

**THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY
SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN**

by

SAHEED ADEKUNLE OYEWU

59781017

submitted in accordance with the requirements for
the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

in the subject

EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROF. H.M. VAN DER MERWE

JANUARY 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Throughout the writing of this dissertation I have received a great deal of support and assistance.

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge God Almighty for giving his grace and wisdom throughout the writing of this dissertation.

A special thanks to my supervisor, Professor H.M. Van Der Merwe, whose expertise was invaluable in the success of this dissertation. Your insightful feedback pushed me to sharpen my thinking and brought my work to a higher standard. I am especially thankful for your dedication and your continual motivation for me to complete the dissertation in time.

I would like to acknowledge the teachers who participated for their wonderful contributions. I want to thank you all for your patient support and for all the opportunities I was given to conduct my research.

I would also like to thank the Western Cape Education Department for granting me permission to conduct this study in the Western Cape, and the Thembalitsha Foundation for granting me permission to conduct this study on their site.

In addition, I would like to thank my mother for her wise counsel and sympathetic ear. You are always there for me. Finally, I could not have completed this dissertation without the support of my dear wife, Adenike Oyewo, and my children, Ryan and Leah, who provided stimulating discussions as well as happy distractions to rest my mind outside of my research.

**THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY
SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN**

DECLARATION

Name: Saheed Adekunle Oyewo

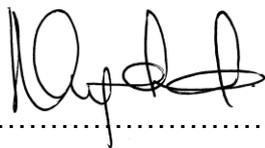
Student Number: 59781017

Degree: Master of Education (Education Management)

I declare that “**The challenges of teaching at-risk learners at a secondary school in Cape Town**” is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated or acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted parameters for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



.....
SIGNATURE

.....
DATE

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

ABSTRACT

The study focused on the challenges of teaching at-risk learners at secondary schools. A qualitative investigation based on interviewing and observation was conducted with sixteen teachers teaching at-risk learners. Findings revealed that pre-service teacher training does not prepare teachers adequately to teach learners at risk constructively. Findings also revealed that at-risk learners have no control over themselves due to lack of parental support as parents show no commitment and support for their children's education. Interventions to counter challenges with teaching at-risk learners relate to applicable preservice teacher training to engage with at-risk learners constructively and continuous in-service teacher training as professional development to empower teachers to engage with at-risk learners appropriately. At-risk learners must value second-chance education opportunities with schools ensuring that a supportive school culture prevails. The study contributes to the discourse on effective teaching practices to support at-risk learners for acceptable academic attainment.

Key terms: academic attainment, at-risk learner, commitment, constructive education, parental support, professional development, school culture, secondary schools, significant adult, teacher training.

**THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY
SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	II
DECLARATION	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
ANNEXURE	X x
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF TABLES.....	xi

CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.2	BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	3
1.2.1	Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory as a theoretical framework	3
1.2.2	Learners at risk considered from a global education perspective	4
1.2.3	Learners at risk considered from a local education perspective.....	6
1.3	MOTIVATION FOR STUDY	8
1.4	PROBLEM STATEMENT	9
1.5	THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY.....	10
1.6	RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	10
1.6.1	Research paradigm	11
1.6.2	Research approach	11
1.6.3	Population and sampling	12
1.6.4	Data collection	13
1.6.5	Data analysis and interpretation	14

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

1.6.6	Trustworthiness and validity	15
1.6.7	Ethical considerations	16
1.7	CONCEPT CLARIFICATION	16
1.7.1	At-risk learners	16
1.7.2	Learner	17
1.7.3	Experiences	17
1.8	ORGANISATION OF THE DISSERTATION	17
1.9	SUMMARY	18
CHAPTER TWO		
LITERATURE STUDY		
2.1	INTRODUCTION	19
2.2	AT-RISK TREE METAPHOR AS AN INFORMAL FRAMEWORK	20
2.3	BRONFENBRENNER'S ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY AS THEORETICAL LENS	22
2.3.1	The micro-system	24
2.3.2	The meso-system	25
2.3.3	The exo-system	26
2.3.4	The macro-system	26
2.3.5	The Chrono-system	26
2.3.6	Assumptions surrounding the ecological model	27
2.4	THE CHALLENGES IN TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS	27
2.4.1	Family and societal issues	27
2.4.2	School and learning issues	28
2.4.2.1	Theorising behaviour	28
2.4.2.2	Belonging and connection	29
2.5	AT-RISK YOUTH EDUCATION IN THE WESTERN CAPE	30
2.6	TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS	33
2.6.1	The categories of at-risk learners in South Africa	34
2.6.1.1	Drop out	37
2.6.1.2	Immigrant learners	37

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

2.6.1.3	Exceptional learners	38
2.6.1.4	Adjudicated and incarcerated youth	39
2.6.2	Successful schooling despite inhibiting home and external environmental conditions	39
2.6.2.1	Success stories of at-risk learners	40
2.7	TEACHER TRAINING TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGE OF LEARNERS AT RISK: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE	42
2.8	TEACHER TRAINING IN SOUTH AFRICA TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGE OF AT-RISK LEARNERS	47
2.9	SUMMARY	50
CHAPTER THREE		
RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY		
3.1	INTRODUCTION	52
3.2	RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	53
3.3	RESEARCH PARADIGM AND RESEARCH APPROACH	53
3.3.1	Qualitative research approach	53
3.3.2	Constructivist research paradigm	55
3.3.3	Phenomenological study	56
3.4	SELECTION OF SITE AND PARTICIPANTS	57
3.4.1	Site selection and sampling.....	58
3.4.2	Sample size	59
3.5	DATA COLLECTION	60
3.5.1	Individual interviews	61
3.5.2	Direct observation	63
3.6	DATA ANALYSIS	66
3.7	TRUSTWORTHINESS	68
3.7.1	Credibility.....	68
3.7.2	Transferability	69
3.7.3	Dependability and confirmability	70
3.8	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	70

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

3.8.1	Anonymity	72
3.8.2	Confidentiality	72
3.8.3	Informed consent	72
3.8.4	Voluntary participation	73
3.9	SUMMARY	73
CHAPTER FOUR		
RESEARCH FINDINGS		
4.1	INTRODUCTION	74
4.2	RESEARCH METHODS	74
4.3	RESEARCH SITE AND PARTICIPANT PROFILES	75
4.4	THE DATA COLLECTION PREPARATION PROCESSES	79
4.4.1	Building trust and gaining access at the research site	79
4.4.2	The delivery of permission letters	80
4.5	DATA COLLECTED BY MEANS OF FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS	81
4.5.1	Congruence of themes	82
4.6	EMERGENT THEMES	84
4.6.1	Theme 1: The importance of teacher training in equipping teachers of at- risk learners: Lived experience	84
4.6.1.1	Sub-theme 1: Oversight in teacher training	84
4.6.1.2	Sub-theme 2: Broader implications of teacher training	86
4.6.1.3	Sub-theme 3: Teachers' concerns	88
4.6.1.4	Sub-theme 4: Poor professional development training opportunities	89
4.6.2	Theme 2: Issues hindering the success of educating at-risk learners: Challenges	90
4.6.2.1	Sub-theme 1: Presenting behavioural issues	91
4.6.2.2	Sub-theme 2: Lack of being prepared with stationery and learning resources	92
4.6.2.3	Sub-theme 3: Lack of parental support	93
4.6.2.4	Sub-theme 4: Lack of social support	94
4.6.2.5	Sub-theme 5: Misplaced value of second-chance education	96

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

4.6.2.6	Sub-theme 6: Influence of at-risk learners' disposition on successful learning	98
4.6.2.7	Sub-theme 7: Influence of teachers' disposition on successful learning	99
4.6.3	Theme 3: The results of educating at-risk learners successfully - Influence	101
4.6.3.1	Sub-theme 1: Mind-set shift	101
4.6.3.2	Sub-theme 2: Breaking the cycle of poverty	102
4.6.3.3	Sub-theme 3: Game changer	104
4.6.4	Theme 4: Best practices in the education of at-risk learners - Solutions	105
4.6.4.1	Sub-theme 1: Solutions from practical experience in educating at-risk learners	105
4.6.4.2	Sub-theme 2: Best practices in teaching at-risk learners	106
4.7	DATA COLLECTED BY MEANS OF DIRECT OBSERVATION	108
4.7.1	Behavioural key indicators	108
4.7.1.1	Indicator 1: Non-vulgar (NV) behaviour	109
4.7.1.2	Indicator 2: Non-violent (NVI) behaviour	109
4.7.1.3	Indicator 3: Destructive (D) behaviour	110
4.8	SUMMARY	111
CHAPTER FIVE		
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS		
5.1	INTRODUCTION	112
5.2	SUMMARY OF THE STUDY	112
5.3	CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY	116
	Teacher training equipping teachers to teach learners at-risk successfully	116
5.3.2	Challenges for teachers teaching at-risk learners	118
	The influence of successful teaching on the learning experiences and life propositions of learners at-risk	119
5.4	RECOMMENDATIONS	121

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

5.4.1	Recommendation with regard to research objective one	121
5.4.2	Recommendation with regard to research objective two	122
5.4.3	Recommendation with regard to research objective three	123
5.5	SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY	125
5.6	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	125
5.7	CONCLUDING REMARKS	126
BIBLIOGRAPHY		127
ANNEXURES		
Annexure A:		
	Ethical clearance letter from the University of South Africa	140
Annexure B:		
	Western Cape Education Department's approval letter to conduct the research at the selected school	142
Annexure C:		
	Letter to the principal for permission to conduct research	143
Annexure D:		
	Consent letter for permission from participant to conduct interviews	144
Annexure E:		
	Assent letter to conduct research with secondary school learners	148
Annexure F: Interview schedule Annexure G:		
	Observation schedule	154
Annexure H:		
	Letter of language editing	155

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1.1: ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS	4
FIGURE 2.1: AT-RISK TREE METAPHOR	21
FIGURE 2.2: BRONFENBRENNER'S ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS	23
FIGURE 2.3: EDUCATIONAL ATTENDANCE- YOUTHEXPLORER.ORG.ZA	31
FIGURE 2.4: LEARNER DROPOUT -YOUTHEXPLORER.ORG.ZAERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.	

**THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY
SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN**

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Background information on the research site	76
Table 4.2: Biographical data on participants	77
Table 4.3: Emergent themes	82

CHAPTER ONE ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

National research has demonstrated that learners at risk have an elevated rate of dropping out of mainstream education, and this rate in the dropout rate can be related to various aspects of the environment such as socio-economic status, political realities, economic state and cultural factors which must be carefully considered in the context of learners who are at risk. In this regard, Wallace (2013) indicates that in 2010 over a million South African teenagers were not in school and had not graduated from high school. Booyens and Crause (2012:256) ascertain that, for 2010, the South African population was young, with those between birth and 34 years numbering 34 303 400 or 68.6% of the estimated total population of 49 991 300 (Statistics South Africa, 2010). Furthermore, poor-quality results in primary school lead to weak participation on other school levels.

Large numbers of learners are dropping out of secondary schools without getting a National Senior Certificate (Grade 12) qualification, or a further education and training (FET) qualification, or an adult basic education and training (ABET) qualification. About 1 million young people exit the schooling system annually, of whom 65% leave without achieving a Grade 12 certificate. Half of those who exit the schooling system do so after Grade 11, either because they do not enrol in Grade 12 or they fail Grade 11 (National Youth Policy 2020, 2015). The right to a basic education, enshrined in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of South Africa, provides for improved access to basic education; however, the South African school system remains plagued by problems relating to providing education of good quality (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). Some regard this plague as a national disaster with schools providing education of such poor quality that they constitute a significant obstacle to social and economic development. The majority of mainly township and rural schools are especially hit hard by poor quality education to the extent of being dysfunctional (Bloch, 2009; Western Cape Youth Commission, 2008).

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

High dropout and failure rates are evident, with only about 39% of South Africa's youth obtaining a national certificate for the 2010 academic year (Republic of South Africa, 2011). In the same vein and in recent research conducted in 2017, it was deduced that with 1,103, 495 enrolments in Grade 10 in 2014, only 610,178 wrote Matric in 2016, which shows a 44,57% dropout since Grade 10 (Equal Education, 2018). In addition, the reality for rural children remains one of inequality, with poverty, hunger and transport costs as well as factors such as female-headed households, teenage pregnancy and substance abuse taking their toll on both access to school and school completion rates (Branson and Lam, 2008; Western Cape Youth Commission, 2008).

Unemployment among the youth in South Africa is extensive and entrenched. Most of the South African youth move into unemployment when they leave basic education; however, research statistics reported only a 48,6% youth unemployment rate in the third quarter of 2016 for youth between the ages of 15 and 34 (Statistics South Africa, 2016). The unemployment rate for youth of ages 15-24 (exclusive of those in education) was a shockingly high 65,5% (Equal Education, 2018). While the general unemployment rate of those with university degrees and matriculation certificates is 3% and 28%, respectively, the percentage rises to over 60% of those without a Grade 12 qualification (Branson, Hofmeyr, Papier, and Needman, 2015).

In South Africa, at-risk learners have been disadvantaged by mainstream education since school leaders and teachers are not adequately trained to educate them. In many cases, at-risk learners are labelled and processed out of the schooling system and left with no other option than to resort to crime and violence (Booyens and Crause, 2012).

Therefore, more research into at-risk learners' education is evidently required in South Africa. Within this context of provisioning to at-risk learners, Booyens and Crause (2012) explored the lives of at-risk learners living in a rural setting with a focus on these learners' transition from school education to education for life and work and the transition to productive work. Booyens and Crause's (2012) work further focuses on the perceptions of at-risk youth about their exclusion from education and work. What is missing with the

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

research on at-risk learners, however, are the causes of poor academic performance amongst at-risk learners. It is important to ascertain whether teachers teaching at-risk learners positively engage these learners and do not simply process them out of the school system. Secondly, a qualitative enquiry about high school teachers' understanding of working with at-risk learners will provide grounded insight into their lived experiences.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Literature regarding the engagement of at-risk learners in secondary school was examined in order to gauge teachers' experience of educating at-risk learners in both local and international contexts. During this study, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory was employed as a theoretical lens to interpret the research findings.

1.2.1 Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory as a theoretical framework

The ecological systems model as articulated by Bronfenbrenner (1989, 1994) posits that individual human development occurs within interconnected and embedded ecological systems (McWhirter, 2017). The model asserts the importance of a good foundational understanding of the impacts generated through culture, politics, relationships, social interactions, and life experiences on the attitudes, behaviours, and competences of adolescents and their families (McWhirter, 2017).

The model has been used in numerous studies focusing on culturally relevant counselling and assessments conducted in the context of adolescents in general, or at risk (Ponterotto, 2010). This model was grounded on the thesis that humans develop and grow within the context of several reciprocal systems. The ecological systems (as depicted in Figure 1.1) are the Micro-, Meso-, Exo-, Macro-, and Chrono-system, with the individual at the centre, and they are interrelated and function interactively to support and guide, or hamper, human growth (McWhirter, 2017).

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

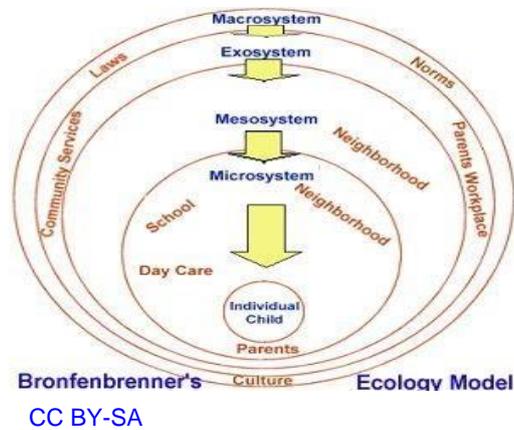


Figure 1.1: Ecological systems theory by Bronfenbrenner

Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory was employed as an applicable theory in this study to articulate the challenges of at-risk learners within the South African context and what interactions and direct contact there exists between at-risk learners and their immediate and proximal ecological systems.

1.2.2 Learners at risk considered from a global education perspective

Learners considered to be at risk of school failures and other adverse life outcomes are characterised by the intention of not making good decisions, or of making decisions that differ from the expectations of society (Edwards, Mumford and Roldon, 2007:30). Kominski, Jamieson and Martinez (2001:31) acknowledged that specific detrimental factors such as peer pressure, neglect, and domestic abuse might make a child's life more difficult upon entering adulthood. Because of these detrimental factors, the behaviour of learners at risk manifests in grade retention, chronic absenteeism and behavioural problems such as aggression, abuse and teenage pregnancy (Bemak, Chi-Ying, and

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Siroskey-Sabdo, 2005). These learners at risk tend to engage in delinquent behaviour and eventually drop out of school.

In the support modelled for at-risk learners in the United States of America, researchers used a model called the *“Positive Developmental Assets Framework”*, to identify and enhance variables that contribute to healthy child development and positive outcomes (Benson, Lerner and Benson, 2003). The first 20 developmental assets focus on positive experiences that learners receive from the people and institutions in their lives. These assets are categorised into external and internal assets. External assets focus on Support, Empowerment, Boundaries and Expectations, and Constructive use of time; internal assets focus on Commitment to learning, Positive values, Social competencies and Positive identity (Benson et al., 2003). The adaptation of these developmental assets was used as a framework to promote intervention services to at-risk learners in the USA; providing learners with increased academic support and positive personal attention is another method of building developmental asset for learners considered to be at risk (Edwards et al., 2007). In addition, teachers and school counsellors encourage assets development in classrooms by incorporating assets within lesson plans and developing group activities that help promote individual asset building (Benson, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2003).

Support for at-risk learners in Singapore pertains to government utilising a framework known as Youth At-Risk Engagement (YARE) as an early intervention framework to support at-risk learners based on evidence-informed services (Jamie, 2016). The framework consists of components relating to assessment of risks, evidence based/informed programmes, evaluation of programmes and standards of competency for youth workers. The beneficiaries of YARE in Singapore are learners aged 12 to 21 years old who have at-risk traits, such as conduct issues, social difficulties and poor response to school interventions, and who are children from divorced families (Jamie, 2016).

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Support for at-risk learners in Australia relates to assistance to learners who are completing senior secondary education. Factors in Australia determined to contribute to at-risk situations stem from complex interactions between individual and family circumstances and characteristics of school and society (Te Rielle, 2006). Policy identification of at-risk learners tends to simplistically focus on personal attributes of young people. The involvement of at-risk learners in education is a powerful protective factor against involvement in criminal activities because attending school on a regular basis reduces the chances that at-risk learners in Australia will get involved in criminal activity, even if they are not achieving academically (Arthur et al., 2000; McLaren, 2000).

Leone and Mayer (2004) suggest three approaches to prevent at-risk learners from disengagement with their education and the school system. Firstly, school support must be congruent with the academic mission of the school, i.e. if high academic achievement is mandatory, then support must be in place for learners who will be at risk of not meeting this standard. Secondly, school discipline is key to satisfactory learner performance and such discipline procedures should be proactive, consistent and positive. Thirdly, for evidence based educational interventions for learners at risk to be successful, support for at-risk learners and constructive school discipline must be adapted consistently in a school environment where learners at risk are expected to succeed (Leone and Mayer, 2004).

1.2.3 Learners at risk considered from a local education perspective

Landman (2017) emphasises that South African youth remain marginalised regardless of labour opportunities. There is an urgent need for the government to diversify the labour market so that the vulnerable youth in the society can be accommodated and integrated into the labour force. Furthermore, the South African education system needs to go back to the drawing board to redesign the system to incorporate skills sector training into secondary schooling and, more so, to engage at-risk learners in developmental programmes that will see them grow and be prepared to face the coming future.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Incompetency from government to provide sufficiently for the educational needs of youth is even further placing the youth at risk in a disadvantaged position.

The South African National Youth Policy of 2010 provides for a non-sexist, non-racist, democratic South Africa in which young people develop to their full potential in the social, economic and political spheres of life with accompanying responsibilities to contribute to a better life for all (National Youth Policy, 2015; Landman, 2017). In this regard, diverse participation is needed from all stakeholders to drive the economy and to promote the life chances of all citizens including at-risk learners by encouraging learners to seize the opportunities to develop their communities and eradicate poverty (Landman, 2017).

Social ills associated with the development of at-risk learners in South Africa relate to school dropout with an accompanying lack of access to tertiary education. At-risk Learners in South Africa are isolated because they are not linked to support networks and can therefore not achieve their development aims to build a future for themselves (Landman, 2017). Failing to develop the competencies of at-risk learners in South Africa in order to meet global competitiveness and to drive enough economic and employment opportunities will present a significant risk to social cohesion and political stability (Landman, 2017).

Bialobrzaska, Randell and Hellmann (2012), in a guide published by the South African Institute for Distance Education, mentioned that South African schools are filled with vulnerability and it is becoming even more difficult for teachers to identify vulnerability amongst learners in their classrooms. As the social context that places learners at risk is prevalent amongst South African families, the government must intervene by training teachers on how to identify vulnerable learners in their classrooms, and how to provide the required support or environment for at-risk learners to thrive (Bialobrzaska, Randell and Hellmann, 2012).

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

The Western Cape government indicated that at-risk learners are not prepared to eventually succeed in the labour market, leading to unemployment and permanent poverty. As a result, intervention measures are rolled out for at-risk learners in the Western Cape, which focuses on the following five approaches (Western Cape Department of Social Development, 2018):

- Prevention in all schools: This initiative is propelled to support school leaders in identifying learners who may be vulnerable; also, to serve as an early warning system across schools in Western Cape in preventing the emergence of emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Early intervention in all schools: Emotional support and guidance is provided to learners identified to be struggling with emotional and behavioural barriers to learning; the appointed Social Workers at schools mostly provide this support.
- School-based support programmes: This support is school-based and provided to learners identified to be at risk of expulsion or entering the criminal justice system; the school makes all effort to provide relevant support to the learners in question.
- Youth care and educational programmes: Should a learner not benefit from mainstream education, the schools are in network with youth care and educational centres and, through referral, these centres are able to provide a more structured and tailor-made support to the referred learners.
- Registered child and youth care centres: these centres provide support to learners or youth who may have conflicted with the law or are generally at risk. Some of these centres are adequately equipped to provide support to vulnerable young mothers and fathers once found to be at risk.

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR STUDY

One of the reasons for poor academic achievement amongst at-risk learners lies with the way in which teachers engage them; when teachers in collaboration with parents put the

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

needs of an individual learner or a classroom uppermost in their agenda, they increase the effectiveness of their interventions (McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, 2017).

However, further research into teachers' experience of teaching at-risk learners and exploring the issues that transpire in their classrooms and how these high school teachers deal with these issues are thus imperative. One of the difficulties in trying to understand at-risk problems is fragmentation of knowledge. Becker (1981:14) observed that information accumulated about at-risk learners has become "strewn all over the place" and indeed continues to be to this day, leaving researchers with probing questions like, what is the cause and effect? How does one situation relate to another? What is the relationship between various aspects of at-risk problems? What are the underlying connections? The focus of this study on at-risk learners relates to the interventions available for at-risk learners once they become completely vulnerable and drop out of school. The focus of this study is, therefore, on teachers teaching at-risk learners by understanding these teachers' actions and challenges to support at-risk learners in completing their schooling successfully.

In my experience of working with at-risk learners, I have been plagued with numerous unpleasant encounters. In one of the instances, I was threatened with a knife simply because I disciplined a defaulter according to the school discipline policy. Another instance concerned that of a teacher who was constantly bullied by a group of at-risk learners simply because they knew that the teacher was younger in age than they were. Considering the above-mentioned experiences, I was propelled to carry out a study to supplement and augment research on the challenges facing at-risk learners and their teachers. Initial efforts to solve problems pertaining to at-risk learners involved dividing their complex issues into manageable chunks, which led to one problem being resolved at the expense of another. What was obvious, however, was that these problems interact, reinforce one another, and cluster together (McWhirter et al., 2017:18).

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

The motivation for this study was to contribute to the development of new and more comprehensive practical approaches in engaging at-risk learners in a South African school environment, and to provide guidelines to teachers and school leaders in the delivery of quality learning experience to these learners.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Inadequate teaching support provided to at-risk learners in South African schools relates to the lack of knowledge and skills on comprehensive education approaches to engage at-risk learners meaningfully in their own education (Jamie, 2016). These inadequacies resulted in unconstructive relationships between at-risk learners and their teachers, with these-relationships being detrimental to the success of educating at-risk learners in South Africa in pursuit of a better life based on a proper education. The research question inferred from this situation is as follows:

- What are the challenges of teaching at-risk learners in a secondary school in Cape Town?

The research problem is solved by investigating sub-categories of the main research question. The derived answers to the following research sub-questions assisted in answering the main research question:

- How does teacher training equip teachers to teach at-risk learners successfully?
- What are the challenges teachers teaching at-risk learners experience?
What is the influence of successful teaching on the learning experiences and life propositions of at-risk learners?

1.5 THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

With the aim of study stating the purpose of the research and the objectives specifying the outcomes contributing to attaining the aim (Denicolo and Becker, 2012:53), the aim with this study is to find out what the challenges are when teaching at-risk secondary school learners. During the study, the first focus was given to the training of teachers in South Africa and to ascertain if their training merits the standard laid out to successfully educate at-risk learners in classrooms across the country. Secondly, the focus was vested in the challenges faced by teachers teaching at-risk learners, to gauge their lived experiences, whether negative or positive, and to provide guidelines to improved teaching and learning experiences within these classrooms. Finally, the aim was to measure what influence the successful teaching and learning of at-risk learners would eventually have on the life propositions of at-risk learners.

In order to achieve the aim of this study on the challenges and solutions in teaching at-risk learners, the research objective, linked closely to the postulated research question, is as follows:

- To identify what the challenges are when teaching at-risk secondary school learners using semi-structured interviews, in a school in Cape Town.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study was a qualitative research approach, which focused on understanding social phenomena from the perspective of human participants in natural settings.

1.6.1 Research paradigm

This study adopted a constructivist research paradigm because in this study reality is socially constructed (Mertens, 2010:43). The constructivist research paradigm is related to hermeneutics, thus implying interpretive understanding and meaning (Eichelberger,

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

1989). The basic assumptions guiding the constructivist research paradigm are that people active in the research process socially construct knowledge, and that the researcher wants to understand the complex world of lived experiences from the point of view of those who live it (Schwandt, 2000). In the context of this study on teaching at-risk learners, the researcher wanted to understand the complex world of at-risk learners from the point of view of their teachers.

1.6.2 Research approach

Qualitative research approaches consider the values and character of the participants and participants' understanding of their own circumstances (Davids, Theron and Maphunye, 2009). A qualitative research approach was chosen for this study on at-risk learners because the study explores a basic belief, and it enshrines the quality of constructing meaning based on a balanced representation of views derived from raising participant awareness and creating a community of understanding on the topic of study (Mertens, 2010). With reference to Burnard (2008:59), a phenomenological case study approach was used that focuses on understanding the challenges faced by teachers of at-risk secondary school learners. The experiences and points of view of the different participants were considered to provide an understanding of the phenomenon of study (McMillian and Schumacher, 2010:346), namely challenges in teaching at-risk secondary school learners.

1.6.3 Population and sampling

About this study on at-risk learners, a case of a school serving vulnerable at-risk learners in the metro-central district of Cape Town was selected as a research sample. The school information was derived from the list of special needs schools published by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) and representing the research population for this study. The selected school engages at-risk learners through second chance education. Second chance education is a strategic objective of a school to provide specialised

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

education to at-risk, vulnerable and age-inappropriate learners through inspiration, best-practise curriculum delivery and a holistic approach to intervention in education.

McDuffie and Scruggs (2008) describe a case study as an approach that involves an in-depth exploration of a single case or example of the phenomenon under study. A case may be based on any number of units of analysis, such as an individual, a group of individuals, a classroom, a school, or an event. All the teachers at the selected school were identified to participate in this study. The research sample pertained the ten qualified and two qualifying teachers at the school and an additional four qualified teachers who have resigned in the last three years, namely in the period 2015 to 2017. The reasons for the choice of the sample size were:

- Participants have a minimum of two years working experience with at-risk learners. A minimum of at least two years working experience with learners at risk is important because it provides the participants with tangible contact time with these learners and such engagement produces lived experiences of at-risk learners.
- Participants are qualified to teach learners in the General Education and Training and the Further Education and Training Bands, implying that the participants have undergone the methodologies and pedagogies of educating learners of such aptitude.
- Participants are current or past teachers of the school who have recorded ? numerous encounters with at-risk learners and who understand the specific context, namely at-risk learners in Cape Town.
- Participants can share their lived experiences in educating at-risk learners in current times providing insights, suggestions and solutions to the research questions.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

1.6.4 Data collection

Based on a qualitative research approach, data were collected through semi-structured individual interviews and observations. This approach was used as the data-gathering tool because of its adaptability; a skilful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings during and after the interview (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen and Razavieh, 2010). Due to the nature of conducting interviews, it can be a time consuming and subjective technique, and can therefore elicit bias; hence, each interview may last up to an hour to counter subjectivity and biasness with relatively prolonged exposure. The aforementioned time frame, therefore, provides a considerable amount of time to deduce volumes of in-depth data rather than quick responses that may be invalid or contain false information.

Wiseman and Aaron (1972) compared interviewing to a fishing expedition and mentioned that it requires careful preparation and considerable practice should the researcher want a rewarding catch. For this study, the careful preparation entailed, a pre-prepared schedule used for interviewing, which enabled a set of responses that was recorded, summarised and analysed ensuring that all relevant themes were addressed within the interview.

Two days was also spent observing participants in their classes as a means to augment and ground existing data derived from the interviews with the participants. The planned two days of observation in this study assisted in determining whether what was said in the semi-structured interviews actually matched the experiences of the participants in their natural settings, which in this case were their classrooms. The observation also helped to illuminate that which the participants may have found difficult to articulate.

For a comprehensive picture of the complete situation, data were collected by observing participants in their natural setting by means of a systematic checklist approach; this entailed systemic data collection with a checklist and observation schedule. The checklist

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

presented a list of behavioural themes and actions observed. In this context, and as a researcher, I maintained a passive, non-intrusive role by merely noting down the incidences of the factors under study.

With reference to the main advantage of direct and systematic observation, namely observing actions first hand, this data collection method provided a record of the actual behaviour that transpired within the classrooms of the participants which eliminated the need to pose additional questions to the participants and confirmed participants' responses to questions.

1.6.5 Data analysis and interpretation

Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, and Redwood (2013) ascertain that there are several approaches to qualitative data analysis, including those that pay close attention to language and how it is being used in social interaction. In this study, close attention was paid to the language that participants used to express their experiences of teaching at-risk learners. The research involved the systematic search for patterns to generate full descriptions capable of shedding light on the phenomenon under study, which was learners at risk in South Africa.

In this study, a system-based framework was employed to analyse the processes that are required to be incorporated into teacher training to equip and prepare teachers for their role in educating at-risk learners. Also, the dynamics of interactions among teachers themselves was examined to point out the nature of training needed for successful engagement of at-risk learners in classrooms. The effects of the applied engagement were examined to understand the extent to which teachers teaching at-risk learners influence those learners positively for retained schooling. However, researchers often note the chaos and complexities associated with analysing data within a qualitative design, and this infer that researchers working with qualitative data are confronted with enormous

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

quantities of relatively unstructured data that require organisation and systemic refinement (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen and Razavieh, 2010:500).

Creswell (2007) explains qualitative data analysis as processes of familiarisation, categorisation and synthesis based on predetermined considerations. In further articulation, Creswell (2007) added that data analysis is spiral and must fit into the approach of qualitative inquiry, and that once data are collected, the collected data must be organised and managed carefully. With reference to Creswell (2007), data collected were analysed systemically as follows:

- Familiarisation and organisation of data;
- Coding and reduction processes;
- Interpretation and representation of coded data.

1.6.6 Trustworthiness and validity

The trustworthiness and validity of research findings for this study were addressed using the authenticity criteria as implied by Cuba and Lincoln (1989), namely adhering to fairness, and to ontological, educative, analytical and tactical authenticity.

With reference to the suggestions of Cuba and Lincoln (1989), the following validity concepts were adhered to:

- The use of an accurate and reliable measuring instrument;
- The researcher's control is applied carefully;
- The researcher always poses consistent questions ; and
- The participants are provided with the transcriptions of the data to confirm accuracy of collected data.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

1.6.7 Ethical considerations

Conducting interviews to collect data has an ethical dimension in the sense that interviewing concerns interpersonal interaction and produces information about the human condition (Mouton, 1996). Three main areas of ethical consideration that apply to this study on at-risk learners relate to informed consent, confidentiality, and the consequences of the interviews (Kvale, 1996:111).

- **Informed consent**

The participants were individually contacted to gauge their willingness to participate in the study. A brief summary and pilot questions were made available for participants after successful assessment of their willingness to participate. Permission was obtained from the Western Cape Education Department and their district offices, including the principal of the sampled school.

- **Confidentiality and anonymity**

All data collected were treated confidentially and all images and information of participants were protected. All confidentiality and anonymity protocols were clearly observed, and data were kept secure on hard drive and backed up on Google Drive throughout the research process.

- **The right to withdraw**

Participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study should they no longer want to participate in it.

1.7 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

The important concepts related to this study are the following:

1.7.1 At-risk learners

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

With reference to Herr (1989:201) on at-risk learners, and in the context of this study, at-risk learners pertain to secondary school learners who run the risk of not acquiring the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to reach a stage of self-reliance. These learners behave in ways that put them in at-risk situations of not completing their high school training.

1.7.2 Learner

A learner refers to any person receiving education (South Africa, 1996b). In this study, it refers to school-going children from Grade 1 to Grade 12 representing children in the age group 7 years to 18 years.

1.7.3 Experiences

Experiences refer to the lived knowledge about an event. In this study, it refers to the day-to-day encounters between teachers and their learners within the school environment.

1.8 ORGANISATION OF THE DISSERTATION

This study on the challenges of teaching secondary school at-risk learners is organised into five chapters:

Chapter 1

This chapter presents a general orientation to the study. This overview chapter details the introduction to the research, reflection on the background, and the motivation for the study. This chapter further presents the background of the problem under study, both locally and internationally, and provides the bases for the formulation of the research questions and thus the motivation for study.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 is devoted to a literature review on challenges facing teachers teaching at-risk learners in both local and international contexts. This review is eventually narrowed down to a local perspective to gauge and gain more insight into the existing study about the education of learners deemed to be at risk in the Western Cape. The theoretical framework underlying the study is also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 3

The research design and research methodology that was employed to collect data for the empirical investigation is discussed in this chapter. Matters discussed include the sample of the study, data collection methods, and the procedure used to analyse and interpret the collected data in order to derive answers to the research question. The adherence to ethical considerations and the issue of trustworthiness are also addressed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4

The focal point of this chapter is to present the empirical research findings derived from an analysis of the collected data, which was then interpreted and evaluated as meaningful to answer the formulated research questions.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 is based on a summary of the literature findings and the findings from the empirical investigation. From this summary, conclusions are drawn, and guidelines are developed culminating in recommendations for solutions in teaching at-risk secondary school learners in South Africa.

1.9 SUMMARY

Teachers in the business of educating at-risk learners are confronted daily with the insurmountable societal ills rooted in dysfunctional and broken homes, which require urgent attention from all stakeholders in the education landscape of South Africa.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Teachers involved with at-risk secondary school learners are not coping with the demands of their work and are exiting the profession. Everything must be done to ensure that solutions are found to retain teachers in the system. The salient factors creating barriers to the successful education of at-risk learners need to be identified and tackled to ensure that already disadvantaged learners excel academically, and this is only attainable if teachers are equipped with required skills to remedy this unconstructive relationship.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

“At-risk learner” refers to any identified learner who needs additional support and who is not meeting or not expected to meet the established goals of the educational programme (academic, personal/social, career/vocational) (Guzman, 2016:1). In current times, there is increasing attention drawn to learners labelled as at-risk, and the probing questions remain, who? are these learners and what can schools do to help them? (Guzman, 2016:1). Due to the rate at which learners become at-risk in most schools across the globe, and as an emerging trend in South Africa, school leaders in South Africa are becoming inundated with this societal problem and are failing to provide comprehensive solutions or combating tactics to eradicate the problem of at-risk learners.

Previous research has underscored that the definition and the use of the term “at-risk learner” varies and can be controversial; however, the common denominator is a concern about providing support to learners who are viewed as likely to become school dropouts (Guzman, 2016:1). With the intention of most schools to reduce school dropouts, it is imperative for school leaders to take cognisance of the underlying factors placing learners at risk, and to not focus the locus of the problem within the learner (Guzman, 2016:1). School leaders should clearly understand that the problems experienced by at-risk learners are caused by external factors such as neighbourhood, family, school, peers and individual conditions, and they should clearly refrain from blaming or labelling these learners, as such an approach will exacerbate the problem. Since at-risk learners include

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

but are not limited to learners in the following groups: homeless children and youth, dropouts, returning dropouts and potential dropouts, it is useful to think about underlying risk factors and behaviours as an impediment to successful schooling, and the focus should be driven as such. Although at-risk learners are what they are because of their circumstances, choice is always at stake. There are learners faring well regardless of their desolating circumstances. Bronfenbrenner's theory articulates that individuals are also active participants in their environments exercising choice of action.

Several causal factors place learners at risk of not completing their education and it is useful to view these factors from a developmental angle. Human development and its associated problems, particularly in an educational context, can be categorised into internal and external causal factors. The internal causal factors include psychological, physical and behavioural factors (which can also be ascribed to the family structure). The external causal factors (human problems) can be placed with the school and the community at large (Withers and Russell, 2001:12). With the focus of this study in mind, namely, the challenges of teaching at-risk learners, it is imperative to understand the factors responsible for causing learners to become at risk in order for the study to point at the possible solutions to teaching at-risk secondary school learners.

2.2 AT-RISK TREE METAPHOR AS AN INFORMAL FRAMEWORK

Decades ago, Becker (1981:14) observed that information accumulated about at-risk conditions has become "strewn all over the place, spoken in a thousand competitive voices". Insignificant fragments are magnified out of proportion while major and world historical insights about at-risk conditions demand attention. To date, Becker's statement is evidently true; information available regarding at-risk children and youth is "strewn all over the place". What is the cause and what is the effect? What is the relationship between various aspects of a child's lack of development problem? What are the underlying connections?

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Many researchers have made the effort to solve the problem through an approach that requires the problem to be divided into manageable chunks such as school dropout, drug and alcohol abuse, juvenile delinquency and youth suicide, since it is intertwined and complex by formulation. This approach will provide an opportunity for these issues to be studied separately (McWhirter et al., 2017:17-18). These underlying issues that place learners at risk is rife in South Africa and research fails to provide enough information about at-risk learners and as such impedes the availability of information about at-risk learners in South Africa.

McWhirter et al. (2017) laid out a systematic informal framework to guide researchers in the quest to understand the scope and the range of problems for which children and adolescents are at risk; their framework integrated the various at-risk categories and intervention strategies to convene the information and knowledge about specific at-risk categories in a unifying framework. The analogy of a tree was utilised in considering a range of issues that relate to at-risk children and youth. This at-risk tree referred to the “Soil” of the tree as the individual societal environment; and the “Roots” as the connection from the family, school and peer group to the soil that provides support and nurturance.

“Trunk” serves as the conduit of developing attitudes and behaviours of each individual child that resulted in a specific at-risk category, and these are the “Branches” of the tree. The fruits of the tree in the context are individual and specific young people in the society; some are whole and healthy, others are bruised and damaged, and others dropped from the tree. As referred to in this study, at-risk learners are evidently bruised and damaged and many more have dropped out from the tree, hence the need for ‘gardeners’, namely teachers, social workers, counsellors and psychologists. Like all growing trees, the at-risk tree needs pruning, staking and trimming, sun, water and nurturing. Nurturing as indicated must be directed at different times toward the soil, roots, trunks and branches to harvest good fruits from the tree (McWhirter et al., 2017:21).

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

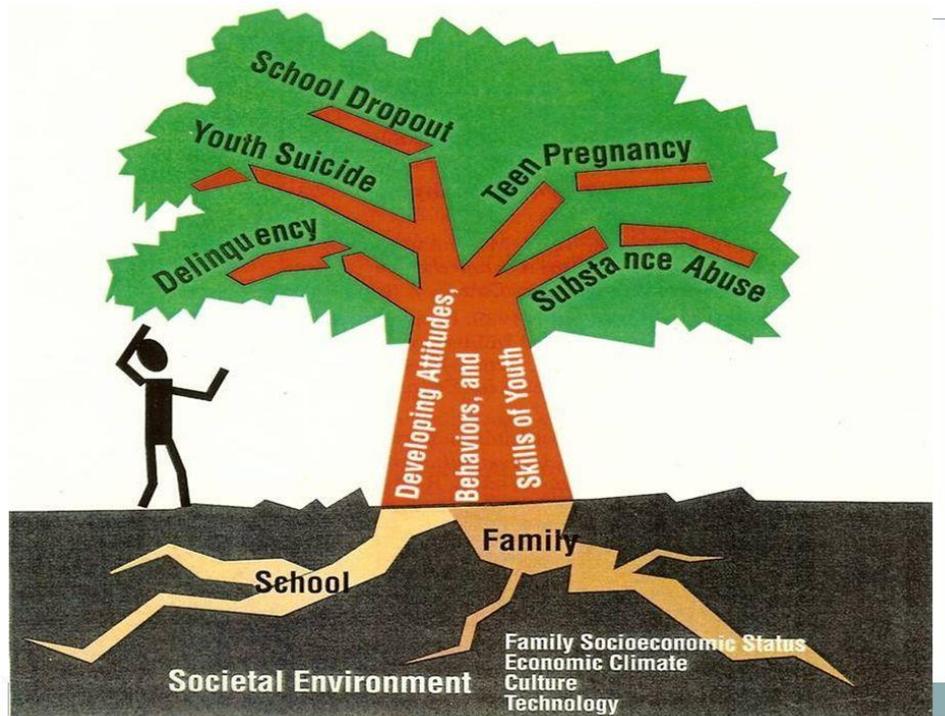


Figure 2.1: At-risk tree metaphor

The at-risk tree is a useful but informal framework for understanding and working with at-risk learners. It will be useful to explore a more extensive and elegant theoretical framework for this study. Hence, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model for human development, which is the theoretical framework for this study, is discussed next.

2.3 BRONFENBRENNER'S ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY AS THEORETICAL LENS

Owing to the strewn nature of information available about at-risk learners, there are many definitions of at-risk conditions. The most relevant definition of an at-risk situation in the context of this study is defined by Manning and Baruth (1995); they define at-risk learners as those who are not able to complete their high school education due to several risk factors that include poor achievement, grade retention and problems of attitude and school attendance where large numbers of the learners are poor. These risk factors resulting in

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

at-risk conditions can be linked to the ecological theory of human development as developed by Bronfenbrenner.

Bronfenbrenner was known to be one of the leading theorists in the field of developmental psychology. In 1989, Bronfenbrenner developed the ecological systems theory based on four concentric systems that are the Micro-, the Meso-, the Exo-, and the Macro-systems. He later added a time-related fifth system called the Chrono-system (Bronfenbrenner, 1989:188).

Bronfenbrenner's concentric systems have incubated various risk factors as outlined by the definition of at risk by Manning and Baruth (1995). Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory lays stress on the quality and the context of the child's surroundings as these determine the future propositions of a child. Bronfenbrenner maintains that as the child develops the interaction with the environment acquires a complex nature; the chance for the complexity appears since the physical and cognitive structures of a child grow and mature (Paquette and Ryan, 2001).

Further, in Bronfenbrenner's study of ecological systems it was pointed out that development and socialisation are influenced by the different circles of the environment with which a person is in active participation. This include three significant assumptions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Saarinen et al., 1994):

- A person is an active player, exerting influence on his/her environment.
- Environment is compelling a person to adapt to its conditions and restrictions.
- Environment is understood to consist of different size entities that are placed one inside another depicting reciprocal relationships between these entities representing different systems, namely Micro-, Meso-, Exo- and Macro-systems.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Bronfenbrenner's (1994) four concentric systems depicting interactive, interrelated functioning of socially organised sub-systems, to support and guide, or hamper, optimal growth serve as the theoretical framework for this study and it is discussed next.

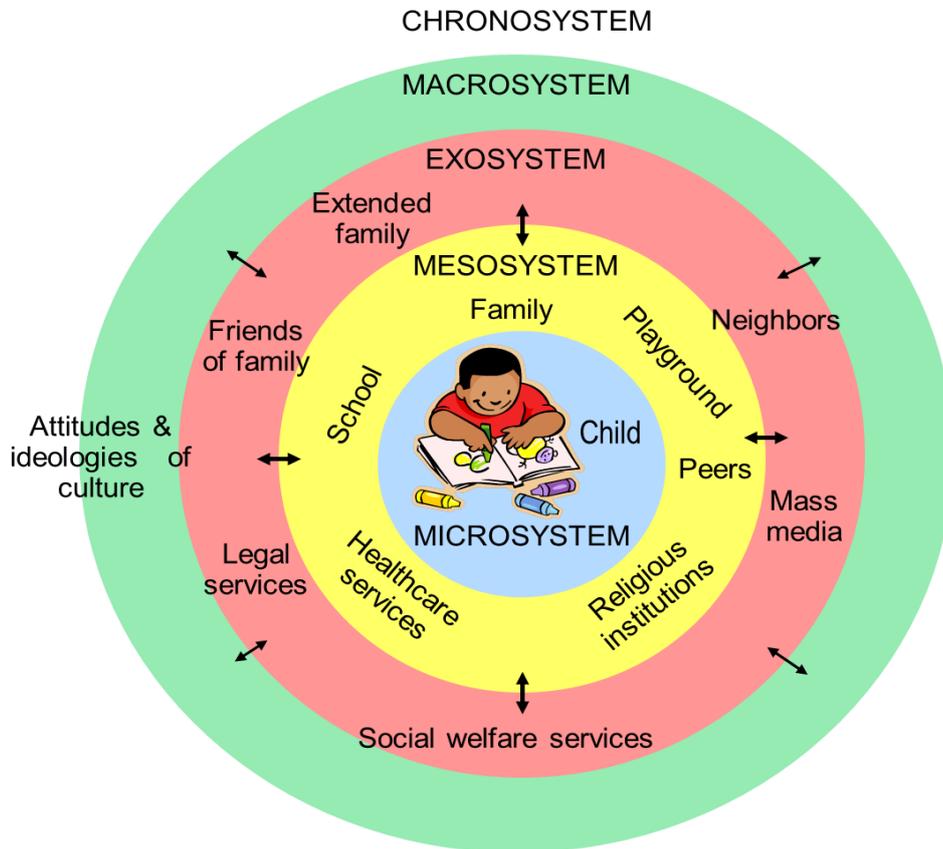


Figure 2.2: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems

The ecological systems model as articulated by Bronfenbrenner (1989, 1994) posits that individual human development occurs within interconnected and embedded ecological systems, and that the model provides a good foundation to understand the impact of culture, politics, relationships, social interactions, and life experiences on the attitudes, behaviours and competences of children, adolescents, youth and their families. The ecological model rests on the thesis that humans develop and grow within the context of a number of reciprocal systems, which include concentric circles capturing various levels or degrees of interactive and reciprocal experiences. The inner core of the model

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

incubates the individual human with his or her predispositions, evolutionary and biological components, and unique personality characteristics. (McWhirter et al., 2017:24).

2.3.1 The micro-system

According to the micro-system definition, all environments in which the developing person is an active participant are his/her micro-environments. Bronfenbrenner (2001:263-266) made the system definition more precise and, among other things, paid attention to the belief systems of the person because they can have stimulating effects on development. Home and family, school and community come to foreplay quite naturally while studying the developmental issues of any person of no matter what age (Harkonen, 2007:8).

Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological model rests on the thesis that humans develop and grow within the context of a number of reciprocal systems with the individual at the centre (McWhirter et al., 2017:21-22). The model can be visualised as a number of circles placed in one another capturing various levels and degrees of interactive and reciprocal experiences; at the inner core is the individual with his or her genetic predispositions, evolutionary and biological components and ongoing processes of behavioural, cognitive and affective experiences. The micro-system is described to consist of the people with whom an individual comes into direct contact or participation and refers to immediate, proximal interactions in the person's world (McWhirter et al., 2017:23). The composition of this system includes the family, the child's school, the neighbours, friends and the church (which speaks to the belief system of the family). Each microsystem influences the child's development.

2.3.2 The meso-system

The meso-system comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person (the relationship between home and

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

school, school and workplace). According to Herkonen (2007), a meso-system is a system of microsystems. The meso-system can also be understood as the embedded interconnections between different micro-systems, as well as the impact of the reciprocal interactions (McWhirter et al., 2017:24). The meso-systemic influences include the relationships between a child's parents and teacher, and between the child's school and the surrounding neighbourhood.

The ecological model as developed by Bronfenbrenner assumes that an individual's development is enhanced if the meso-system, which pertains to the relationship among the microsystems, is constant and positive (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989).

2.3.3 The exo-system

The exo-system consists of the interconnections between one or more settings that are more distal and do not directly involve the individual (McWhirter et al., 2017:24). School governance can be cited as a good example of an exo-systemic factor. School governance regarding educational outcomes, assessment policies and norms and standards of public school funding have an influence on the individual and his/her micro-systems (for example schools, family and community), but the individual may not be present in the environment where these standards are laid down (McWhirter et al., 2017:24).

2.3.4 The macro-system

Bronfenbrenner (1989:228) describes the macro-system as consisting of an overarching pattern of micro-, meso-, and exo-systems characteristic of a given culture, sub-culture, or other broader social context, with a particular reference to the developmentally, instigative belief systems, resourced life styles and patterns of social interchange that are embedded in each of these systems. Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner (1994) reiterated that the macrosystem can be thought of as a societal blueprint of a particular culture, sub-culture, or other broader social context. The macro-system is the outmost layer for the

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

child; it has no distinct framework, but it holds inside it the cultural values, traditions and laws (Beck, 2000).

The macro-system provides a framework to the preceding systems.

McWhirter et al. (2017) point out that research that examines the relationship between children's aggressive behaviour and exposure to violent television is an example of studying macro-systemic influences on individuals.

2.3.5 The Chrono-system

The chronosystem is a description of the evolution, development or stream of development of the external systems in time (Harkonen, 2007). McWhirter et al. (2017:24) also describe this system as the socio-historical circumstances and transitions that unfold during the course of the individual's life over time.

2.3.6 Assumptions surrounding the ecological model

Three explicit assumptions are inherent in the ecological systems theory by Bronfenbrenner (1989; 1994): the individual and the environment are interacting and constantly changing; the individual is an active participant in his or her environment; and changes in one ecological system influence changes in the other and vice versa. Hence, in this study the focus will be on the changes in various systems, and how they affect the normal development of the individuals under study to the point of placing these at-risk learners of completing their secondary school education.

2.4 THE CHALLENGES IN TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS

Hammond et al. (2007) categorise different factors that place learners at risk into four domains namely individual, school, community and family. The individual domain factors are those related to the learner individually - behaviour and academic performance. The

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

family domain factors relate to the background of the family and perception toward education, and family dynamics. The school domain consists of factors that relate to the environment, structure and policies of the school such as resources of school. The community domain factors are those relevant to the society and its surroundings such as type and location of the society, characteristics and demography of the society, and the overall environment. With this in mind, and when several or all of these risk factors are prevalent in the life of a learner, there is possibility that the learner will become less motivated in school which may increase the chances of the learner dropping out of school (Suh and Suh, 2007). Hence, some of the risk factors that contribute to at-risk status amongst secondary school learners are discussed next.

2.4.1 Family and societal issues

Lewis and McCann (2009:897) explain the impacts of family issues upon at-risk learners, which cannot be disregarded when studying patterns of behaviours amongst at-risk learners. The culture from which at-risk learners originate relates to familial issues such as low socio-economic status, familial substance abuse, single parent families, low parental educational status, criminal activity, violence, poverty, lack of parental supervision, poor home-school relationship and ethnic minority status as indicators of at-risk learners (Johnson, 1998). Some additional indicators can be ascribed to at-risk learners' parents' experiences such as low achievement in school, unemployment, poverty, lack of involvement in the child's education, or failure to impart values, aspirations and motivation to persevere and be successful in school; and when parents fail to participate in their child's education, learners react with unethical and unruly behaviours like truancy, lack of social skills and lack of academic skills such as literacy and numeracy, and in turn lack vision for their future (Rumberger et al., 1990).

2.4.2 School and learning issues

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

In the quest to support at-risk learners in schools, it is important for school leaders, teachers and remedial support teams to identify learners with learning disabilities; this move is pivotal as it prevents learners from becoming at risk of academic underachievement. The research on using literacy and numeracy as a means of identifying at-risk learners supports the notion that it is important to identify and address such issues early in schooling (Sideridis, 2002).

2.4.2.1 Theorising behaviour

Much of the literature on at-risk learners is concerned with overt, aggressive behaviours amongst at-risk learners; there is much less concern about passive, withdrawn behaviours amongst at-risk learners, yet links between withdrawal and suicide are mentioned in literature (Patton, 2000). For the sake of this study, particularly when unfolding the challenges of educating at-risk learners, it is useful to explain the two categories of behaviours that are mostly played out by at-risk learners. The first represents misbehaviour as being the result of the impact of some temporary condition or context on the learners, and the second conceptualises misbehaviour as a more ongoing, repetitive issue related to characteristics of the learner (McInerney and McInerney, 2006). The temporary response, which is represented as the first category of misbehaviour, is seen as a way of relieving a short-term emotional state stimulated by some unsatisfactory aspect of the environment of at-risk learners (McInerney and McInerney, 2006). The result of their temporary response may include frustration, anxiety, boredom, fear or excitement. The second identifiable category of misbehaviour is persistent, repetitive, challenging behaviour. These behaviours can be displayed in varied forms including irritation, moving or talking without permission and rocking on chairs, etc. More severe forms of repetitive behaviours may involve passive resistance, arguing with the teacher or other learners; should the behaviour not be dealt with, it can escalate into consistent attempts to avoid schoolwork or school (Lavis and McCann, 2009:898). The second behaviour may also lead to building up resistance to teachers and the school interventions (Lavis and McCann, 2009:898).

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Social behaviour theorists such as Glasser (1992) and Pearl and Knight (1999) suggest that all behaviours reflect attempts by the individual to have his or her needs met. Hence, it is useful to examine what at-risk learners' unmet needs may be and make recommendations on how teachers and the school can address them. Relevant to this study, the most significant of these needs appears to be the need to feel a sense of belonging, competence and usefulness. One of these needs, as conveyed in literature, is discussed next.

2.4.2.2 Belonging and connection

Baumeister and Leary (1995) mentioned that the need to belong is associated with differences, not just in classroom behaviour, but also in cognitive processes, emotional patterns, health, and well-being. A positive sense of relatedness affects people's perceptions of others, leading them to view friends and group members more favourably than others, and to think about them more often and in more complex ways. It is regarded that human beings are fundamentally and pervasively motivated by a need to belong, that is, by a strong desire to form and maintain enduring interpersonal attachments (Baumeister and Leary, 1995:522).

The emotional responses of at-risk learners do not just depend upon their relationships with peers but also with their teachers and their behaviour does not just transcend into intended payback but is in response to rejection, and the more persistent the feelings of rejection, the more persistent the behaviour (Lewis and McCann, 2009:898). Evidence suggests that whenever at-risk learners have feelings of belonging and acceptance, it leads to a variety of positive emotions such as feeling happy, elated, content and calm, whereas being rejected, excluded or ignored leads to potent negative feelings such as experiencing anxiety, depression, grief and jealousy (Baumeister and Leary, 1995:508).

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Learners develop a sense of self-worth before beginning school, based on their perceptions of interactions with parents and siblings within the family (Dreikurs, 1968). At-risk learners have in most cases indicated that they are not valued within their family and, as such, develop a strong need to be recognised within groups, even if this need is met through socially inappropriate behaviours. With this said, many at-risk learners' teachers assume that the need and feeling of belonging among at-risk learners are met automatically, but this notion is unsubstantiated in the real context.

2.5 AT-RISK YOUTH EDUCATION IN THE WESTERN CAPE

High-school dropout is a phenomenon that occurs in several countries within formal educational systems (Donald et al., 2010:176; Masitsa, 2006:166; Suh and Suh, 2006: 1120; Progress Report, 2007; Townsend et al., 2008:21-32). The interrelated inter-functioning of ecological systems and educational engagement, and other societal factors have a direct influence on the academic achievements of learners and their decisions to remain in school, yet in South Africa the dropout rate remains high with several of these and other factors not contributing to retain learners in the education system (RSA, 2011; Townsend et al., 2008:22).

The community survey conducted by the by University of Cape Town's (UCT) Poverty and Inequality Initiative in 2016, in partnership with OpenUp Statistics South Africa and the Economies of Regions Learning Network (ERLN) pointed out progress and regression around youth in the Western Cape (OpenUp; StatsSA; ERLN, 2016). The same survey provided data on youth education in Cape Town, Western Cape and South Africa at large. The data-driven survey depicts various youth age groups' educational attendance. It was deduced in the survey that at-risk youth's educational attendance diminishes as learners grow maturely in age. The mainstream schooling system tends to purge age-inappropriate learners from the age of 17 years onwards out of the schooling system, and this approach places most youth at risk of not completing their secondary schooling.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Figure 3.2 shows the trends in educational attendance as learners mature in the South African schooling system.

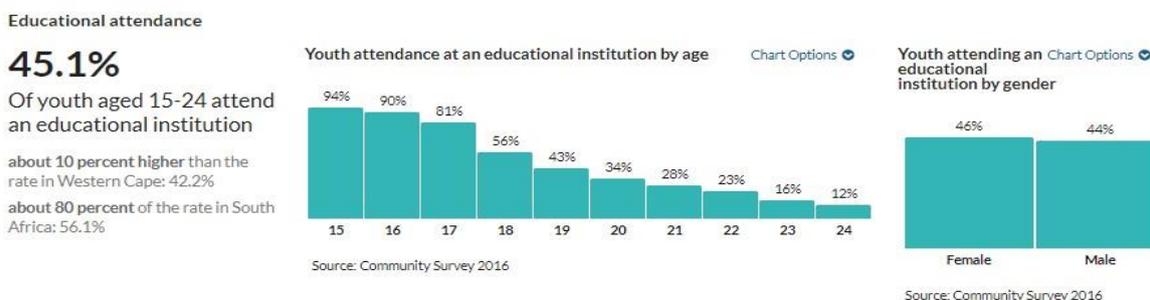


Figure 2.3: Educational attendance-Youthexplorer.org.za

As is clear from Figure 2.3, the South African education system and reforms pertaining to Section 29 of the Constitution, which provides that everyone has the right to basic and further education, failed to cater for youth from the age of 17, which is the age where constructive interventions are needed in order to avoid at-risk learners of not completing their education. Figure 2.3 points out severe vulnerability amongst female learners, which showed a higher prevalence than amongst male learners. This could be a result of many reciprocal experiences amongst this gender like their social interactions with their male counterparts. These reciprocal experiences could materialise in the form of teenage pregnancy, isolation and lack of family support which further places this gender group at risk.

Many young people experience multiple forms of deprivation simultaneously, including low levels of education, poor health and limited access to housing, basic services and economic opportunities. These vulnerabilities are often inter-related: for example, low income and poverty can compromise children’s health, which, in turn, impacts on education and employment prospects. Effective implementation of youth development policies requires a comprehensive understanding of young people’s realities; their needs and dreams; their real or perceived support networks, or gaps in these; their level of

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

access to services and their willingness to take these up; and their sense of happiness (De Lannoy, Fortuin, MpofuMketwa, Mudiriza, Ngcowa, Storme and Smith, 2018). It is, however, important to avoid applying a 'blanket approach' to youth, as such an approach would mask the racial, gender and income inequalities that influence young people's lives and life chances. Another form of deprivation towards youth in the Western Cape is the public policy decision regarding educational outcomes of at-risk youth; as well known in the mainstream schools, there is no obligation to enrol a learner above 18 years of age (De Lannoy et al., 2018). This policy is detrimental to the group of learners who are above 18 years, as they eventually drop out of schooling as is depicted in Figure 2.4.

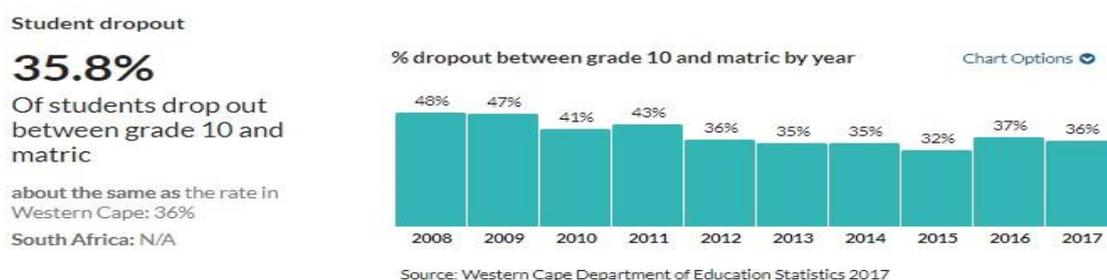


Figure 2.4: Learner dropout- Youthexplorer.org.za

As is clear from Figure 2.4, many young people struggle to finish secondary schooling, and only 48% of youth aged 20 – 24 have completed Matric or Matric equivalent. There are extreme disparities at ward level in outcomes between learners attending school in affluent areas versus those attending schools in townships or informal settlements. For instance, only 7% of learners in the New Crossroads Township in Western Cape passed the mathematics test in 2015, compared to 68.2% of learners attending school in the much wealthier suburb of Newlands in the same province (De Lannoy et al., 2018).

Nationally, access to education has improved significantly since 1994, but this has not resulted in increased employment. The poor quality of education in most public schools acts as a poverty trap. Poorer children in those schools very quickly fall behind, and such learning backlogs and grade repetition remain key drivers of school dropout at a later age (De Lannoy et al., 2018). The community survey of 2016 about student dropout (Western Cape Department of Education Statistics, 2017) indicated the alarming rate of dropout

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

amongst youth between Grade 10 and Matric, emphasising the question about what happens to these learners between Grade 10 and Matric. Dropping out of school is rife among learners on the way to completing their secondary school education and, according to various studies, it is rife specifically among adolescents from deprived socio-economic environments such as the Cape Flats region of Cape Town (Western Cape Department of Education Statistics, 2017; ERLN, 2016).

Reasons for particular concern with at-risk learners not only relates to the extent of their need for education and social stability but also to the observation that their issues often manifest as challenging behaviours at school, including withdrawal, truancy, disengagement, resistance and disconnection (Lewis and McCann, 2009:895). As seen in most secondary schools across the country, teachers do not in most cases know how to respond to such behaviours. Dealing and educating at-risk learners requires thorough knowledge of management strategies, tailor-made discipline procedures and individually developed philosophy, hence the essence of conducting this study. Individual teachers have their own ways of educating and instilling discipline in their learners, specifically learners deemed to be at risk; however, there is a dire need for research related to educating at-risk learners on the verge of dropping out of their secondary education. It is important to understand the numerous challenges of educating at-risk learners as faced by teachers and make recommendations on effective management strategies and solutions to address the issues of teaching learners at risk in order to counter their tendency to drop-out before having completed their school education satisfactorily.

2.6 TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS

Many groups in the South African society who were in a marginalised position before the implementation of apartheid remain in that position and, despite the various political reforms that have been enacted towards redress and social justice, many South African citizens in several communities still experience considerable challenges after 25 years of democracy, placing many school learners at risk of not completing their education (Inglis

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

and Lewis, 2013:46). Normand (2017:14-15) ascertains that challenges pertaining to parental support and community involvement could have dire consequences on the physical, social and emotional development of the youth, and thus result in family breakdown and lack of parental support for them.

School learners living in high-risk communities across the Cape are then exposed to numerous psychological stressors, daily such as dysfunctional families, poorly resourced schools, and substance abuse as well as negative peer interactions. These psychological stressors can place learners at risk of future disengagement in their education, and for this reason effective interventions are needed in order to avoid possible negative outcomes (Inglis and Lewis, 2013:46). Learners are influenced differently by the ecological systems interactively interrelating in their lives representing their immediate families and the manner in which they are brought up, the moral and cultural values that impact on them and the schools they attend (Jozefowicz-Simbeni, 2008:51-53). From these ecological systems, they derive meanings and cultivate an understanding of what transpires around them. As such, the accumulation of physical, cognitive, social and contextual changes associated with adolescents cause some academic, behavioural, attitudinal and mental health challenges, which compromise school performance and place learners at risk of losing interest in their learning and possibly dropping out (Jozefowicz-Simbeni, 2008:51-53).

In the context of at-risk education and challenges faced by at-risk learners due to their home and external environmental conditions, and more so that this is an aspect needing continuous research in South Africa, it is the aim of this study to expand on the research around the challenges faced by teachers teaching at-risk learners, and to recommend guidelines to these teachers on how to guide potential at-risk learners to persevere with their schooling in order to complete their Matric qualification as a crucial first step to possible social mobility. Hence, it is useful at this point to discuss the at-risk categories, so as to clearly identify the at-risk learners under study in this research.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

2.6.1 The categories of at-risk learners in South Africa

To understand the decline in academic performances of many learners in the South African education system, it is important to note the changes that have taken place in the education system. In the post-apartheid era, the Department of Education (DoE) introduced three national curriculum reform initiatives, which focused on schools (Jasen, 1998). The first attempt was to eradicate from the apartheid curriculum (school syllabuses) all racially offensive and out-dated content such as the content relating to racial division and oppression, segregation and inequality. The aim of this reform was to stop Bantu Education's ulterior motive of enforcing racially separated educational facilities. Secondly, the DoE phased in continuous assessment into schools relating to School Based Assessments, and how it is implemented in schools. With the introduction of this curriculum, learners were given numerous opportunities to complete their year-long assessments on a continual basis as opposed to the era where once a learner is given a chance for assessment and had missed it, no other opportunity is availed. During the apartheid regime, curriculum planning did not accommodate learners from challenging and disadvantaged backgrounds (Lucen et al., 1998).

The most ambitious curriculum policy since the inception of a democratic system of government has been Outcome Based Education (OBE), the focus of which has to improve the quality of education. The outcomes-based education, grounded by the OBE paradigm (the underlying philosophy behind South Africa's 'Curriculum' 2005), which focuses on the outcomes of the educational process, was introduced in South Africa after 1994 as one of the measures to improve the quality of education in post-apartheid South Africa, and to address the demands for an increasingly skilled working force. The OBE system (model) was introduced in South Africa on the assumption that it would lead to an increase in the quality of education that South African learners attain in schools (Botha, 2002). OBE, which was supposed to have fostered democracy, failed when it was taken over and administered by government departments. Government departments do not operate on the principles of democracy; they are authoritarian, bureaucratic and very

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

controlling; teachers did not know exactly what was required of them and did not know what to do; and learners took it all as fun and stopped learning (Jansen, 1998).

The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) was later introduced with the aim of translating the OBE curriculum into easier workable chunks for teachers to work with in their classroom (Jansen, 1998). The NCS curriculum was later reviewed and replaced with the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), with the aim to promote conceptual coherence, and to have a clear structured curriculum designed in a clear language to promote the values of the society whilst striving towards social justice, equity and development (Chisholm et al., 2000). The development of a national curriculum is a major challenge for any nation and, at its broadest level, the education system and its curriculum express the ideas of society and its vision as to how the futuristic form of the society should manifest (Chisholm et al., 2000). The RNCS was a curriculum written by South Africans for South Africans who hold dear the principles and practices of democracy. The curriculum was designed to encapsulate the vision of the teachers and learners who are knowledgeable and multi-faceted, sensitive to environmental issues and able to respond to and act decisively upon many challenges still to confront South Africa in the post-apartheid era (Jansen, 1998).

Following years of political influence on the education system of South Africa, the key stakeholders in the education system such as the DoE, Minister of Education and the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) reviewed some areas of the RNCS, its nature and manifestation, with this review leading to the birth of a new curriculum in 2014 named Curriculum & Assessments Policy Statement (CAPS). This new curriculum was believed to be comprehensive and to contain a well-structured policy statement on curriculum and assessment (Jansen, 1998).

The continuous and inconsistent curriculum reforms and changes in the education system have had a lasting impact on the learners and their teachers; these resultant effects have placed increased demands on learners with some unintended effects relating to unruly

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

behaviour, negative peer influence and unexpected dropout rates. A study done by the City of Cape Town in 2016 on youth education in the Western Cape revealed that 83% of youth aged 16 to 17 have completed Grade 9 or higher; 59% of youth aged 20 to 24 have completed Matric, Matric equivalent or higher (Youth Explorer, 2016). The research further revealed that 45% of youth aged 15 to 24 attend an education institution, with 82% of learners writing Matric passing. In addition, 53% of Grade 8 learners go on to pass Matric and 36% of learners drop out between Grade 10 and Matric (Youth Explorer, 2016). However, many more previously disadvantaged learners with widely diverse backgrounds are being educated than ever before in South African history. Schools are tasked to serve vastly larger numbers of learners and to serve learners from very different social, cultural and language backgrounds (Maree, 2012). The number of learners dropping out of high school has increased and there are strenuous efforts to reduce this number to a minimum. Hence, the various categories of at-risk learners in the South African context are discussed next.

2.6.1.1 Drop out

A dropout is a learner who leaves school before Matric and before completing a programme of study (McWhirter et al., 2017:129). Research has revealed that there is still an enormous gap about the provision of equal education to the diversified racial groups in South Africa after 25 years of democracy in the post-apartheid era. During the apartheid era, the black learners were the most neglected racial group; they were directed to attend township schools where the quality of education remained poor (Maree, 2012). These learners account for 80% of the total South African enrolment in elementary and secondary education and are thus pivotal to the national educational progress (Grobler et al., 2014). Since compulsory schooling in South Africa ends in Grade 9, South Africa continues to encounter high dropout rates, especially at secondary and tertiary educational levels (Grobler et al., 2014). Approximately 60% of the learners who enter the schooling system complete Matric, and 40% of the learners drop out of the system after repeated failure (Department of Basic Education, 2017a).

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

2.6.1.2 Immigrant learners

Although all countries have experienced immigration, South Africa, being the most economically viable country on the African continent, experienced an exponential immigration rate. The public schooling system reflects these demographics, with children of immigrants accounting for a substantial percentage of all South African school learners (Peyper, 2017). In addition, provincial migration is also on the rise. A rise in the number of migrants has been recorded from less economically active provinces to more economically active ones, for example, it is anticipated that the Western Cape will experience an inflow of 485 000 people over the next five years from 2019 to 2023 (Chambers, 2019).

These movements will place enormous strain on resources in the economically active provinces such as the Western Cape and Gauteng with education at the centre of this insurgence (Peyper, 2017). With this influx, especially into schools in the Western Cape and Gauteng, an additional fifteen new schools and 480 more teachers per year are needed to accommodate these learners efficiently into the education system (Chambers, 2019). Hence, immigration in itself can place immigrant learners at risk of dropping out of the education system and can place enormous constraints on the existing teaching and learning resources, which are not sufficient for optimal teaching and learning for the learners already enrolled.

2.6.1.3 Exceptional learners

In addition to learners of colour, immigrants and learners for whom English as the language of instruction is their second language, drop out statistics include many learners with disabilities (McWhirter et al., 2017:132). Research revealed that the dropout rate for learners with emotional/behavioural disabilities is consistently higher than that of general learners. Effort is placed into ensuring that learners with any form of learning disabilities are kept in the schooling system through policies of inclusivity and accommodation.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

However, it is evident that these learners are socially alienated by peers and teachers and are found to drop out of school more frequently than learners without disabilities who eventually complete school; youth with disabilities face complex challenges to complete their high school education (McWhirter et al., 2017:132). Black male learners are disproportionately identified as having learning disabilities and emotional/behavioural disorders, both of which contribute to their marginalisation in the schooling system in South Africa and, ultimately, places this population at risk of dropout (Dancy, 2014).

Lynch (2017) articulates that when researchers sound warnings about reaching learners who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, they tend to use the “one-hat-fits-all” approach. Minority learners, immigrant learners and learners from low socio-economic backgrounds are simply grouped under one umbrella. While it is true that all these groups of learners present more noticeable challenges than their white English-speaking counterparts, it is evident that South African education system is not yet doing enough to address the specific needs within these at-risk groups (Lynch, 2017)

Black male learners are a learner demographic that has been, and continues to be, misunderstood (Dancy, 2014). Misbehaviour, learning-styles and social skills are often misconstrued as (problems by teachers) when, in fact, black male learners are simply not receiving the most effective forms of discipline, lessons and peer-interaction opportunities (Lynch, 2017). As such, these groups of at-risk learners are slipping through the cracks, and not learning to their best potential. This lack of support forms part of the focus of this study to shed more light on effective ways of educating at-risk learners.

2.6.1.4 Adjudicated and incarcerated youth

Adjudicated young people are less likely to complete their high school; more than 75% of juvenile offenders of high school age fail to return to school following their release from custody. These adolescents are often alienated from school due to low academic performance, chronic truancy, and a need for special education interventions (McWhirter

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

et al., 2017:134). In the South African context, most of these youth released from custody and of school going age face stigmatisation, and mostly return to the life of crime as opposed to completing their high school education.

2.6.2 Successful schooling despite inhibiting home and external environmental conditions

Poverty is considered a risk factor that jeopardises children's academic performance (Wills and Hofmeyr, 2018:1). However, even in high-poverty contexts there are learners who manage to achieve consistently good academic results. Some of the success stories of at-risk learners who have persevered and completed their schooling despite their unfavourable life circumstances are narrated next.

2.6.2.1 Success stories of at-risk learners

“Anita, 24, is a single African American mother with three children aged 16 months, 4 and 5. She dropped out of school at the age of 15 and is unemployed. Her 4-year-old son, Thomas, has a speech impediment. She is ashamed of being on welfare. A programme called New Start in Kansas City (United States) has enabled Anita to study for a high school diploma equivalent while Thomas is cared for in a childcare centre on the same site. Through New Start, Thomas benefits from dental and medical services, and is receiving specialist help for his speech. With the support of New Start, Anita feels optimistic about her future and is beginning to regain her self-esteem. Thomas is very happy at the child centre. He thoroughly enjoys visits to museums, theatres and zoos, which, in other circumstances, he might never have experienced” (OECD, 1998).

Chen and Kaufman (1997) expanded on research first conducted by Kaufman and Bradby

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

(1992), who used the 1988 National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS:88) to profile 8th Graders at risk of dropping out of school between 8th and 10th Grade. Chen and Kaufman's study (1997) extended the time frame through the second follow-up (1992) when most of the cohort graduated from high school to compare at-risk learners who dropped out of high school with their resilient counterparts (at-risk learners who graduated). To understand why resilient learners remained in school despite the odds against their doing so, factors such as family stability, parental involvement in school activities, learners' attitudes about learning, and peer associations were examined and compared to the experiences of learners who dropped out. The results revealed that resilient learners had more positive attitudes about school, had more cohesive families, had parents who were more supportive of their schooling, and had peers more engaged in school than dropouts. The study concluded that these positive experiences play a protective role in reducing the impact of risk on resilient learners (Horn and Chen, 2000:1).

“Ameena, 16, is a young South African schoolgirl who fell pregnant due to pressure from her peers to have unprotected sex at a young age. Ameena fell in love with a peer classmate who is immature and not ready to father a child. Ameena's parents were not happy with her when they found out about her teen pregnancy; she had to stay home afterwards to assist her mother who is the only working adult; she sells cupcakes at their community taxi rank for the entire family to survive. After giving birth, she was determined to return to school after learning the hard way from her mistakes. She was fortunate and was accepted into a second chance special school to complete schooling. Ameena persevered to complete her secondary school education despite the challenges faced as a teenage mother and having to keep up with the pace of learning as well as mothering her child. She later finished her secondary education at the age of 19 years and went on to complete her tertiary education at a local university majoring in education. She graduated thereafter and has since been gainfully employed by the

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Provincial Department of Education as a primary school trained teacher” (Thembalitsha Foundation, 2012).

Reflecting on the success stories, it is obvious that some at-risk learners excel academically despite their challenging family circumstances. At-risk learners in these circumstances come to education as a last resort in order to accomplish a better future for themselves. Although these success stories did not happen easily, there were several factors that played a part such as teacher support, school support, peer support, and family and community involvement. Teachers in the education of at-risk learners play a considerable role in getting them from the point of giving up to a point where they could persevere and achieve (Dancy, 2014). Wali and Saad (2018:280) suggested a number of teaching practices that help at-risk learners succeed academically. These include 1) support from a caring and committed teacher; 2) involvement in learning; and 3) peer tutoring.

Research has indicated that effective schooling practices could possibly bring excellence in education; however, the question remains whether these techniques, processes and procedures which arguably work in mainstream schools will also yield the desired results with at-risk learners in schools. Seeing that there are little known facts when it comes to effective school practices and their application to at-risk learners' education, most schools simply toe the line and label at-risk learners as opposed to providing necessary support to accommodate the special needs of those likely to drop out. In addition, many researchers have sounded the warning that effective school practices themselves could constitute a threat to education for at-risk learners if not carefully applied (Wali and Saad, 2018:280).

2.7 TEACHER TRAINING TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGE OF LEARNERS AT RISK: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Various education systems across the globe are exploring numerous ways to combat the challenges faced by teachers educating at-risk learners with the aim of addressing the root cause of this endemic societal problem. Many learners across the global education landscape are no longer taking education seriously nor perceive education to break the cycle of poverty, which is rife in many communities across the world (Dancy, 2014). Hence, it is important to draw on global ideas and methods of ameliorating this dysfunctionality.

The following examples represent actions taken in the USA to address challenges relating to teaching at-risk learners after which Australian endeavours will follow.

Chicago has been placed in the forefront in United States in its use of ninth-grade indicators of dropout. Catalysed by the development of freshman on-track indicators and research around it, Chicago school administrators, central office personnel, and external partners have developed several mechanisms using ninth-grade indicators to stimulate school improvement (Allensworth, 2013:68). The state developed early warning indicators, which were used in improving learners' achievement: 1) focusing conversations and efforts on actionable problems; 2) identifying learners for interventions; and 3) using indicator patterns to address low performance in a strategic way. The high schools in Chicago suggest that knowledge of the on-track indicator and its use in district accountability were not enough for practice to change; however, the availability of the data tools which made it easy to act on information have changed the ways in which teachers and school staff interact with each other, learners and parents regarding improving learners' performance (Allensworth, 2013:68-83).

Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) in the State of Wisconsin developed an early warning indicator for high school and beyond to build predictive models for identifying learners at elevated risk of an entire series of adverse outcomes in high school and beyond, beginning with Grade 9 retention and continuing into post-secondary education (Carl, Richardson, Cheng, Kin and Meyer, 2013). This early warning system in MPS makes at least two significant contributions: 1) broadening the set of outcomes that early warning work can

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

predict; and 2) investigating new ways of conveying early warning information to practitioners, such as probability estimates for each outcome and the total quality credits (TQC) measure (Carl et al., 2013).

In another instance in the American education system, states such as Texas and Mississippi used a district level strategy through the creation of Teacher Preparation Programmes (TPS) to recruit and keep teachers in at-risk and hard-to-staff schools. The districts achieved this aim by collaborating with local colleges and universities to create alternate route programmes specifically to address the needs of at-risk and hard-to-staff schools (Rowland and Allen, 2007:73). Examples of TPS include the New York City Teaching Fellows, The Boston Teacher Residency and Houston's Alternative Certification programmes. Many of these programmes focus on "home-grown" teacher candidate who are more likely to remain in local classrooms (Rowland and Allen, 2007:73).

Since schools are focused on increasing the number of learners completing secondary education, at-risk learners are often faced with a variety of social and personal issues that affect their engagement and quality of learning. Hence, a more practical individual level approach seeks to address these problems (Lamb and Rice, 2018:18). The provision of strategic, targeted welfare and skill programmes can have a more positive impact on the learning capacity of at-risk learners for retained schooling. The following strategies and methods have proven to address the challenges of teaching at-risk learners in the Australian Education landscape:

- **Student Case Management (SCM):** SCM is one of the most effective strategies for directly assessing individual learner needs, targeting appropriate assistance and monitoring progress (Gandara, Larson, Mehan and Rumberger, 1998; Strategic Partners, 2001). Case management can be organised in different ways. In Victorian schools, careers teachers often work as case managers through their roles in the SCM programme. The Victorian school system has a great reputation, with high quality teachers, a diverse curriculum, and learners

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

from many different backgrounds and learning spaces that bring out the best in everyone. The most successful schools implemented the programme from Year 7 in order to identify and assess individual learners' needs as early as possible, particularly for learners at risk, and providing intensive and ongoing interventions through case management. Welfare staff played this role in some schools (Lamb and Rice, 2008:18). Evaluations of various programmes that use case management as a key feature often report positive gains (Gandara et al., 1998; Strategic Partners, 2001). The evaluation report revealed that the SCM was the major factor in the most effective projects developed to help retain learners in education and training and promote successful transitions to further study and work (Lamb and Rice, 2008:18).

- **Mentoring:** Mentoring provides one-to-one support for learners that can encompass guidance on study and schoolwork, assistance with homework, career and financial planning, or social and emotional support. It is one of the most commonly used strategies in effective programmes found to keep learners in school and engaged. Mentoring was targeted at learners deemed at risk, particularly where there were social problems (Lamb and Rice, 2008:18).
- **Attendance Policies and Programmes:** These policies and programmes are an important feature in several of the Australian schools, which had achieved high retention rates despite having large numbers of at-risk learners. Several studies recommend intensive attendance monitoring as a way of increasing achievement and engagement (Rumberger, 2004; Rumberger and Thomas, 2000).
- **Targeted Assistance for Skill Development:** This assistance among low achievers can help improve the academic skills and achievement of at-risk learners. Low achievement is strongly associated with early school leaving (Rumberger, 2004). Targeted assistance, whether individual or group, preferably in the early years of secondary school, is one means of addressing this. Academic programmes that counter low achievement, such as literacy and

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

numeracy courses, homework centres, and remediation programmes in key subject areas can be successful (Rumberger, 2004).

- **Tutoring and Peer Tutoring:** Tutoring whether by peers or other people is a mechanisms for providing targeted academic support for at-risk learners. One-on-One tutoring is a strategy for providing extra help to disadvantaged learners at all levels of school. With the recruitment of adult volunteers and various peer-tutoring strategies, schools can provide many under achieving learners with the type of one-on-one instruction to raise their skill levels and achievement (Lamb and Rice, 2008:20).
- **Pathways Planning:** Pathway planning for at-risk learners needs to begin early. Careers and pathways planning are important elements in helping keep learners engaged (Morris, 2000). Effective careers education with early pathways planning for at-risk learners can help learners plan and help identify areas that require assistance and focus. Successful careers counselling in assisting at-risk learners is linked to the experience, qualifications and training of careers officers (Morris, 2000).
- **Targeted Financial Support:** This support is important to learners where their own or their family's need for more income becomes a powerful incentive to leave school. Financial sponsorship can be an important means of allowing such learners to remain in school (Lamb and Rice, 2008).

Following an individual level approach, some schools in the Australian education system also employed a learner-centred strategy to address the challenges face by at-risk learners; a school-wide method based on a supportive school culture approach relates closely to educating at-risk learners. The quality of school culture plays a critical part in engaging and retaining learners. A study by Socias et al. (2007) for the California Dropout Research Project found that schools with significantly better-than-predicted school completion rates, while nominating various interventions as being vital to their success, also stressed the development of a supportive school culture that fostered connections

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

with learners, parents and the community, and the creation of a school climate of high expectations and accountability (Lamb and Rice, 2008:10).

Croninger and Lee (2001) report that the degree of teacher caring and interaction with learners (reported by both learners and teachers) has a significant impact on dropout rates, and that the impact is strongest for at-risk learners, while Kennelly and Monrad (2007:11) note that, schools successful in dealing with dropout address overall school climate in order to facilitate learner engagement. However, how schools create such supportive environments - a supportive school culture - remains a matter of debate. There are no universal rules or formulas that can be identified as the sole route to establishing a quality culture or atmosphere that produces strong positive learner engagement and high levels of school completion, particularly in schools that have high proportions of at-risk learners (Lamb and Rice, 2008:11). The factors that researchers and school systems point to when describing quality schools relate to the following features (Lamb and Rice, 2008:11; Sadegholvad, Yeatman, Omidvar, Parrish and Worsley, 2016):

- **Commitment to success for all:** building a shared view that all learners can succeed with on-going commitment to identifying the most effective teaching and learning strategies to raise the achievement of at-risk learners.
- **Flexibility and responsiveness to individual needs:** capacity to respond to varying needs, which in addition to welfare and academic might include social, personal and emotional needs.
- **High expectations:** research findings point to the key role played by aspirations and the need to create a climate of achievement through effective leadership and a high level of teacher commitment and expectations on learner learning.
- **Shared vision:** building a consensus around the aims and values of the school and developing a sense of community with a shared purpose.
- **Focus on continuous improvement:** continuing to reflect on and monitor the impact of changes and encourage innovation for improvement as well as refine and adjust approaches as learner and parent needs shift.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

- **Climate of challenging and stimulating teaching:** ensuring that programmes engage learners by being challenging, stimulating, involve opportunities for sharing learning tasks, are satisfying as learning experiences, and have clear and demonstrable benefits beyond school.
- **Strong and fair disciplinary climate:** research on school effectiveness and engagement points to the need for creating a safe school disciplinary climate with clear and fair rules.
- **Encouraging learner responsibility and autonomy:** building an ethos of learners taking responsibility for their own learning and behaviour so that learners accept the idea that their own efforts are important for progress.

2.8 TEACHER TRAINING IN SOUTH AFRICA TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGE OF AT-RISK LEARNERS

In the quest to ensure a fair education system, it is imperative for policy makers to ensure that all teachers have a similar level of capacity (Smuts, 2018). Education being a constitutional right in many countries must be fair; learners in rural areas should equally have a good teacher standing in front of them every day, like their counterparts in more affluent urban areas. For a good educational system to prevail, initial teacher training must be highly standardised and fundamentally equal. It is only in this way that all learners receive a fundamentally equal chance of learning (Smuts, 2018).

Apart from good quality parenting and a good quality external environment in which the child grows up, good quality teaching is an important starting point in the overall quality of an education system. Alternatively, as it is often phrased, the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of the teachers in that system (Smuts, 2018). Functional education systems know that teaching is a complex profession that requires specific skills and a high degree of professionalism. Therefore, it is imperative to safeguard a good teacher-training programme that has strict selection criteria and provides rigorous training

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

that includes extended in-classroom practice that spans over years even after the teacher has qualified (Smuts, 2018).

The question remains as to how South Africa fares in ensuring an equitable system of education in comparison to its counterparts in the Southern African region. Despite high rates of public investment in education, education in South Africa, and in particular teacher education, faces a number of serious constraints. These constraints largely result from the legacy of inequality left by the apartheid era pertaining to racial discrimination and segregation, and more so the huge gap that remains steadfast between the rich and the poor in South Africa (Centre for Development and Enterprise, 2017:16).

The results of Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (2017) for a nationally represented sample of Grade 6 mathematics teachers indicated that 79% showed mathematics content knowledge levels below the Grade 6/7 band. This is of enormous concern, not only given the strong evidence that teacher subject expertise has a significant impact on learner outcomes, but also considering how it reflects poorly on the status of the teacher (CDE, 2017:27).

In addition, the National Development Plan indicates that part of the reason for poor teaching quality is a weak accountability system; there is a resistance towards accountability in the South African schooling context and access to conducting inspections and observations in the classroom is uneven. A previous study carried out by researchers at Stellenbosch University in a 2016 report concluded that:

The root causes of South Africa's low educational outcomes, while multifaceted, generally fall into one of two categories: 1) a lack of accountability, and 2) a lack of capacity (CDE, 2017:28).

Consequently, any proposed solution would need to address both of these elements to gain traction (CDE, 2017:28).

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Teaching is regarded as a prestigious and attractive profession that recruits the brightest and most motivated school graduates who do not require continual monitoring and oversight (Van Zyl, 2019). In the case of the South Africa education system, this is not the norm; the initial teacher training is highly variable but generally insufficient. For example, a study conducted by Taylor (2014) found that three out of five of the higher education institutions sampled provided no English language, literature, or linguistic education for teacher trainees not specialising in these subjects, despite poor English language proficiency among teacher trainees being an ubiquitous concern (Van Zyl, 2019).

Consequently, the research by Taylor (2014) revealed that students enter their teacher training with poor skills, and leave with little more and, as a result, their learners fare very poorly and teaching is perceived as a low status career. Hence, teacher education programmes in South Africa are therefore in general unable to reliably attract high quality graduates, and so tend to be less demanding. Therefore, a vicious cycle repeats itself (Van Zyl, 2019). While in-service training programmes attempt to make up the backlog, and some are succeeding in achieving small learning gains, they cannot truly compensate for the lack of teacher skills resulting from poor initial teacher training and generally unskilled matriculants (Van Zyl, 2019).

Pre-service teacher training in South Africa is the training provided to student teachers before they have undertaken any teaching. Common topics include classroom management, lesson plans, and professional development. A major focus during such training programmes is the practicum where the pre-service teacher is placed within a school setting either at primary or at secondary school level. The pre-service teacher will be given opportunities to develop skills through lesson planning, teaching lessons and classroom management. Lesson planning, teaching lessons and classroom management are not enough for developing a whole teacher. Pre-service teacher training should include exposure to the policy of education, education administration, the structure of teaching, and the diversity of teachers and learners. These will help to develop the teacher who will

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

be able to handle the diversity of situations that may arise in the working situation (Mashau, 2012:55). In order to capacitate prospective teachers in South Africa, pre-service training should not only focus on lesson plans, teaching lessons and classroom management; the pre-service training of teachers should encapsulate more rigorous methods, pedagogy and insight which benefit millennial learners (Mashau, 2012).

To ensure that pre-service student teachers are capacitated to educate at-risk learners, these student teachers must be trained concisely about the education system of South Africa, bearing in mind that the education system has since democracy produced a new calibre of learners called at-risk learners (Van Zyl, 2019). Most teaching training colleges and universities are still using outdated approaches in preparing student teachers such as focusing solely on lesson plans, teaching lessons and classroom management, with these student teachers placed in metropolitan schools for their practical training where a low percentage of learners are deemed to be at risk (Van Zyl, 2019). Hence, the prospective teachers lack pre-knowledge of at-risk learners and their presenting behavioural issues, and as such are ambushed by these problems upon returning to schools as qualified teachers.

To answer a probing question on how teacher training should be designed to capacitate prospective teachers to attend competently to learners at risk in ensuring retention in school, the education system needs an overhaul and refocus. Mashau (2012:55) suggests that pre-service teacher training in South African universities should be channelled to offer training, which will include a vital component representing the South African society, namely diversity, which pertains to culture, socio-economic status and gender approaches of the learners. These components play a pivotal role in the paradigm shift with regard to the noticeable gaps in teacher training currently experienced in the South African education system (Mashau, 2012).

There is no substantial evidence that initial teacher training or in-service teacher training prepares teachers to educate at-risk learners that evolves within the schooling system.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

This notion makes it worthwhile to undertake this study on at-risk learners and the challenges faced by their teachers. It is the aim and objective of this study to provide some solutions and make recommendations to address this gap in the South African education system.

2.9 SUMMARY

It is imperative for the successful engagement and teaching of at-risk learners to have competent and motivated teachers. Moreover, the fact that learners disengage from learning because of family and external environment constraints results in at-risk learners. The question remains, how prepared are teachers to engage constructively with at-risk learners, and what kind of initial or in-service teacher trainings are needed in the preparation of teachers for the education of at-risk learners to prevent school dropout and permanent disengagement? Hence, it is pivotal to bear in mind that the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of the teachers in that system; a further valid reason for policy makers to ensure the provision of and access to quality initial and in-service teacher training.

Therefore, it is useful for the sake of this study to clarify the challenges faced by teachers, in teaching at-risk learners and thereafter, suggest solutions and recommendations for the successful engagement of at-risk learners in teaching and learning endeavours.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

CHAPTER THREE RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As stated in paragraph 1.4, the main research question for the study pertains to the challenges of teaching at-risk secondary school learners.

The three research sub-questions that were formulated in paragraph 1.4, the answers to which contributed to answering of the main research question, are repeated as pertaining to the following:

- How does teacher training equip teachers to teach at-risk learners successfully?
- What are the challenges teachers teaching at-risk learners experience?
- What is the influence of successful teaching on the learning experiences and life propositions of at-risk learners?

For an understanding of the research problem, a literature study was conducted in Chapter 2 that provided information on the challenges and solutions to teaching secondary school learners at risk. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory served as the theoretical framework for the study (par 2.3). The challenges of teaching at-risk learners (par 2.4 & 2.6), at-risk youth education in the Western Cape (par 2.5) and teacher training in South Africa and beyond (par 2.7) were evoked and teacher training to address the challenges in South Africa (par 2.8) was discussed.

Chapter 3 focuses on the research methodology and research design for the empirical investigation. In this regard, the research aims and objectives, the research paradigm and approach, the selection of sites and participants, the collection and analysis of data, and the trustworthiness and ethical considerations about data collection and interpretation are discussed next.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

3.2 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary aim of the study was to understand how teachers can be equipped to provide at-risk learners with successful learning experiences. In order to understand these, the researcher first had to focus on the training of teachers in South Africa and, after evaluation, the researcher further ascertained if these trainings achieved the standard laid out to successfully educate at-risk learners in classrooms across the country. Secondly, the researcher focused on the challenges faced by teachers teaching at-risk learners to gauge their lived experiences whether negative or positive, and to provide guidelines to improve teaching and learning experiences within these classrooms. Finally, the researcher evaluated what influence the successful teaching and learning of at-risk learners had on their life propositions.

In the pursuit of providing at-risk learners with successful learning experiences, and in accordance with the research questions, the following research aim was derived (par 1.5):

- To identify what the challenges are when teaching at-risk secondary school learners using semi-structured interviews, in a school in Cape Town.

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM AND RESEARCH APPROACH

The selected research design is qualitative departing from a constructivist research paradigm. The study is regarded as a phenomenological study (par 1.6.2) whereby semi structured individual interviews and observation are the techniques used to collect data.

3.3.1 Qualitative research approach

Qualitative research seeks to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. This process of research involves emerging

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particular to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2014:309).

Qualitative research provided the platform to unpack the complexity of the situation, based on a constructivist research paradigm and using a constructive style (Creswell, 2014:309) in order to understand the challenges faced by teachers teaching at-risk learners, and what the training of South African teachers entails to engage at-risk learners in successful learning experiences. In this regard, qualitative research conducted in educational management provided insight into the education of at-risk learners in South Africa. This was investigated as pertaining to the challenges and solutions in teaching at-risk learners and the influence of one role player on another, namely teachers of at-risk learners and at-risk learners themselves.

Qualitative research in education seeks not only to answer questions such as 'does it work?', but also to find ways to understand the how, why and related to whom of this working (functioning). These questions cannot be answered through quantitative research as there are perceptions and experiences of people involved resulting in a transcending of mere confirmation of facts to a better understanding of the studied phenomenon (Tai and Ajjawi, 2016:175). Qualitative research allows the researcher to take into account the values and character of the participants and participants' understanding of their own circumstances (Davids, Theron & Maphunye, 2009), which with this study pertained to teachers of at-risk learners and the education of at-risk learners in South Africa. Qualitative research allowed for the development of practical approaches to ensure successful teaching and learning owing to an in-depth understanding of the themes relevant to lack of engagement of at-risk learners in successful learning experiences.

Mentens (2010) states that qualitative research explores a basic belief, and it enshrines the quality of constructing meaning based on a balanced representation of views arranged through raising participant awareness and creating a community of rapport on the topic of

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

study. Owing to this statement, qualitative research was selected as the research design for the empirical investigation on challenges and solutions in teaching secondary school learners at-risk.

3.3.2 Constructivist research paradigm

The constructivist research paradigm finds its ideas from works such as Berger and Luekmann's (1967) *The Social Construction of Reality* and Lincoln and Guba's (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry*. More recent writers who have summarised this position are Denzin and Lincoln (2011) and Mertens (2010). The constructivist paradigm based on reality being constructed in a social environment with cognisance of multiple realities experienced by different people in different social environments and with truth being dependent upon the context in which research takes place (Mertens, 2010), suited this study about a single case of a school serving vulnerable at-risk learners and a small sample size of interviewees who contributed to information-rich data.

Through the constructivist research paradigm, the researcher was able to seek understanding of the world in which they (at-risk learners and their teachers) live and work (Creswell, 2014). Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences and meanings directed toward certain objects and issues. These meanings are varied and multiple. They allowed the researcher to look for the complexity of views related to the themes underlying the engagement of at-risk learners in successful learning rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas. Based on constructivist research approaches, the researcher relied on the participants' views of the situation under study.

Validity as a requirement for a constructivist research approach raises two concerns, namely that the researcher:

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

- may not use appropriate steps to develop a good psychometric instrument. Developing a good instrument is not easy, and adequate steps need to be put in place;
- may develop an instrument or measures that do not take advantage of the richness of the qualitative findings into account. This occurs when the qualitative data lacks rigor or occurs simply at the theme level without further data analysis, steps associated with using one of the qualitative design types, such as ethnography, grounded theory, or case study procedures (Creswell, 2014:409).

In the case of this study on the teaching of at-risk learners, the researcher ensures the development of thorough interviewing and observation measures relating to the duration of the semi-structured individual interview, which lasted at least one hour to allow for an in-depth engagement with the participants. The researcher further enriched the data collection by conducting meticulous observation of actions in the participants' natural environment, i.e. the classrooms. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that the instruments (interview schedule and observation checklist) took full advantage of the richness of information and contributions from participants, culminating in qualitative findings.

3.3.3 Phenomenological study

Phenomenological study relates to philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants. This description culminates in the essence of the experiences for several individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon. This design has strong philosophical underpinnings and typically involves conducting interviews (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994).

Using phenomenology, the researcher was able to understand the term 'at-risk' and the challenges that accompany this phenomenon, and how different role players in their own

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

way influence the engagement and the successful learning experiences of at-risk learners. Through phenomenology, the researcher developed a real life understanding of the studied phenomenon by relying on the first person account (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg & McKibbon, 2015:1773), as this first person account pertained to the challenges that at-risk learners' teachers are facing in the delivery of successful learning experiences.

There are several different data collection methods available to ensure first person accounts, such as individual interviews (structured or semi-structured), focus group interviews, and observation (Tai & Ajjawi, 2016:177). Individual interviews and observation were used to collect data for this study on at-risk secondary school learners. The motivation for the use of these methods is discussed in paragraph 3.5.

Semi-structured individual interviews were ideal for collecting data on the different individual experiences and perspectives of the at-risk learners' teachers. The nature of individual interviews allows sensitive topics to be investigated and discussed in depth (Tai & Ajjawi, 2016:177), which, with this study, provided for rich data and contributed to the understanding of the experiences of participants on the successful teaching of at-risk learners. Direct observation of participants is one of the effective ways to collect rich data that can augment, and ground existing data derived from semi-structured interviews. Direct observation was used as a data collecting tool in this study to understand the complex interactions of participants in their natural setting, which in the case of this study was their classrooms. The use of direct observation as a data collection tool assisted in determining whether what was said in the semi-structured interviews matched the lived experiences of the participants in their natural settings (classrooms). Teachers were observed in their classrooms by means of a systematic checklist approach, which entailed data collection with a checklist and observation schedule. The findings revealed the challenges faced and suitable measures or solutions from the perspective of the teachers.

In line with Dyer (1995:181-184) on the key principles of structured observation, the research site provided the opportunity for applicable behaviour to occur, procedures to be

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

clear and unambiguous and a manageable number of variables to be present. Hence, in this study, the observation technique contributed to an in-depth understanding of challenges faced by teachers teaching at-risk learners and provided solutions to ensure successful learning experiences at the school.

3.4 SELECTION OF SITE AND PARTICIPANTS

Apart from the school being selected with reference to the uniqueness of their services to at-risk learners, it was also selected as the research site because it was accessible to the researcher. Teachers teaching at-risk learners acted as primary participants in this study and were, therefore, considered information-rich participants.

3.4.1 Site selection and sampling

As mentioned in paragraph 1.6.3, the research population consisted of a school serving vulnerable at-risk learners in the metro-central district of Cape Town. This school was selected as research sample. The school information was derived from the list of special needs schools published by the Western Cape Department of Education. The selected school engages learners at risk through second chance education. Second chance education is a strategic objective of the school to provide specialised education to at-risk, vulnerable and age-inappropriate learners through inspiration, best-practice curriculum delivery and a holistic approach to intervention in education.

Sampling refers to the subsets of people usually used to conduct studies. These samples in research are used to represent the population from which they were drawn (Martínez-Mesa, González-Chica, Duquia, Bonamigo & Bastos, 2016). In the context of this study, the research site is a second chance-at-education school in the Metro Central district of Cape Town in the Western Cape. Selection of the site was based on the premise of being the only school in the Western Cape that admits learners up to the age of 21 years. From

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

this research site, information-rich participants were selected by means of purposive sampling.

Patton (2015:264) provides the following description of purposeful sampling: The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry; studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding.

The purposive sampling method is used in qualitative research because the researcher believes they reflect the views of others in that social setting; the participants are selected for their unique ability to explain, understand and provide information-rich data about the research focus (Kervin, Vialle, Herrington & Okely, 2006:93).

The participants for this study were the teachers of at-risk learners at the selected school; these teachers were interviewed to explain their experiences of teaching at-risk learners and approaches that have worked in engaging these learners in successful learning.

In line with purposive sampling, this study employed criterion sampling in that participants met predefined criteria. The most prominent criterion was the participant's experience with the phenomenon under study. Researchers normally look for participants who have shared an experience but vary in characteristics and in their individual experiences (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

3.4.2 Sample size

Researchers consider the scope of the study, the nature of the research questions, the research design and methodology, and the sufficiency in answering the research questions to determine the size of the research sample (Tajj & Ajjawi, 2016:178). With reference to selecting participants who share experiences, but who vary in characteristics and in their perceptions of their individual experiences (Moser and Korstjens, 2018), the

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

researcher selected ten qualified and two qualifying teachers and four additional qualified teachers who had resigned in the last three years, namely in the period 2015 to 2017, to act as participants for this study. Only teachers with a minimum of two years' working experience with learners at risk acted as participants for this study. A minimum of two years' teaching experience of at-risk learners was deemed adequate for experiencing the challenges of teaching at-risk learners convincingly.

The usually small sample size in qualitative research depends on the information richness of the data, the variety of participants (or other units), the broadness of the research question and the phenomenon of study, the data collection method (e.g., individual or group interviews) and the type of sampling strategy (Moser and Korstjens, 2018). In line with the suggestions by Moser and Korstjens (2018) and Patton (2015), using small numbers of participants prevented the researcher from generalising, but allowed the researcher the opportunity to explore the yielded insights and provided in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of study, namely teaching at-risk learners. The sample size for this study was ideal and provided enough opportunity to collect information-rich data and to understand shared themes and topics. Teachers of at-risk learners at the research site represented a total of 16 participants sharing their perceptions and experiences relating to challenges and solutions to teaching at-risk learners (par 4.3).

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

As a case study, the study was conducted at a second chance secondary school for at-risk learners in the Metro Cape region of Cape Town, Western Cape. This special need school was selected based on its uniqueness as the only school that accepts learners up to the age of 21 years (par 3.4.2). Semi-structured individual interviews as one of the most dominant and widely used methods of data collection within the social sciences (Bradford and Cullen, 2012) were conducted with teachers. The aim of the individual interviews was to understand the lived experiences of teachers teaching at-risk learners, and how these teachers manage to constructively engage at-risk learners in successful learning. Note

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

taking during the interviews was kept to a minimum to avoid distracting the interviewees (Rosenthal, 2016:512).

Direct observations were conducted over two days in the participants' natural setting namely, their classrooms (par 3.4.2, par 4.2). The observations provided information on the complex interactions between the participants and their learners (at-risk learners). The two days observation also assisted in providing clarity whether what was said in the semi structured interview matched the experiences of the participants in their natural setting. Both data collection tools provided meanings to the underlying factors that create challenges in teaching at-risk learners and possible solutions to counter these challenges.

An interview guide was referred to during the individual interviews to ensure that all the relevant aspects pertaining to the topic of study were addressed. The interview guide comprised of essential themes regarding challenges of teaching at-risk learners and participant inputs on solutions to counter these challenges (Appendix F). Additional data were collected by observing participants in their natural setting by means of a systematic checklist approach. This entailed systemic data collection with a checklist and observation schedule. This checklist presented a list of behavioural themes and actions observed (Appendix G). About the observation of participants in their classrooms, the researcher maintained a passive, non-intrusive role by merely noting down the incidence of the factors under study. With reference to the context of the study, direct observation was used to capture what was going on, what people were doing, and non-verbal interactions given while carrying out their actions (Tai and Ajjawi, 2016:178).

Since qualitative research approaches are pragmatically focused on collectability and sufficiency, it is imperative to channel data collection techniques towards the collection of rich data, so that research questions can be answered sufficiently in order to fulfil the aim of the study (Tai & Ajjawi, 2016:178). Hence, individual interviews and direct observations were used for data collection in order to find answers to the postulated research questions for this study on challenges and solutions in teaching at-risk secondary school learners.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

3.5.1 Individual interviews

Individual interviews were used to collect data from the participants at the research site. Interviewing involves conducting intensive discussions by means of questions and prompts to explore participant perspectives on a particular idea, programme or situation (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Key informant interviews involve interviewing people who have particularly informed perspectives on an aspect of the phenomenon being evaluated (Pact Inc, 2014). In this study, teachers acted as key informants and were questioned on the challenges faced daily in educating at-risk learners. Their responses allowed the researcher to understand the contextual factors that guided the decisive actions relating to the education of at-risk learners.

The individual interview was designed to suit the interviewee and enable the researcher to deduce a full understanding of the teachers' experiences with regard to teaching and learning as the giver of knowledge at the school. As explained by Flick (2009), the semi structured nature of the interviews provided the researcher with valuable data and allowed the researcher to explore subjective viewpoints and to gather in-depth accounts of participants' experiences. Semi-structured interviews rely on a pre-conceived interview guide, which means that standard questions were asked in each separate interview, allowing comparison and maintaining data quality. However, semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to ask additional questions if an interesting or new line of enquiry develops in the interview; this flexibility of semi-structured interviews is important for investigations of complex issues, which analyse complex processes that cannot necessarily be foreseen (Rose, Brotherton, Owens, & Pryke, 2016; Young et al., 2014).

According to Fauvelle (2019), open-ended questioning allows participants to express themselves freely on a given subject. Because semi-structured interviewing relies on the posing of open-ended questions, the use of these questions with further prompting for deeper insight engenders improved understanding based on developing refined ideas

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

throughout the interview. As pointed out by Choak (2012), the use of open-ended questions enabled the researcher to address a defined topic whilst allowing participants to answer in their own terms and to discuss issues and topics pertinent to them. This approach ensured that complete and consistent information was received across different interviews, which, as pointed out by Choak (2012), kept each interview interactive and engaging and discussions relevant to the context and the topic of the study.

The following guidelines assisted the researcher in the compilation of the open-ended questions as themes included in the interview guide to be referred to with the individual interviews in order to ensure that the data collected were reliable and that valid and complete information was collected (Porst, 2011):

- The questions were neutral and open-ended. The open-ended questions allowed the participants to respond with more than one answer.
- The open-ended questions allowed the researcher to explore subjective viewpoints.
- The questions were singular and enabled the researcher to address a defined topic whilst allowing participants to answer on their own terms.
- The questions were unambiguous. Participants were allowed a flowing conversation with the open-ended questions allowing for spontaneous and independent thoughts.

Semi-structured individual interviewing is time-consuming, labour intensive, and requires sophisticated interviewing skills. Interviewers need to be smart, sensitive, poised, and nimble, as well as knowledgeable about the relevant substantive issues (Adams, 2015:492). Hence, the teachers were motivated to keep their answers clear and specific, and objective to ensure the anonymity of the learners. In order for the researcher to increase clarity on data collected, he probed participants to add more detail to answers or to clarify abstract statements whilst maintaining the anonymity of the at-risk learners. The

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

researcher stimulated the interview through follow up questions and probes. The responses of participants were audio recorded and transcribed.

To ensure that participants were prepared for the interviews, the interview questions were sent to all participants in advance. This approach provided the interviewees with opportunities to process and digest their answers and contributions to the study. Ethical considerations were applied as all interviewees were informed of the purpose of the study, the underlying and expected risks, and the fact that participation was voluntary. The researcher further ensured that the interviewees were aware of how confidentiality would be protected (par 3.8.2).

3.5.2 Direct observation

Two days were spent observing participants in their natural setting, which, in the case of this study, the participants were observed on their functioning in the classrooms. The participants were approached for classroom observation in order for the researcher to collect additional rich data to augment and ground existing data collected through the semi-structured interviewing.

Direct observation, also known as observational study, is a method of collecting evaluative information in which the evaluator watches the subject in his or her usual environment without altering that environment. As direct observation looks at natural occurrences and provides qualitative data (Holmes, 2013), the direct observation provided a platform for the participants to highlight their challenges and to demonstrate counter measures and solutions used in engaging at-risk learners.

Observation methods are useful to researchers in a variety of ways. They provide researchers with ways to check for nonverbal expression of feelings, determine who interacts with whom, grasp how participants communicate with each other, and check how much time is spent on various activities (Schmuck, 1997). Participant observation allows

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

researchers to check definitions of terms that participants use in interviews, observe events that informants may be unable or unwilling to share when doing so would be impolitic, impolite, or insensitive, and observe situations informants have described in interviews, thereby making them aware of distortions or inaccuracies in descriptions provided by those informants (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). For this reason, the researcher ensured that all teachers were willing participants and knew ahead of time who the other participants were.

Dewalt and Dewalt (2002:92) believe that the goal with participant observation as research method is to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomenon of study in order to ensure an objective and accurate perceiving of actions. They suggest that participant observation be used as a way to increase the validity of the study, as observations may help the researcher to have a better understanding of the context and phenomenon under study. In the context of this study, all teachers are challenged in the course of teaching at-risk learners, which makes these teachers suitable participants for the observation.

DeWalt and DeWalt (2002:68) list five reasons for including participant observation in phenomenological studies, all of which increase the study's validity. These reasons are:

- It makes it possible to collect different types of data. Being on site over a period of time familiarises the researcher with the community, thereby facilitating involvement in sensitive activities to which he/she generally would not be invited.
- It reduces the incidence of "reactivity" or people acting in a certain way when they are aware of being observed.
- It helps the researcher to develop questions that make sense in the native language or are culturally relevant.
- It gives the researcher a better understanding of what is happening in real-time and lends credence to one's interpretations of the observation. Participant observation also enables the researcher to collect qualitative data through interviews.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

- It is sometimes the only way to collect the right data for one's study.

Demunck and Sobo (1998:43), and Johnson, Douglas, Bigby and Iacono (2011:267) provide several advantages of using participant observation over other methods of data collection. These include that:

- It affords access to the "backstage scenario".
- It allows for richly detailed description, which they interpret to mean that one's goal of describing, "behaviors, intentions, situations, and events as understood by one's informants" is highlighted.
- It provides opportunities for viewing or participating in unscheduled events.

Demunck and Sobo (1998:43) and Johnson et al. (2011:267) also share several disadvantages of using observation as a method of data collection, including that:

- Sometimes the researcher may not be interested in what happens out of the public eye and that one must rely on the use of key informants.
- Problems related to representation of events and the subsequent interpretations may occur when researchers select key informants who are like them or when the informants are community leaders or marginal participants (Demunck & Sobo, 1998). To alleviate this potential bias problem, DeWalt and DeWalt (2002:68) suggest pretesting informants or selecting participants who are culturally competent in the topic being studied.

Although these advantages and disadvantages of observation pertain to ethnological studies and the collecting of data among indigenous people, they are relevant to the observation of classrooms where at-risk learners are taught because they allow the researcher to experience the back-stage scenario, which is evident in the case of at-risk learners. The researcher was privileged to observe and experience unscheduled events, which teachers teaching at-risk learners experience daily.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

The positive characteristics of individual interviewing supplemented by classroom observation confirmed these data collection methods' relevancy to this study on challenges and solutions to teaching at-risk secondary school learners.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

A framework representing a system-based analysis was carried out with the raw data. The systematic search for patterns from interviewees to generate full descriptions of challenges faced by teachers teaching at-risk learners were conducted on the raw data and from these, patterns were identified and categorised as different segments. These segments, in turn, allowed the researcher to organise and systemically refine the relatively unstructured data (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Razavieh, 2010:500).

As explained by Creswell (2007), qualitative data analysis involves processes of familiarisation, categorisation and synthesis based on predetermined considerations. In further articulation, Creswell (2007) explains that data analysis is a spiralling action fitting into the approach of qualitative inquiry whereby data is collected and then organised and managed carefully. This notion enabled the researcher to move beyond mere describing what transpired in the study to developing a conceptual understanding of the data collected (Tai & Ajjawi, 2016:179). As explained by Carey et al. (2015:12), a system-based approach has the potential to cast a holistic analytic lens to developing interventions, because it is based on the interrelationship of clusters within a dynamic system. As laid down by Srivastava and Thomson (2009:75-76), the data analysis process for this study included that the researcher carried out the following analytical processes on the raw data:

- Familiarisation which refers to the process during which the researcher becomes familiarised with the transcripts of the data collected (i.e. interview transcripts or observation or field notes) and gains an overview of the collected data (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). With this process, the researcher immersed himself into the

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

data by listening to audiotapes and studying the transcripts. Throughout this process,

the researcher became aware of key ideas and recurrent themes and took note of them.

- Identifying a thematic framework is a stage that occurs after familiarisation when the researcher recognises emerging themes or issues in the data set. At this stage, the researcher allowed the data to dictate the themes and issues. To achieve this end, the researcher used the notes taken during the familiarisation stage. The key issues, concepts and themes that were expressed by the participants now formed the basis of a thematic framework that was used to filter and classify the data (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). At this stage of the data analysis, the researcher maintained an open mind and refrained from forcing the data to fit anticipated priori issues.
- Indexing as the identification of sections of data that correspond to a theme was applied to all the textual data that had been gathered (i.e. transcripts of interviews and observation schedule notes).
- Charting as the stage where the specific pieces of data that were indexed in the previous stage were now arranged in charts of the themes implies that the data is lifted from its original textual context and placed in charts that consist of the headings and sub-headings that were drawn during the thematic framework (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). At this stage, the researcher ensured that although the pieces of data were lifted from their context, the data were still clearly identified as to what case they came from.
- Mapping and interpretation as the final stage which involves the analysis of the key characteristics as laid out in the charts provides a schematic diagram of the event/phenomenon thus guiding the researcher in his interpretation of the data set. It is at this point that the researcher was cognisant of the objectives of qualitative analysis, which include defining high frequency concepts, mapping the range and nature of the phenomenon of study, creating topologies, finding associations, providing explanations, and developing strategies (Ritchie &

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Spencer, 1994:186). This final stage informed the significance of the study, where any strategy or recommendations made by the researcher echoed the true attitudes, beliefs, and values of the participants.

With reference to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:367-380) on audio recordings as a primary aid for data collection, the researcher used field notes to supplement audio recordings. The audio data collected during the semi-structured individual interviews were transcribed for visual review. As emphasised by McMillan and Schumacher (2010:367-380), the researcher continually returned to the data to validate each newly identified theme.

3.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS

The intention with qualitative research is to generate knowledge grounded in human experience (Sandelowski, 2004) which demands conduct of a rigorous and methodical manner to yield meaningful and useful results (Attride-Stirling, 2001). This implies that strategies for solutions in teaching at-risk secondary school learners are relevant to secondary schools that are faced with similar challenges on educating at-risk learners in the current education space in South Africa.

Quality criteria used in quantitative research, e.g. internal validity, generalisability, reliability and objectivity are not suitable to judge the quality of qualitative research. Qualitative researchers speak of trustworthiness, which simply poses the question 'Can the findings be trusted?' (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In the quest to answer this question, the researcher ensured that the criteria to ensure the trustworthiness of the collected data were met. Hence, criteria such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are discussed next.

3.7.1 Credibility

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

The researcher ensured credibility of the study by using the following strategies as laid down by Korstjens and Moser (2018:122):

- Prolonged engagement. Participants were encouraged to support their statements with examples, and the interviewer asked follow-up questions. The researcher studied the data in their raw interview material until a theme emerged to provide a scope of the phenomenon under study.
- Triangulation strengthened the credibility of the study. The researcher made use of two different data collection techniques, namely individual interviews and direct observation. Themes identified with individual interviews were compared to the themes from the direct observations.
- Persistent observation. Developing the codes, the concepts and the core category helped to examine the characteristics of the data. The researcher constantly read and reread the data, analysed them, themed them and revised the concepts accordingly. The researcher recoded and relabelled codes, concepts and the core category. He studied the data until the final themes provided the intended depth of insight.
- Member check. All transcripts of the interviews and schedules from the observations were sent to the participants for feedback. In addition, halfway through the study period, a meeting was held with those who had participated in the interviews and observations, enabling them to correct the interpretations and challenge what they perceived to be 'wrong' interpretations. Finally, the findings were presented to the participants in another meeting to confirm the emerged themes.

3.7.2 Transferability

The researcher ensured transferability of the study by using the following strategies as laid down by Korstjens and Moser (2018:122):

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

- Ten qualified and two qualifying teachers at a school serving at-risk secondary school learners and four additional qualified teachers, who had resigned in the last three years, were included in the sample size. Interviewing this number of teachers enhanced the transferability of research findings.
- All participants fulfilled the role of teachers at the research site. As teachers, participants were able to contribute purposefully to challenges pertaining to teaching at-risk learners.
- Individual interviews with the teachers lasted between 30 minutes and one hour. The observation of participants in their classroom settings lasted between 45 minutes and one hour, depending on the duration of the lesson. The duration of the interviews and the observations provided for sufficient time to collect data and allowed the researcher to develop a thorough understanding of the experiences from the perspectives of the participants.

3.7.3 Dependability and confirmability

The researcher ensured dependability and confirmability of the study by using the following strategies as laid down by Korstjens and Moser (2018:122):

- A complete set of notes on decisions made during the research process, research team meetings, reflective thoughts, research sampling, research materials adopted, emergence of the findings and information about the data management is explained in paragraph 1.6 and Chapter 3. This allows the study to be repeated in future, which enhances the dependability of the findings.
- The data collection techniques used (individual interviews and observation) created avenues for interference in the techniques. Both techniques revealed similar data about the study, and as such gave positive indications of the dependability of the study.
- Markers such as the reasons for theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices throughout the entire study were explained in paragraph 1.6 and

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Chapter 3, so that others can understand how and why decisions were made. This enables the reader to determine the relevance of the research findings.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher approached the Western Cape Education Department (WCED), requesting permission to conduct an investigation at a special needs independent school serving at-risk learners in the Metro Central district of Cape Town (Appendix B). The school was selected from a list of independent schools registered with WCED. The head of department (HOD) granted permission provided that the researcher adhered to the following prerequisites:

- The collection of data should not interfere with the normal tuition time or teaching process;
- The researcher may be approached on completion of the research study to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department; and
- The research documents should be submitted either electronically to a specified e-mail address or via post to a specified postal address, and the documents would be stored in the WCED database to keep track of all studies that have been conducted on education in the WCED.

The school principal of the selected school was also approached requesting permission to conduct a research study at the specific research site (Appendix C). A letter explaining the research intent (Appendix D) was sent to all participants via the principal. With each document, information was included pertaining to explaining the purpose of the study, the ethical principles to be considered, the explanation of the data collection instruments and participant selection. Further communication entailed the questions and topics to be discussed during the interviews and school-specific logistical arrangements for the interviews. Participants received a consent form in advance to sign and submit to the researcher before the interviews commenced (Appendix D).

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

With permission from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) and the Thembalitsha Foundation (umbrella organisation governing the school) to carry out the research, and ethics clearance from the University of South Africa, the school selected as the research site was contacted via telephone, e-mail and letter requesting their participation in the research study. The school principal was approached to grant the teachers the opportunity to participate in the interviews and the observations. Letters of consent were also distributed through the school principal to the parents and guardians of the learner body for permission to carry out observation actions at the research site. The teachers at the research site were interviewed on their challenges of teaching at-risk learners as well as the possible solutions in ensuring successful learning experiences.

Ethical principles, such as anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent and voluntary participation, were adhered to during the course of the study. These principles are discussed next:

3.8.1 Anonymity

Any individual participating in the research study has a reasonable expectation that privacy will be guaranteed. Consequently, no identifying information about the individual should be revealed in written or other communication (Lichtman, 2010:54). Participants were informed that their identities would not be shared in any form of dissemination of research findings. The selected school was referred to as School A, and the teachers as TA, TB, TC, TD and so on (par 4.3).

3.8.2 Confidentiality

Any individual participating in a research study has a reasonable expectation that information provided to the researcher will be treated in a confidential manner. Consequently, the participant is entitled to expect that such information will not be given

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

to anyone else (Lichtman, 2010:55). The guarantee of privacy gave the interviewees a sense of safety and allowed them to share in-depth ideas and opinions freely. Participants were guaranteed unconditional anonymity with the dissemination of results.

3.8.3 Informed consent

Individuals participating in a research study have a reasonable expectation that they will be informed of the nature of the study and may choose whether to participate. They also have a reasonable expectation that they will not be coerced into participation (Lichtman, 2010:56). Participants were informed of the following, as specified by Lichtman (2010:5456):

- The purpose of the study;
- What was expected of the participants, such as the duration of the interview;
- The expected risks and benefits from the study;
- The fact that participation was voluntary, and participants were allowed to withdraw with no negative repercussions; and
- The means of protecting participant confidentiality.

3.8.4 Voluntary participation

As emphasised by Denzin and Lincoln (2000), all participants were allowed equal opportunities to participate in the investigation. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study should they no longer want to partake in it. Withdrawal can be at any point in time without any required explanation or justification for their decisions and actions.

Tai and Ajjawi (2016:180) accent that ethical issues are likely to arise in qualitative research because of the interactions between researcher and participants, the environments in which the research is conducted, and the potential for unexpected

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

findings. Hence, the researcher was transparent by providing participants with relevant information on the nature and purpose of the study, and the topics to be discussed during the interviewing.

3.9 SUMMARY

The aim of the empirical investigation was to collect data in order to understand the phenomenon of at-risk secondary school learners, and the challenges faced by teachers in engaging at-risk learners in successful learning experiences with solutions to counter these acclaimed challenges. For the collection of data, a qualitative research design was employed based on a constructivist research paradigm. A special needs independent school serving at-risk learners was purposefully selected based on the at-risk status of learners attending the school. The teachers from this selected school participated in individual semi-structured interviews and observations. To ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings, the research process adhered to credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability criteria. Ethical principles that were considered for sound research practice pertained to anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent and voluntary participation.

CHAPTER FOUR RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary aim of this study on the challenges of teaching secondary school at-risk learners was to find out what the challenges are when teaching at-risk learners in a secondary school in Cape Town (par 1.5). The aim of the study transpired into three research objectives, namely, to explore how teacher training in South Africa equips teachers in educating at-risk learners successfully, to identify teachers' challenges and experiences, and to establish the influence which successful teaching has on the life experiences and propositions of at-risk learners in South Africa. The three research sub questions that were aligned to these three objectives led the researcher to investigate the

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

research problem and answer the main research question pertaining to how South African teachers can be equipped to engage at-risk learners in successful learning experiences (par 1.4 & par 3.1). It is important to understand the numerous challenges of educating at-risk learners as faced by teachers and make recommendations on effective management strategies and solutions to address the issues of teaching learners at risk in order to counter at-risk learners' tendencies of dropping out before having completed their school education satisfactorily (par 2.5).

Chapter 4 reports on the data collected from sixteen teachers of the sampled school. Of the selected participants, ten were qualified and two qualifying teachers and four additional qualified teachers who had resigned in the three-year period of 2015 to 2017 (par 1.6.3). The analysis of the collected data resulted in the emergence of categories to represent answers on how teachers can be equipped to provide at-risk learners with successful learning experiences.

4.2 RESEARCH METHODS

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with the twelve members of staff teaching at the research site and with four ex-teachers at suitable meeting venues across the Cape Town metro. The aim with the individual interviews was to gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of teachers teaching at-risk learners, and how these teachers manage to constructively engage them in successful learning. Direct observation was conducted over two days in the participants' natural setting, namely, their classrooms. The sample size for the direct observation was a ratio of one teacher to 30 learners (1:30). The observation provided information on the complex interactions between the participants and their learners (at-risk learners). During the observation, the researcher was able to obtain clarity whether what was said in the semi-structured individual interviews matches the experiences of the participants in their natural setting. Furthermore, both data collection tools provided meanings to the underlying factors that create challenges in teaching at-risk learners.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

4.3 RESEARCH SITE AND PARTICIPANT PROFILES

The background information on the research site is presented in Table 4.1

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Table 4.1: Background information on the research site

Research site	Number of learners 2017-2019 respectively	Numbers of Grade 12s 2017 Pass rate (Numbers of Grade 12s 2018 Pass rate (Numbers of Grade 12s 2019 Pass rate (Number of teachers	Socio-economic conditions in catchment areas	Social Interventions and support provided at school	Academic Interventions and support provided at school
School A	147, 150 and 151	18(100%)	20(83%)	22(79%)	10	Townships, Poor communities across the Cape Flats, Financially Challenged backgrounds, Gang Infested communities and Familial breakdown.	Social Worker support, Nutrition Programme and Sports	Extra Saturday classes for Grade 12s, Winter and Spring School

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

It is clear from Table 4.1 that the school had an average of 149 learners for the three-year period 2017 to 2019 of whom 20 were Grade 12 learners. The sampled school had a Grade 12 average pass rate of 87% over the past three academic years, namely, 2017-2019. The achieved Grade 12 pass rate at the sampled school represents the Grade 12 pass rate for most mainstream schools in the Western Cape over that period. The socioeconomic conditions in the sampled school pertained to illiteracy, poverty, familial breakdown, financial challenges, and gangsterism. The sampled school provided education to at-risk learners using a holistic approach; the school employed the service of a full-time social worker to provide social work-related support to at-risk learners. The sampled site also provided food interventions like nutritious breakfasts and daily lunches to learners and opportunities for sports such as that the male learners enrolled in the soccer team and played in a soccer league. However, extracurricular participation options for female learners were limited to joining the school choir and participating in drama production teams.

Academic intervention opportunities focused mainly on learners' academic attainments. In addition to the background information on the research site, the background information about the research participants in this study on at-risk learners appears in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Biographical data on participants

Research Participant No	Participants	Age	Gender	Years of experience in teaching	Tertiary Qualifications
1	TA	52	Male	30	Four-year Bachelor's degree one-year post-professional teachers' certificate (with specialization)
2	TB	63	Female	28	Honours degree (including an old one-year BEd/BEd honours) Master's degree in education

**THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY
SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN**

3	TC	59	Male	10	Higher diploma in education (post-graduate) /post-graduate certificate in education
4	TD	40	Male	17	Four-year Bachelor's degree ABET practitioner diploma
5	TE	69	Male	44	Honours degree (including an old one-year BEd/BEEd honours) Master's degree in education Doctor's degree
6	TF	26	Female	2	One-year Post-professional teachers' certificate (with specialisation) t3 diploma
7	TG	26	Female	2	Four-year professional teaching degree
8	TH	45	Female	19	Higher diploma in education
9	TI	26	Female	4	Qualifying for a Bachelor of Education
10	TJ	37	Male	1	Qualifying for a Post Graduate Certificate in Education, Master's degree
additional participants – formal teachers					
11	FTI	53	Female	28	Higher Diploma in Education (Post-Graduate) /Post-Graduate Certificate in Education
12	FTJ	33	Male	6	One-year Post-Professional Teachers' Certificate (with specialisation)
13	FTK	32	Female	4	One-year post-professional teachers' certificate (with specialisation)

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

14	FTL	32	Male	7	Four-year professional teaching degree
15	FTM	32	Female	7	One-year post-professional teachers' certificate (with specialisation) Master's degree in education
16	FTN	38	Female	4	Four-year professional teaching degree

As is evident from Table 4.2, two of the participants were newly qualified teachers appointed in teaching positions owing to the resignation of two teachers, who were also participants of this study on at-risk learners. Two of the participants were qualifying teachers who were studying towards the completion of their teaching qualifications. With 210 years of collective experience in teaching amongst all participants, the data collected were valuable and information-rich.

Individual interviewing and an hour of direct observation were carried out on ten participants in their natural settings whilst the other six participants were only engaged in semi structured individual interviewing to gauge their experience in teaching at-risk learners. It was clear from Table 4.2 that most participants were well qualified and thoroughly experienced in teaching, having obtained a baccalaureate degree with a related professional qualification and two participants having obtained an Honours degree. Three participants obtained a master's degree in Education and one a doctoral degree. The gender spread of the participants was evenly distributed between seven male and nine female participants. The even distribution of participants based on gender and the convincing degree of qualified teaching experience allowed for the collection of information rich data in a gender unbiased manner.

When collecting data to answer the research questions, there are procedures and steps to follow to ensure trustworthiness and credibility. These procedures and steps are discussed next.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

4.4 THE DATA COLLECTION PREPARATION PROCESSES

The data collection preparation processes pertained to building trust and gaining access in order to reach common ground on the sharing of meaningful information. This was a crucial stage of the research study as the researcher ensured all procedures and steps were carefully taken to derive meaningful information from the research site.

4.4.1 Building trust and gaining access at the research site

The researcher took cognisance of how the success of the study relied on building trust with the participants of the study. Palmer (2015: 2) emphasises that it is an ethical and legal necessity for the researcher to involve human participants through informing them about every aspect that the study entails. Owing to this notion, the determining factor whether the researcher could proceed with the research was gaining access to the participants and the research site. The researcher set up a meeting with the school principal and in the meeting the researcher explained what the study was about, the purpose of the study, and the purpose of the meeting, and thereafter negotiated a convenient time and date for an introduction to the participants (par 3.4.1). In addition, and as indicated by Palmer (2015:2), gaining access requires levels of approval from officials and participants such as the Head of Department of the Provincial Department of Education, Circuit Manager, school principals, teachers, SGB members, learners and parents. In the meeting with the school principal, all of these pre-approvals were tabled to gain the trust of the school principal as the executive manager of the research site.

In the context of the meeting held with the school principal of the research site, the researcher used the face-to-face meeting to build an element of trust. At the same meeting, the researcher and the school principal set dates and times for the semi-structured individual interviews considering each individual teacher participant's timetable. The researcher also took the chance to schedule an introductory meeting with the participants; this meeting enabled the researcher to provide details about what the study was about, the purpose of the study, and the purpose of the meeting.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

All negotiated interview meetings and observations took place before the 30th of March 2020 as per the Cape Provincial Education Department's directive and the conditions of granting permission for the study. This approach provided the researcher easy access as his appointments with the participants did not disrupt teaching and learning as per the school timetable.

4.4.2 The delivery of permission letters

To collect data as part of the process of conducting research, researchers need to gain permission to enter the research site and to involve people in the research area (Palmer, 2015:2). The researcher delivered all the necessary documents to the research site. The delivery included the permission letters from the Western Cape Education Department to conduct the study in the Cape Metro Central district, the ethics clearance certificate from the University of South Africa (UNISA), and the consent forms for each targeted participant (par 3.8). The researcher also provided the school principal of the research site with the permission letter to bolster his understanding of the structure of the study.

A week leading to the commencement of the data collection, the researcher phoned the school principal of the research site, reminding him of the appointment dates for interviews and direct observations. The principal was supportive to the extent that he complimented as follows:

“We discussed and planned for your visits in our last staff meeting and every teacher seems enthusiastic about your study; the teachers indicated that they have briefed the learners about your study and have encouraged them to act as normal, and to not be bothered about the data collector's presence in class during the direct observations”.

These affirmations set the researcher at ease and made him feel confident to conduct the interviews and the direct observations. The principal, on behalf of the researcher, issued

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

consent letters for the research to the teachers and assent letters to the learners, confirming an adherence to ethical requirements (par 3.8.3 & 3.8.4).

4.5 DATA COLLECTED BY MEANS OF FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS

Participants were interviewed with reference to the same questions representing main themes for discussion and were encouraged to elaborate on significant knowledge and information in the course of the interview. Consequently, the interviews were highly individualised, allowing participants to demonstrate strong feelings throughout through expressions of anger, tears of joy, and participants talking for an extended time, sometimes up to ten minutes, with no intervention. The process allowed participants to articulate poignant memories from their lived experiences, which in some cases happened early in their teaching experience at the research site.

4.5.1 Congruence of themes

It was anticipated that specific themes around the challenges of teaching at-risk learners would emerge with new calibres of at-risk learners evolving in South Africa: dropouts, immigrant learners, exceptional learners, adjudicated and incarcerated youth. It was significant in the case of this study that the sampled school reflected highly congruent themes with previous research findings, and it was noted across various global education systems in which elements of at-risk learners are present that these congruent themes are similar. These themes relating to teacher training, challenges, successes and best practices with teaching at-risk learners are mentioned in the publication of McWhirter et al. (2017) titled *At-risk Youth*.

With reference to McWhirter et al. (2017), the data analysis of this study is related to the following themes as presented in Table 4.3:

Table 4.3: Emergent themes

Themes	Sub-themes
--------	------------

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

<p>Theme 1: The importance of teacher training in equipping teachers of at-risk learners - Lived experience</p>	<p>Sub-theme 1: Oversight in teacher training Sub-theme: Broader implications of teacher training Sub-theme 3: Teachers' concerns Sub-theme 4: Poor professional development training opportunities</p>
<p>Theme 2: Issues hindering the success of educating at-risk learners - Challenges</p>	<p>Sub-theme 1: Presenting behavioural issues Sub-theme 2: Lack of being prepared with stationery and learning resources Sub-theme 3: Lack of parental support Sub-theme 4: Lack of social support Sub-theme 5: Misplaced value of second-chance education Sub-theme 6: Influence of at-risk learners' disposition on successful learning Sub-theme 7: Influence of teachers' disposition on successful learning</p>
<p>Theme 3: The results of educating at-risk learners successfully - Influence</p>	<p>Sub-theme 1: Mind-set Shift Sub-theme 2: Breaking the cycle of poverty Sub-theme 3: Game changer</p>
<p>Theme 4: Best practices in the education of at-risk learners - Solutions</p>	<p>Sub-theme 1: Solutions from practical experience in educating at-risk learners Sub-theme 2: Best practices in teaching at-risk learners</p>

Each of the themes appearing in Table 4.3 relates to the challenges of teachers teaching at-risk learners. These themes, including the importance of teacher training in equipping teachers of at-risk learners, issues hindering the success of educating at-risk learners, the results of educating at-risk learners successfully, and best practices in the education of at-risk learners, were consolidated by data obtained through individual interviews and direct observation. The themes evolved from recordings of the individual interviews with teachers and the direct observation of teacher participants in their natural settings, namely, their classrooms (par 3.5.1 & 3.5.2). Inverted commas indicate direct responses of participants quoted as primary sources of information to illustrate important findings (par 3.6). The verbatim words of participants ensured that the experience the researcher had did not influence nor compromise the credibility of the findings (par 3.7.1).

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Qualitative content analysis was used to analyse data collected from participants in their natural settings by means of a system-based framework including persistent observation and member checked interpretations (par 3.6 & 3.7.1). Data transferability was arranged through data collection procedures, findings, and system-based framework analysis discussions (par 3.7.2).

In selecting the most suitable type of coding to analyse the data collected, the researcher considered the main and sub-related research questions. In this regard, Trede and Higgs (2009:18) emphasise that research questions embed the values, world view and direction of inquiry. These questions are also influential in determining what type of knowledge is going to be generated. With reference to Trede and Higgs (2009), the coding method used to analyse the data collected for this study is values coding based on the methodological needs of this study. Values coding is the application of codes onto qualitative data that reflect a participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives and worldview (Saldana, 2013:110). Values coding is applicable to employing different data collecting techniques corroborating coding and enhancing the trustworthiness of findings

(LeCompte and Preissle, 1993:264-265). Throughout the process of data analysis, the researcher transcribed, summarised and presented data from two different data collection techniques, namely, individual semi-structured interviews and direct observation, to ensure enhanced data credibility and trustworthiness (par 3.7.1).

4.6 EMERGENT THEMES – why this heading if themes are already presented?

The responses of participants in this study presented information-rich data on the challenges faced by teachers teaching at-risk learners and solutions to these problems. In discussing the research findings as interpreted data, these findings are based on the voices of participants in their natural setting. These research findings, representing the four themes of teacher training, challenges, successes and best practices with teaching at-risk learners are discussed next.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

4.6.1 Theme 1: The importance of teacher training in equipping teachers of at risk learners - Lived experiences

The interviews with participants revealed that teacher training has equipped them with know-how on classroom management and disciplining learners; however, the training failed to prepare teachers to teach at-risk learners as most of the teachers had never heard of at-risk learners until starting to teach at the research site.

4.6.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Oversight in teacher training (teachers not adequately trained to address learning problems and psychosocial challenges that arise in the classroom

Apart from the general training received by teachers-in-training, there were other training modules like inclusivity and educational psychology which exposed teachers to issues as faced by learners. The study findings suggest that there is an existing gap in teachers' training in South Africa.

According to one teacher, learners are presented in a broader perspective with teacher training courses, and not according to their needs like at-risk or vulnerable learners. One teacher indicated that teacher training has failed to add the necessary knowledge to teachers-in-training; *"Teachers' training adds no value to the performance of teachers teaching at-risk learners"* [TC].

In concurring with this statement, another teacher also pointed to the fact that:

"The lack of preparation of teachers in training slows down the didactic implementation of the curriculum in class, particularly in an at-risk environment" [TH].

However, the teachers pointed out that guiding learners, discovering their potentials, disciplining the learners, provision of learning resources for learners and acting in *loco*

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

parentis at school remained their roles and responsibilities. It will be valuable if teacher training can be bolstered and focused on at-risk learners, since most mainstream public and independent schools now serve at-risk learners. In this regard, one teacher commented as follows:

“Being at-risk is buttressed by the social backgrounds/issues of these learners, for example familial breakdown, poverty, overcrowded homes, substance abuse and domestic violence” [TC].

The findings also suggest that teachers are the embodiment of the school. They model behaviours for learners and they also hold learners accountable. They should challenge and improve the approach of the school citing the inadequacies of teacher training. Teachers should play an active role in crafting the modules to be taught in teacher training courses so that teachers on completion of their training can adequately deal with any challenges in classrooms. Hence, continuous professional development is needed in the career path of all teachers. One teacher alluded to this fact in the following quote:

“Teachers' training should play an important role in classrooms, at-risk learners are simply not ordinary learners, they showcase challenging behaviors in class which may be somewhat difficult for teachers to handle” [TJ].

In addition, teachers pointed to the fact that the education landscape is changing drastically, and so should teacher training. Teachers indicated that classrooms are now filled with at-risk learners whether they demonstrate the characteristics of being at-risk or vulnerable. Teacher training should therefore aim to add value to the performance of teachers teaching at-risk learners. In this regard, one teacher commented as follows:

“This [lack of tailor-made training to teach at-risk learners] evidently is a gap in our teacher training in South Africa” [TC].

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

The researcher believes that when teachers are adequately trained and prepared for the reality in classrooms, particularly in the education of at-risk learners, it assists in bringing about an understanding of the issue being discussed (par 2.8). This is supported by Smut (2018), that in the quest for ensuring a fair education system, it is imperative for policy makers to ensure that all teachers have a similar level of capacity. These sometimes include capacitating teachers in addressing social and educational challenges of at-risk learners. To ensure that pre-service student teachers are capacitated to educate at-risk learners, they must be trained concisely on the education system of South Africa bearing in mind that the education system has since democracy produced a new calibre of learners called at-risk learners (Van Zyl, 2019).

Hence, the research findings prove that prospective teachers lack pre-service knowledge of at-risk learners and their presenting behavioural issues as indicated in Van Zyl's (2019) work on poor quality teachers holding back South Africa's education system.

4.6.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Broader implications of teacher training

Teachers must act strictly in accordance with their job description which includes to guide learners in discovering their potential, discipline the learners, provide learning resources to learners, act in *loco parentis* at school, teach responsibility and ensure that learners meet the requirements for promotion and progression. The need for this approach by teachers was evident in the interview with the school principal where the principal pointed out that in job interviews with prospective teachers, when posing questions related to teaching at-risk learners, teachers tend to dodge such questions which indicates their lack of awareness of this kind of learner. One teacher demonstrated a lack of pre-service knowledge of at-risk learners and their context. During the interview when a question on roles and responsibilities of teachers relating to teaching at-risk learners was posed, the teacher merely answered:

"Teachers are the surrogate of learners at school" [TC].

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Teachers of at-risk learners need a change of mind-set and perspective to better serve at-risk learners who have simply found themselves at a point where all doors in their personal walks of life have closed. At this juncture, a learner who has forfeited chances of mainstream schooling due to physical and verbal attacks on teachers related to gangsterism with eventual drop out, requires teachers who have undergone a mind shift and can assist in creating a robust learning environment for this learner to learn successfully. One ex-teacher indicated from experience that:

“When learners enrol for a second chance at education, the teachers have to strongly change their mind-sets, as most at-risk learners have a back plan to leave; hence, teachers shouldn't be assisting in getting rid of them again for the second time” [FTM].

To answer the probing question on how teachers' training should be designed to capacitate prospective teachers to attend competently to the at-risk learners in ensuring retention at school, the education system needs an overhaul and refocus. Initial teacher training fails to prepare teachers in educating at-risk learners, a group which is persistently present within the South African education system. A suggested approach to address teacher training is mentioned by Mashau (2012:55) who suggests that pre-service teacher training in South African universities be channelled to offer training, which includes representing the South African society comprehensively pertaining to diversity with regard to culture and socioeconomic status. In this regard one teacher emphasised the need for teacher training to develop a compassionate well-rounded teacher:

“As a teacher, you must be a certain type of person, a passionate teacher who is socially involved in the lives of the learners” [TD].

4.6.1.3 Sub-theme 3: Teachers' concerns

All participants echoed the social and educational challenges surrounding at-risk learners. The teachers voiced their concerns about the difficulties experienced in their various

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

capacities to educate at-risk learners. As there are some underlying factors inherent in at-risk learners, these factors present this group of learners as being too difficult to educate, creating a barrier in the minds of teachers exposed to teaching at-risk learners. In this regard, one teacher commented that at-risk learners are not simply ordinary learners:

“At-risk learners are simply not ordinary learners, they showcase challenging behaviours in class which may be somewhat difficult for teachers to handle” [TJ].

Although all teachers believed that at-risk learners can be educated to a certain degree, their challenging behaviours in class remain of great concern to many. A former teacher at the research site indicated that about 60% of at-risk learners stand a chance of completing their secondary school education with 40% of this cohort requiring additional support in the quest to move on with life, and about 10% of this cohort simply fall back into a life of crime. This poses discomfort among teachers, who are trying their best to educate at-risk learners.

One of the teachers commented that teachers' teaching tasks could have been easier, if their pre-service education somewhat informed and prepared them for the reality of today's classroom. The teacher expressed this as follows:

“At-risk learners come with challenges, social and education challenges” [TC].

At-risk learners being at risk of not completing their secondary education is attributed to social background conditions. In many instances, these learners are exposed to substance abuse and domestic violence due to issues beyond their control. Ill-discipline among at-risk learners is in many cases the result of parents and guardians who have failed to shape and nurture these learners into the right path.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

“At-risk learners are primarily at risk of not completing their secondary education and being at-risk is buttressed by the social backgrounds/issues of these learners, for example family breakdown, poverty, overcrowded homes, substance abuse and domestic violence. These problems are invisible in learners but have presenting behaviours which makes us as educators to feel it” [TC].

From the interviews with participants it was clear that a certain type of teacher personality is needed to successfully educate at-risk learners. This personality type relates to arranging a supportive school culture which Lamb and Rice (2008:11) describe as a good quality culture and atmosphere that produces a strong positive learner engagement and high levels of school completion, particularly in schools that have high proportions of at-risk learners. Therefore, the concerns raised by teachers of at-risk learners about the lack of teacher training for specific contexts such as the context of at-risk learners are potent. According to teacher participants, training is especially needed with regard to teaching at-risk learners to be able to deal effectively with at-risk learners and their presenting problems.

4.6.1.4 Sub-theme 4: Poor professional development training opportunities

It became clear from the interviews with participants that the Department of Education does not offer any professional in-service training possibilities to teachers in aspects of teaching at-risk learners. The researcher noted that all the participants agreed that in-service training on teaching at-risk learners could have equipped teachers better for their task of ensuring successful learning for at-risk learners (par 2.6). The majority of participants alluded that their teaching task would be easier if the Department of Education provided periodic training around factors placing learners at risk of completing their schooling. One teacher commented as follows:

“Being trained makes you acceptable for a particular position; with other schools, the premise is that learners must adhere to all laid out

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

rules and regulations; however, at a school for at-risk youth, it is an investment to walk the road with them. Hence, there is no prescribed or forewarn information about it at teachers' training. You have to be tolerable to them and develop yourself alongside teaching them. The education department currently do(es) not provide training on at-risk learners" [TD].

Participants revealed that the only time where teachers are taught about the diverse groups of learners in classrooms is when they attended a course on education inclusivity. One teacher commented that she was able to enrol for a course in inclusivity, simply because she studied for a bachelor's degree in education. The researcher noticed that many teachers partaking in this study completed a post graduate certificate course in becoming a teacher, lacking any training in teaching at-risk learners. Taylor (2014) reveals that student teachers enrol for teacher training courses with poor skills, and leave with little more and, as a result, their learners fare poorly and teaching is perceived as a low status career. Hence, prospective teachers must be trained for the South African context which includes training to teach learners at risk (Van Zyl, 2019).

In summary, it can be concluded that teacher training does not equip teachers for teaching at-risk learners effectively. The depth, breadth and level of teacher training is inadequate to face the presenting behaviours of at-risk learners successfully. Mashau (2012:55) indicates that in order to capacitate prospective teachers in South Africa, pre-service training should not only focus on lesson plans, teaching lessons and classroom management, but should also encapsulate more rigorous methods, pedagogy and insight which befit modern day learners of whom at-risk learners are a crucial part. Therefore, teacher training in South Africa lacks the pedagogical skills to address challenges as faced by teachers teaching at-risk learners. Teacher training fails to adequately prepare teachers in preventing at-risk learners from presenting behavioural issues. This results in teachers being ambushed by manifold problems in teaching learners at risk successfully.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

4.6.2 Theme 2: Issues hindering the success of educating at-risk learners - challenges

The unsuccessful engagement of at-risk learners in teaching and learning is attributed to detrimental factors such as peer pressure, neglect and domestic violence manifesting in grade retention, chronic absenteeism, aggression and abuse (Bemak, Chung & SiroskeySabdo, 2005). From the interviews with participants, it was clear that one of the reasons for poor academic attainment among at-risk learners is the approach of teachers when engaging with them. However, the teacher approach is closely linked to the challenges teachers face when dealing with at-risk learners. These challenges are discussed next.

4.6.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Presenting behavioural issues

All participants revealed that there is a greater tendency for at-risk learners to engage in delinquent behaviour and eventually drop-out if measures equipping learners with security and resilience are not put in place at home. Participants agreed with the findings by Benson, Lerner and Benson (2003) that a Positive Developmental Assets Framework must be in place to enhance variables that contribute to healthy child development and positive learning outcomes. However, as this framework is lacking in the developmental stages of at-risk learners' home backgrounds, this inhibits the successful engagement of at-risk learners in schooling (par 1.2.2). Due to the lack of ensuring such a positive development framework in learners' home backgrounds, they are inclined to poor behaviour such as:

“Rudeness, fighting, ill-discipline” [TD]; “swearing, despondent, and disrespectful [TI]; lying on the floor, walking around the classroom, threats of various degrees against learners and teachers” [FTM].

Participant FTM pointed to the fact that threats of various degrees are posed periodically against learners and teachers by at-risk learners leading to the fear of possible danger to

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

the lives of everyone present at the research site. Participant FTM relayed that this is the case with most learners newly enrolled at the school, with these threats mostly common among male at-risk learners. Participants linked these regular threats by at-risk learners to the inadequacies of South African teacher training to equip prospective teachers with knowledge and skills with regard to treating vulnerable learners. In this regard, Bialobrzeska, Randell and Hellmann (2012) emphasise that South African schools are filled with vulnerable learners and that it is becoming more difficult for teachers to identify vulnerability amongst learners in their classrooms (par 1.2.3). Government must intervene by training teachers on how to identify vulnerable learners in their classrooms and how to provide the required support for at-risk learners to thrive. Participant FTI voiced this notion as follows:

“And to define at-risk learners, these are learners who are at risk of not reaching their full potential. They walk in today full of anxiety, basic needs not met, self-esteem not well developed or traumatised by crime in their communities. So, this is a skill that you hardly find among new teachers currently. Naturally born teachers, don't assist any more. I recommend that the knowledge about at-risks and vulnerability be taught to our teachers at teachers' college, otherwise we are setting them up for failure” [FTI].

McInerney and McInerney (2006) identify two categories of behaviour that are mostly relevant to at-risk learners, namely behaviour as a result of the impact of some temporary traumatic condition on the learner and behaviour as a repetitive issue related to the characteristics of the learner. In the case of this study, the latter is evident as at-risk learners display persistent, repetitive and challenging behaviours as a result of their character. Lavis and McCann (2009:898) indicate that such repetitive behaviours, if not dealt with, may result in consistent attempts to avoid schoolwork or school. Participant TA identified “*lateness and tardiness*” as a form of this repetitive behaviour leading to building up resistance to teachers and the school interventions. Participant TB acknowledged that although some learners “*are making good use of the opportunity [of schooling], many are*

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

missing the opportunity, experience school as something they are being forced to attend”
[TB].

4.6.2.2 *Sub-theme 2: Lack of being prepared with stationery and learning resources*

Participants agreed that at-risk learners have no control over themselves and thus present disruptions to learning during tuition times. Due to the fact of not having a significant adult in their lives, at-risk learners lack structure and routine. This lack of structure and routine manifests in at-risk learners' lives as they are never prepared and focused for the school day which is in the first place evident in them not having their stationery and school books with them. All participants agreed that this is the norm daily in classrooms as most at-risk learners arrive at school with no stationery or learning resources as participant TA confirmed: *“No stationery, no textbooks”*.

The lack of at-risk learners being prepared for the school day by not taking care to bring stationery and learning material, alludes to the findings by Lewis and McCann (2009:898) on negative presenting behaviours, which, in the case of the research site, is demonstrated in the form of avoidance of school work by not having stationery and learning material on purpose.

4.6.2.3 *Sub-theme 3: Lack of parental support*

The findings identified the lack of parental support for at-risk learners. One teacher reported that although the school does call parents of learners with disciplinary issues, parents of learners with persistent behavioural issues do not honour the call of the school and in most cases do not show up for meetings with the school's disciplinary committee; such behaviour from parents shows lack of commitment and support for their children's education. Hence, at-risk learners' teachers are mostly left alone to take on the journey of educating at-risk learners with no support from the parent body.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

“Disciplinary issues and in most cases, it is around the same learner with no support from the parents, hence, these are issues from outside the school impacting on the school” [TA].

According to Withers and Russell (2001:12), there are external factors that can cause learners to be at risk; these factors relate to the background from which the learner evolves. Participant TA mentioned this external issue being prevalent among at-risk learners, relating to *“not having a lovingly primary caretaker, exposed to family disintegration, peer pressure for substance abuse”*. McWhirter et al. (2017:21) compare at-risk learners to growing trees; these trees require pruning, staking and trimming, sun, water and nurturing (par 2.2). The findings of this study show that in the case of most at-risk learners, the notion as pointed out by McWhirter et al. (2017:21) is not evident. At-risk learners require continuous nurturing and grooming which should be provided by their biological parents but with the lack of having a trusted and committed primary caregiver, the task of nurturing is shifted to the teachers at school. When there is no parental support for at-risk learners, it leads to *“absenteeism and low productivity”* [TB] and to *“sleeping and hyperactivity”* [TJ] with these learners *“just giving up on their education”* [TJ].

Participant TJ mentioned that due to lack of parental support, at-risk learners arrived at school tired and restless and sometimes hyperactive which could mainly be attributed to the use of substances. In households where parents are prone to excessive substance abuse, at-risk learners are left to survive and care for themselves which could mean that the learner has no controlled bed-time or eating plan, which inevitably influences proper sleep negatively, resulting in not being prepared for a productive day at school.

4.6.2.4 Sub-theme 4: Lack of social support

Participants explained the school’s provision of social service through a permanently placed social worker at the school. The social worker assists the learners with a range of social support services pertaining to the well-being of the learners. This is provided in the form of counselling, psychosocial support, educational psychology and clinical support.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

The social worker also provides academic guidance and counselling to learners in making decisions with regards to career paths and life choices. The social worker also conducts monthly open-group workshops with parents in order to equip parents with practical parenting skills needed in parenting adolescents, teenagers and at-risk learners. However, participants felt that having one social worker only to see to the social support needs of over a hundred vulnerable learners daily is not adequate.

Participants mentioned the interruptions created by the social worker during lesson times when learners have to attend counselling sessions or partake in a focus group workshop. These interruptions can manifest in the form of a hindrance to the learner's ability to gain knowledge on a cognitive level, as the process of gaining knowledge is interrupted through the need for such a learner to attend counselling sessions during tuition time. Participant TH mentioned intolerance as at-risk learners in classroom generally chip over each other's shoulder. The researcher deduced the meaning of this statement as a situation where learners simple do not care and support each other. Learners in this case target one another and perpetuate vicious act toward one another. This act results in verbal abuse and altercations toward peer learners and sometimes results in physical fights in the classroom:

"Intolerance, learners generally chip over each other's shoulder" [TH].

Participant TH added that this is a concern as it is expected of learners in the classroom to be calm, relaxed and ready to learn; however, this is not the case with at-risk learners. Participant TI added to the notion raised by participant TH that at-risk learners arrive at school despondent, demotivated and unwilling to accept the environment in which they have found themselves, and in most of these instances their dispositions can be attributed to the challenges they face at home and in their communities. Participant TI mentioned that, although at-risk learners through the Department of Social Development are provided with social support grants and placement in child care facilities, this support is inadequate resulting in at-risk learners having *"emotional outbursts, and lacking responsibility for their own learning" [TI].*

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

However, participants acknowledged that the permanently employed social worker at the school has abetted the uplifting of at-risk learners in focusing on their education as supposed to being buried in their underlying circumstances due to them being “*vulnerable and in survival mode*” [FTI].

Participant FTI explained this survival mode in at-risk learners by saying they are exposed to vulnerability due to their home circumstances and thus lose control of their lives, and as such stay in survival mode. Participant FTI cited the assumptions of Bronfenbrenner (1979), that a person is an active player, exerting influence on his/her environment, and that the environment is compelling the person to adapt to its conditions and restrictions. The participant explained that parental and psychosocial support are imperative as human develop and grow, and in situations where the former is not the case, individual human development tends to move lopsided. It is for this reason that at-risk learners stay in survival mode.

Participants agreed on the lack of social support in the ecological systems of at-risk learners, because, although much is done at school to support vulnerable learners, little is done to support them at their homes or in the community. To support the above statement,

Bronfenbrenner (1989, 1994) posits that individual human development occurs within interconnected and embedded ecological systems, and that humans develop and grow within the context of a number of reciprocal systems, which includes concentric circles capturing various levels or degrees of interactive and reciprocal experiences (par 2.3). The study found that the selected school is providing a high standard of social support to learners in their care; however, the school is overwhelmed by the needs of these learners because of a total lack of support and responsibility for the wellbeing of their children by the parents of these at-risk learners.

4.6.2.5 *Sub-theme 5: Misplaced value of second-chance education*

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

High-school dropout is a phenomenon that occurs in the formal education systems of many countries (par 2.5). Within the South African education system, the dropout rate remains high with several factors inhibiting the retainment of learners in the educational system. The findings of this study show that the research site is the only school in Western Cape that provides at-risk learners with a second chance at education and, according to their admission policy, they can enrol learners up to the age of 21 years. It was also noted that the school is categorised as a special school due to the school's enrolment and admission policies. The school serves the poorest of the poor and mainly at-risk learners who have been dismissed from mainstream education due to behaviour problems, teenage pregnancy or gangsterism. Through the selected school, learners are given a second chance at completing their high school education.

Participants agreed that, although many learners make use of this opportunity to set matter right with their education, the value of a second-chance at education has been misplaced by some learners retaining the same inhibiting approaches and attitudes towards life. In this regard participants explained as follows:

“About 70% of the learners, value second chance at education, however, there are certain number of learners at our school who are still doing exactly the same thing that got them expelled in the first instance” [TA].

“A greater number of learners are making good use of the opportunity; however, few are missing the opportunity. Seems like they are being forced to attend school” [TB].

Participant TD commented that the success of some at-risk learners who are successful in completing their high school education at the research site can be attributed to the values as taught by the school, namely, *“FAMILY, RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY, PERSEVERANCE AND HOPE”*. Participant TD acknowledged that these learners then become successful but admitted that *“there are also cases of dropout and fall back into a life of crime” [TD].*

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Participant FTI, an ex-teacher of the school, believed teachers are not doing enough to keep at-risk learners at schools even in a second chance education environment. She commented on the fact that at-risk learners retain the notion of dropping out which needs to be reprogrammed by skilled teachers:

“When learners enrol for second chance at education, the teachers have to strongly change their mind-sets, as most at-risk learners have a backup plan to leave, hence, teachers shouldn't be assisting in getting rid of them again for the second time” [FTI].

According to Wali and Saad (2018:280), teaching practices that help learners at risk succeed academically includes support from caring and committed teachers, which is in line with the practical experience of participant FTI.

From the interviews with participants, it was clear that most at-risk learners in second chance education do make good use of the opportunity, and that a greater number of at-risk learners' teachers do motivate them to stay in school and complete their high school education. This is aligned to Dancy (2014) claiming that teachers in the education of at-risk learners play a considerable role in getting them from the point of giving up to a point where they could persevere and achieve (par 2.6.2.1). However, this denotes that teachers of at-risk learners should devise more measures to help at-risk learners understand the value of an education through a second chance at education. This is achieved through constant motivation on an individual level and through school assemblies. Participant TH commented on this approach as used at the research site:

“By the constant motivation individually and at school assemblies for devotion to what is meaningful in life, our learners receive so much encouragement and support. The teachers at our school are very observant” [TH].

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

4.6.2.6 Sub-theme 6: Influence of at-risk learners' disposition on successful learning

According to Horn and Chen (2001:1), positive experiences play a protective role in reducing the impact of risk on resilient learners (par 2.6.2.1). The findings of the study suggest that learners' success in learning largely depends on their positive disposition towards life. However, participants revealed that some at-risk learners exhibit behaviours and attitudes that negate successful learning. Participants pointed out that learners' disposition towards education influences successful learning negatively when such dispositions are of negative intent. According to the findings of the study, this is the case at the research site, namely that several at-risk learners hamper the successful progress of teaching and learning daily and this impedes the success of educating at-risk learners. In this regard, participants commented as follows:

"Learners' progress is hampered by their negative attitude towards life" [TG];

"To a very large extent, learners' disposition towards education draws the progress of learning backwards" [TB];

"Yes, they constrain learning because they take up teaching time and creates disruption for the entire lesson" [TF].

Participant FTM commented that sometimes at-risk learners struggle to learn at the pace of their peers, and instead of asking for support from their teachers, they react differently to the ecological systems, that is, they derive flawed meanings from their learning environment and as such experience academic, behavioural, attitudinal and mental health challenges, which then compromise their schooling because of *"their inability to learn and not owing up to it"* [FTM].

Participants agreed that if the problem of at-risk learners struggling to learn is not seen to, the resultant effect will be detrimental to a successful learning experience for at-risk

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

learners. Therefore, participants commented on the strategy they have adapted; this strategy will be discussed later in the chapter under Theme 4.

4.6.2.7 Sub-theme 7: Influence of teachers' disposition on successful learning

According to Smuts (2018), initial teacher training must be highly standardised and fundamentally equal for a good quality educational system to prevail (par 2.8). The findings of the study suggest that education being a constitutional right must be fair and of equal access, and that every learner must equally have good teachers standing in front of them, be it a rural or an affluent school. Although most teachers at the research site are good and experienced teachers, and are thus committed and dedicated to the education of at-risk learners, there are a number of teachers who seems to be less committed to the education of at-risk learners. In this regard, participants commented that there are a number of teachers who stay absent from school often and for this reason a message of lack of care is communicated to at-risk learners.

“Constant absenteeism of teachers demoralizes the learners” [TB];

“Team work is defeated and a message of “I don’t really care” is conveyed” [TC].

Some teachers, however, do walk the extra mile in trying to adequately educate at-risk learners. They are present at school every day and they do not allow their personal issues to negatively impact their roles as instructional leaders in their classrooms. Participants TD commented:

“Where teachers are concerned, it is in TWO folds, your attitude and your presence. Hence, your presence is needed daily at school to promote quality teaching for learning. Also, your attitude speaks at all times; having a bad day should not be an issue to you and your learners and should not negatively impact your role as an instructional leader in your classroom” [TD].

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Furthermore, the study revealed that teachers' disposition can never be one of anti-at-risk learners, labelling learners as dropouts and thus give up in trying to engage them. Lewis and McCann (2009:898) suggest that when at-risk learners have feelings of belonging and acceptance, it leads to a variety of positive emotions such as feeling happy, elated, content and calm, whereas being rejected, excluded or ignored leads to potent negative feelings such as experiencing anxiety, depression, grief and jealousy (par 2.4.4.2). For this reason, it is *"very important that teachers' disposition cannot be anti-teaching or anti-at-risk"* [TC].

Participants agreed that teachers' disposition to at-risk learners within their classrooms should always convey a message of trust and commitment. Participant FTM pointed out that where trust and commitment are not evident between teachers and at-risk learners, it mostly results in behavioural issues as at-risk learners use their dispositions to fight for recognition and attention from their teachers. On the other hand, it exposes the teacher's inability to successfully engage at-risk learners, which in most cases results in a situation where the teacher either exits the position or the profession. Participant FTM commented:

"To a great extent, my inability to care and educate at-risk learners becomes obvious and I rather opt to go" [FTM].

It appears that there are many issues hindering the success of educating at-risk learners. It was clear from the interviews with teachers that behavioural issues, not caring about having stationery and learning resources, lack of parental support, lack of social support, misplaced values about the opportunity to a second chance education, and influences of at-risk learners' and teachers' dispositions to teaching and learning are hindrances to successful learning by at-risk learners at the research site (par 2.4). De Lannoy et al. (2018) argue that the effective implementation of youth development policies requires a comprehensive understanding of young people's realities; their needs and dreams; their real or perceived support networks, or gaps in these; their level of access to services and their willingness to take these up; and their sense of happiness. This notion is vital in the education of at-risk learners as it is important that all role players in at-risk learners' lives

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

have an understanding of their needs, dreams, and complex realities and how at-risk learners react to their ecosystems. However, there are role players who are still not clear as to what their role is in educating at-risk learners and there are still at-risk learners who are not embracing the second chance opportunity despite failing to thrive at mainstream schooling. The success at educating at-risk learners largely depends on their willingness to embrace the second-chance opportunity to education. Theme 3 will outline the results of educating at-risk learners successfully.

4.6.3 Theme 3: The results of educating at-risk learners successfully - Influence

Although effective schooling practices contribute to successful learning, the question remains whether the techniques, processes and procedures which are successful with mainstream schooling yield equitable results with the teaching and learning of at-risk learners (par 2.6.2.1). Wali and Saad (2018:280) warned that effective school practices could constitute a threat to educating at-risk learners if not applicably used. The findings of the study regarding effective school practices for at-risk learners are discussed next.

4.6.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Mind-set shift

Participants revealed that most learners enjoy the learning experiences, and this can be attributed to a mind-set makeover which most at-risk learners at the school undergo. According to Participant TA, when at-risk learners set their minds towards their education and with the necessary support from all sub-systems in the ecosystems (teachers, family, external environment), at-risk learners flourish on the needed support and guidance for optimal growth:

“If the mind-set is set right on education, the learners enjoy the learning experiences” [TA].

Participants TD and TG agreed that through the help of all support structures as referred to in Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems theory, at-risk learners derive a better and

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

broaden understanding of education and why it is necessary to achieve academically, and why they are empowered to make better life choices:

“Yes, at-risk learners have a better view of themselves and a more broaden understanding of education” [TD].

“This process empowers at-risk learners in making much better life choices leading to their future” [TG].

At-risk learners' mind-set shifts play an important role in their journey of transformation to a more constructive life. In this regard, the retention of at-risk learners in the schooling system is attributed to teachers' support, school support, peer support and family and community involvement. Dancy (2014) emphasises that teachers in the education of at-risk learners play a considerable role in getting from the point of giving-up to a point where they could persevere and achieve (par 2.6.2.1). Participants agreed, as voiced by participant TA, that through the significant intervention of teachers in the education of at-risk learners these learners can persevere and achieve in their educational encounters: *“Yes, 60% of at-risk learners go on to leave productive and extra ordinary lives” [TA].*

Apart from teachers and support workers playing a considerable role in ensuring the success of educating at-risk learners, the Education Department supports teachers with curriculum planning and provides a financial subsidy at the selected school. It was clear from the interviews with participants that parent support is very low at the selected school, with only a small percentage of parents providing the needed support to their children. There are, however, parents who had no education of any sort and who are trying their best to ensure that the same situation is not repeated in the lives of their children. These parents try to support and encourage their children to achieve academically, seeing education as a means of breaking the vicious cycle of poverty.

4.6.3.2 Sub-theme 2: *Breaking the cycle of poverty*

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Poverty is considered a risk factor that jeopardises learners' academic performance (Wills and Hofmeyr, 2018:1). However, even in high-poverty contexts there are learners who manage to achieve consistently good academic results (par 2.6.2). The study found that at the research site there are learners who have persevered and completed their schooling despite their unfavourable life circumstances. As educating at-risk learners successfully can result in breaking the vicious cycle of poverty, the aim is to encourage these learners to "*start dreaming BIG now, dreaming to break the cycle of poverty in their family*" [TB]. Participant TB explained that, through the effective application of school practices in dealing with the education of at-risk learners, they start dreaming BIG and as such fight the inheritance of poverty in their lives by committing all efforts towards their education.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Lewis and McCann (2009:897) explain the influence of family issues upon learners at risk as a factor that determines schooling successes. The culture from which at-risk learners originates relates to familial issues such as low economic status and engendering related constraints such as family disintegration, teenage pregnancies, substance abuse and gangsterism. Teachers and schools must counter such conditions to successfully educate at-risk learners in their care. Participant TG pointed out that once these familial issues are identified and addressed on behalf of the learners there is a sudden change in the dynamics towards the life of these learners, because "*at-risk learners are then motivated to progress in life*" [TG].

One of the goals of the Department of Basic Education in South Africa is to retain as many learners as possible and to prevent drop-out in the schooling system. Approximately 60% of learners who enter the schooling system complete Matric, and 40% drop out of the system after numerous repeated failures (Department of Basic Education, 2017a) (par 2.6.1.1).

Participant TC proclaimed that when low socio-economic status constraints of learners are combatted with effective school practices, it alleviates the chances of learners dropping out and thus remaining in the vicious cycle of poverty. The process gives at-risk learners

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

hope and courage to remain in the schooling system and to complete their secondary schooling education: *“It presents to them their future opportunities”* [TC].

The study revealed that the selected school’s processes and procedures of addressing the effect of at-risk learners’ low socio-economic status with related conditions is successful in combatting at-risk learners dropping out of school and remaining in the cycle of poverty. Part of dealing with these familial issues is the provision of nutritious meals for all learners and the provision of transport subsidies. These support endeavours at the selected school in themselves have assisted the school in reducing the drop-out rate amongst at-risk learners to improve retention rates based on an environment conducive to learning for at-risk learners.

4.6.3.3 Sub-theme 3: Game changer

Education systems across the world are exploring numerous ways to combat the challenges faced by teachers teaching at-risk learners with the aim of addressing the root cause of this endemic societal problem (par 2.7). Participants revealed that the school tries its best to support at-risk learners in their care to a point of self-reliance. Participant TA confirmed this notion saying the school employs a more practical individual level approach in addressing at-risk learners’ problems. Lamb and Rice (2008:18) allude to this approach as a way of providing strategic, targeted welfare and skills programmes to impact the learning capacity of at-risk learners for retained schooling, which Participant TA acknowledged as *“a game changer as learners then evolve and excel in life”*.

Lamb and Rice (2008:10) explain the individual level approach to address the challenges faced by at-risk learners relating to a school-wide methods approach based on a supportive school-culture to educate and support at-risk learners. In order to change the dynamics of problems faced by at-risk learners, schools develop a supportive school-culture that fosters connections with learners, parents and the community, and creates a school climate of high expectations and accountability (par 2.7). The researcher noted that this was the case at the research site as the school employed a supportive school-culture

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

approach. This approach is felt and noted in the day-to-day engagements with learners and teachers at the selected school. Participants commented that the education at the research site is a journey of hope and transformation. These values are enshrined and embedded in the daily practices of the school. Participant TC commented that although the changes in life approach may not be present immediately, with time these monumental changes in their approach to life become evident as learners progress with their schoolwork with possible eventual tertiary education serving as a vector to change their socio-economic status conditions. Participant TC commented:

“Yet, their social circumstances might not change immediately, but it will give the learner a better future if he is supported to persevere with his schoolwork” [TC].

It was clear from the interviews with participants that the degree of teacher and school caring and interactions with learners has a significantly positive impact on decreasing dropout rates for at-risk learners. The caring at the research site was found to be in line with Kennelly and Monrad (2007:11) confirming that caring schools decrease dropout rates through an overall positive school climate that facilitates constant learner engagement (par 2.7). This approach of constant engagement through caring and support becomes a game changer in the lives of many at-risk learners influencing their life propositions for the better.

4.6.4 Theme 4: Best practices in the education of at-risk learners - Solutions

4.6.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Solutions from practical experience in educating at-risk learners

Participants acknowledged that although at-risk learners can be successfully educated despite inhibiting home and external environmental conditions (par 2.6.2), success stories are difficult to achieve. Participants perceived the factors pertaining to successful schooling of at-risk learners as teacher support from the Department of Education, initial

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

appropriate teacher training, school support from school leadership, peer support from colleagues and family involvement. Regarding the initial teacher training and teacher support, Participant FTI commented on the importance of teachers having knowledge of and skill in dealing with at-risk learners:

“And to define learners at-risk, these are learners who are at risk of not reaching their full potential. They walk in today, full of anxiety, basic needs not met, self-esteem not well developed or traumatized by crime in their communities. So, this is a skill that you hardly find among new teachers currently. Naturally born teachers, don't exist anymore. I recommend that the knowledge about at-risks and their vulnerability be taught to our teachers at teachers' college, otherwise we are setting them up for failure” [FTI].

Participant TI emphasised the importance of support to at-risk learners from their teachers as relating to *“driving academics, finding ways to shape the learners' character, and finding opportunities to prepare them for outside of the school” [TI]*. For Participant FTI the provision of financial and nutritional support for at-risk learners in the form of meals and transport money is crucial because *“without the nutrition and transport subsidy and child care grant, solutions to challenging conditions are not possible”*.

Participant FTI concurred with Dancy (2014) that an important task of teachers of at-risk learners is getting these learners from the point of giving-up to a point where they could persevere and achieve. Regardless of learners' home and environment circumstances of poverty and neglect, *“enriching a child that is at the turning point is the only thing to do to address the wrongdoing of the past; school for at-risk should be replicated across our communities” [FTI]*.

It was clear from the interviews with participants that providing some sort of financial support can be an important means of keeping at-risk learners in school. Further, teachers' caring for and interaction with at-risk learners have a positive influence on decreased

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

dropout rates. This caring by teachers teaching at-risk learners relates to being focused on learning successes and finding ways to shape the characters of at-risk learners through their interactions with these learners. Initial teacher training, according to Mashau (2012:55), should include exposure to education policy, education administration, structure of teaching, and diversity of teachers and learners, as this will capacitate teachers to handle different learners and different situations. A focus on these themes with teacher training may result in the development of skilled teachers capable of handling at-risk learners and their situations and thus contribute to successful schooling opportunities for at-risk learners in South Africa.

4.6.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Best practices in teaching at-risk learners

Participant TG emphasised the importance of constructive discipline fostering long lasting attitudes towards life as a tool to promote academic achievement among at-risk learners. Participant TG explained as follows:

“I draw my boundaries, I promote academic focus”; “discipline is taught which is then applied to at-risk learners’ future” [TG].

Participant FTM added that, when teachers invest their time and effort in the education of at-risk learners, these learners become well-rounded human beings who want to achieve academically. Teachers’ time and effort could be in the form of mentoring, discipline and nurturing *“with this investment and support, ensuring that at-risk learners can achieve”* [FTM].

Participant FTI emphasised that trust and rapport must be intact before teachers can successfully educate at-risk learners simply because these learners do not trust anyone due to trauma previously experienced. Participant FTI therefore suggested that teachers should first develop trust and rapport and demonstrate integrity by keeping their word and promises to at-risk learners to ensure that they will thrive academically and socially within the schooling system. Participant FTI commented as follows:

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

“To date, even more importantly, we now have children who come from diverse background, income groups, single household family, trauma and privileged etc. Teachers nowadays come into class to teach lesson where they haven't even developed trust, rapport with children who are traumatized and don't trust you. These are learners at risk; in the context of at-risk learners, you have to show integrity, keep your words and promise to them. Teaching at-risk learners require the best of all methods and approaches” [FTI].

For Participant FTM, constant motivation and observation are necessary in order to develop and maintain trust and rapport with at-risk learners. Participant FTM said:

“By the constant motivation for devotion, learners are encouraged to persevere; our learners receive so much encouragement and support the teachers at our school are very observant” [FTM].

Concurring with Wali and Saad (2018:280), it was clear from the interviews with participants that assisting at-risk learners to succeed academically includes focused support from a caring and committed teacher. Therefore, teachers of at-risk learners play a vital role in these learners' education by providing support, care and motivation to them. When at-risk learners are motivated, cared for and supported adequately, they are likely to stay in the school system and complete their secondary school education.

4.7 DATA COLLECTED BY MEANS OF DIRECT OBSERVATION

Direct observation as an alternative source of data collection to answer the research question was used by the researcher. Holmes (2013) indicates that direct observation, also known as observational study, is a method of collecting meaningful information by means of which the researcher observes the subject in his or her usual environment without altering that environment. Observation as a data collection method is used to

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

evaluate an ongoing behaviour process, event, or situation that can be readily seen. After having completed the semi-structured individual interviews, the researcher observed participants in their natural classroom settings. Observation was enacted to ascertain whether what was said by participants during the interviews matched their experiences in their classrooms.

The researcher conducted direct observation in the classrooms of ten teachers who were teaching at-risk learners.

4.7.1 Behavioural key indicators

From the observation of the ten teacher participants in their classroom settings over two days, three indicators became apparent relating to disruptions, namely non-vulgar, nonviolent and destructive.

4.7.1.1 *Indicator 1: Non-vulgar (NV) behaviour*

Non-vulgar behaviour as apparent during the direct observation depicts learners' bodily expressions towards peers and teachers in the classroom. Fifteen non-vulgar interactions from learner to teacher, forty-eight non-vulgar interactions from learner to learner and two non-vulgar interactions from teacher to learner were observed. The researcher noted that tuition was able to progress despite these levels of disruption from learners and teachers. Although the researcher noted that some teachers used inappropriate teaching methods, namely GIB (General Inappropriate Behaviour), to maintain orderliness during their lessons, it was clear that this method is used to draw learners' attention back to the task at hand. GIB includes at-risk learners making all sorts of degrees of threats towards peers and teachers.

The researcher recorded some participants raising their voices to motivate at-risk learners to give attention to tuition or to interject discussions relating to back-chatting. However, the average level of constructive engagement with subject content was 95% of the tuition

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

time in an hour. GIB examples pertained to teachers clapping their hands to demand learners' attention, or teachers raising their voices to address learners' disruptive behaviour.

Participant TD raised her voice to get the attention of learners after numerous efforts to calm the learners down for tuition. With many learners refusing to listen to the teacher, the challenges faced by teachers teaching at-risk learners became evident, namely to pursue an average level of engagement by learners for at least 75% of the tuition time of an hour.

4.7.1.2 Indicator 2: Non-violent (NVI) behaviour

Non-violent behaviour as apparent during the direct observation depicts learners' attitudes and conduct towards learning. This conduct was mostly manifested in the form of a do not care message or disposition. As recorded during the observations, there were five nonviolent interactions from learner to teacher, ninety-seven non-violent interactions from learner to learner and nine non-violent interactions from teacher to learner. The non-violent interactions included eating in class, no classwork books, sleeping in class, walking around the classroom and conversing on topic off-task. In one of the instances, Participant TH tried to attract learners' attention to the topic by introducing the lesson objectives first, before asking the learners to take out their classwork books. The researcher noted that most of the learners failed to present their classwork books but continued chatting with their fellow learners.

Participant TH used a non-violent approach by clapping to cut out conversations during lesson time which resulted in five minutes of learner attention to the lesson. Twenty minutes into the lesson, some at-risk learners fell into a deep sleep while others walked around the classroom disrupting fellow learners. However, these few disruptive learners did not disrupt teaching as the average level of engagement was 95% of the tuition time of an hour.

4.7.1.3 Indicator 3: Destructive (D) behaviour

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Destructive behaviour are cases where at-risk learners destroy the learning resources available for teaching and learning. This behaviour is manifested in the form of damage to the textbooks and stationery of peer learners and that of the teacher. These behaviours lead to unruliness and ill-discipline among at-risk learners which may completely hamper their successful engagement. The analysis of the direct observations showed that there were four destructive interactions from learner to teacher, twenty-nine destructive interactions from learner to learner and twenty-three destructive interactions from teacher to learner. According to the observations, teachers teaching at-risk learners resort to destructive interactions with learners when they have tried all they could to keep the learners focused on the tuition at hand. Participant TG's average level of engagement of learners with subject content was 50% of the tuition time of an hour. The researcher noted that the learners were unruly, despite all the efforts by the teacher to continue facilitating subject matter. The researcher noted that learners were eating in class after break, which is against the teacher's classroom rules; most learners arrived at class with no classwork books.

These observations alluded to what participants conveyed during interviewing, namely their frustrations with ill-discipline issues common among at-risk learners such as not valuing learning and arriving without stationery which is exacerbated by low parental support. It was clear from the classroom observations that the education of at-risk learners has become solely the responsibility of teachers without any support from parents for the well-being of their children.

4.8 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the research results of the empirical investigation were analysed, interpreted and synthesised to put forward the challenges of teaching at-risk learners at a secondary school in Cape Town. According to Guzman (2007:1), the common denominator with regard to at-risk learners is providing support to them to ensure they do

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

not drop out from school. Adequate support to at-risk learners pertains to teacher support, school support and family and community support.

Four main themes were identified from the interviews and direct observations relating to the literature review findings. These themes gave insight into the challenges of teaching at-risk learners from a systemic point of view, as well as best practices in the education of at-risk learners. It was clear that teaching at-risk learners demands tailor-made teacher training in order to be equipped with applicable knowledge and skills to support at-risk learners cognitively and emotionally. The main challenges with teaching at-risk learners were determined to relate to behavioural issues, lack of classwork books and textbooks, lack of social support, and misplaced value of second chance education. A crucial factor representing best practices with teaching learners at risk of dropping out is mentoring and nurturing them with the aim being to keep at-risk learners in school to ensure successful schooling.

The above themes were discussed based on the insights gained from interviews with teacher participants. The final chapter of this study will synthesise and consolidate findings by means of providing a summary from which conclusions will be deduced and recommendations made for improved practice.

CHAPTER FIVE SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present the summary, findings and recommendations of this study. The main aim of the study was to understand how teachers of at-risk learners can be equipped to provide them with successful learning experiences. The research sub questions of the study were:

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

- How does teacher training equip teachers to teach at-risk learners successfully?
- What are the challenges teachers teaching at-risk learners experience?
- What is the influence of successful teaching on the learning experiences and life propositions of at-risk learners?

The answers to these research questions will be discussed in the conclusion section of this chapter.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 introduced the study by providing information regarding the background to the study (par 1.2). The motivation for the study was to contribute to the development of new and more comprehensive practical approaches in engaging at-risk learners in learning in the Western Cape region of South Africa (par 1.3). Furthermore, the study was focused on providing guidelines to teachers of school leaders in the delivery of quality learning experiences to at-risk learners.

When teachers in collaboration with parents put the needs of an individual learner or a classroom uppermost on their agenda, that helps them in reaching out to vulnerable and at-risk learners, and as such increase the effectiveness of their interventions. This can be achieved by ensuring that there is good quality teaching and learning opportunities at schools as well as improved attendance and good behaviour. Good quality teaching and learning at schools serving at-risk learners, in particular, is deemed an important practical approach in ensuring that at-risk learners gain access to quality education despite their challenging backgrounds. It was with this intention that the main aim of the research was to ascertain whether teachers at the sampled school are equipped well enough through teacher training to educate at-risk learners successfully, and to identify the different challenges faced by these teachers in teaching at-risk learners. Therefore, the first focus of this research was on the training opportunities for teachers in South Africa relevant to teaching at-risk learners; the second focus was vested on the challenges faced by

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

teachers teaching at-risk learners; and, finally, the focus was on understanding what influence successful teaching and learning has on the life propositions of at-risk learners. The main research question for this study was phrased as follows:

How can South African teachers be equipped to engage at-risk learners in successful learning experiences?

The conceptualisation of at-risk learners as considered globally and locally was discussed relating to support for at-risk learners completing senior secondary school and suggestions on approaches to prevent them from disengagement with their education and school system. Furthermore, issues relating to the social ills in South Africa associated with the development of at-risk learners were discussed (par 1.2.2). A preliminary literature review on marginalised South African youth and the provisions of the South African Youth Policy (2010) was conducted. Further review of the South African education system filled with vulnerability and, the significant risk to social cohesion and political stability was conducted (par 1.2.2 & 1.2.3). The research design and methodology pertaining to a constructivist research paradigm, since the study reality is socially constructed, was outlined. The study followed a qualitative research approach with the focus on understanding social phenomena from a human perspective (par 1.6.2). It was clear that once the extent to which South African teachers are equipped in engaging at-risk learners in successful learning is determined, the recommendations on how to address the challenges that teachers of at-risk learners face in the process of educating them successfully could be discussed (par 1.5).

Chapter 2 provided a literature study to use as a base on which to pose the relevant research questions presented in the semi-structured interview schedule. Research conducted on trends and development theories with regard to the challenges of teaching secondary school learners at risk in provincial regions of other countries was compared to the challenges of teaching secondary school learners at risk in the Western Cape region of South Africa (par 2.5). These trends and development theories included the increasing attention drawn to at-risk learners, who they are and what can schools do to help them.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

As several factors place learners at-risk of not completing their education, it was needful to view these factors from a development angle, namely human development and its associated problems in an educational context (par 2.1).

Next, the at-risk tree metaphor (informal framework) and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory serving as theoretical framework for this study were discussed (par 2.2 & 2.3). The at-risk tree metaphor was used as an informal theoretical lens to explore and understand the concept of working with at-risk learners. This was followed by a discussion of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model articulating the fact that the quality and the context of a child's surroundings determine the future propositions of a child. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory served as the theoretical framework for this study (par 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.3, 2.3.4 & 2.3.5). The challenges of teaching at-risk learners in a local and international context were discussed as pertaining to at-risk learners' behaviour and academic performance, and the numerous psychological stressors faced by at-risk learners such as dysfunctional family structure, substance abuse and negative peer interactions (par 2.6 & 2.7). Finally, in Chapter 2, the influence of teacher training in South Africa in addressing the challenges of at-risk learners was discussed as pertaining to ensuring that initial teacher training is highly standardised and fundamentally equal in order to promote an equitable system of education as seen in neighbouring African countries (par 2.8).

Chapter 3 reported on the research design and methodology used to conduct this study. The research design was explained, along with the research paradigm (par 3.3.1). A constructivist research paradigm was chosen (par 3.3.2) as the research paradigm, a philosophical viewpoint where people can seek understanding of the world in which they (at-risk learners and their teachers) live and work. From this perspective, individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences and meanings directed toward certain objects and issues (par 3.3.2). Using phenomenology, the researcher developed a real life understanding of the studied phenomenon by relying on first person accounts, as these

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

accounts pertained to the challenges that teachers of at-risk learners face in the delivery of successful learning experiences (par 3.3.3).

The qualitative research approach was used to conduct this study (par 3.3), which then led to the rationale for choosing qualitative research methods to collect data, namely the constructivist research paradigm using a phenomenological study approach (par 3.3.1). The research objectives pertaining to providing at-risk learners with successful learning experiences and exploring how teacher training in South Africa equips teachers in educating at-risk learners successfully were linked to the formulated research questions (par 3.2). Purposive sampling relating to choosing a small group of participants who had authoritative knowledge on the teaching at-risk learners' topic was identified (par 3.4.1). The sample size comprised of only teachers with a minimum of two years working experience with at-risk learners. These teachers provided information-rich data about the phenomenon under study, namely, to approach at-risk learners in such a way that they are motivated to persevere with their schooling (par 3.4.2). Semi-structured face-to-face interviews and direct observation resulted in the collection of meaningful data transpiring into emerging themes, culminating into research findings as answers to the postulated research questions.

From the formulated sub-questions from Chapter 1, four themes with sub-themes emerged as research findings (par 4.6). The findings pertaining to the study suggest that the only time when teachers were taught about at-risk learners was when they attended a course on education inclusivity. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the current teacher training does not equip teachers of at-risk learners. Mashau (2012:55) indicates that, in order to capacitate prospective teachers in South Africa, pre-service training should not focus only on lesson plans, teaching lessons and classroom management, but should also encapsulate more rigorous methods and pedagogical skills to address challenges faced by teachers of at-risk learners (par 2.8). Furthermore, it was clear that behavioural issues, lack of resources and parental support, lack of social support, misplaced values of second chance education, and influences of at-risk learners and their teachers are all considered to be hindrances to the successful education of at-risk

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

learners. De Lannoy et al. (2018) argue that the effective implementation of youth development policies requires a comprehensive understanding of young people's realities (par 2.5). The findings of the study also revealed that the degree of teacher and school caring and interactions with at-risk learners has a significant impact on dropout rates. Kennelly and Monrad (2007:11) confirm that schools successful in dealing with dropout problems address overall school climate in order to facilitate learner engagement. Wali and Saad (2018:280) suggested that several teaching approaches that help at-risk learners succeed academically include a greater degree of support from a caring and committed teacher, hence the study revealed that nowadays teachers failed to develop trust and rapport with at-risk learners (2.7).

In line with the challenges of teaching at-risk learners, conclusions and recommendations are discussed next.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

The conclusions of the study are discussed below aligned to the four research sub questions (par 1.5).

5.3.1 Teacher training equipping teachers to teach learners at-risk successfully

Teacher training does not fully prepare teachers teaching at-risk learners to successfully educate them in constructive education, the reason being that the training received at teacher training institutions is not effective enough and, as a result, teachers of at-risk learners are simply not effective in engaging with at-risk learners. On the contrary, at-risk learners are not encouraged to persevere with their schoolwork. The findings thus indicate that there is an existing gap in teacher training in South Africa in that teacher training does not effectively equip teachers with knowledge on their roles and responsibilities in guiding learners at-risk, discovering these learners' potential, disciplining these learners constructively and providing learning resources of an emotional kind to aid successful teaching and learning. South African teacher training must be bolstered and focused on

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

teaching at-risk learners, since most mainstream public and independent schools now serve at-risk learners of various degrees (par 4.6.1.1). Teachers are embodiments of the school as they model behaviours to learners by holding at-risk learners accountable and that if teachers challenge and improve the approach of the school, this approach will yield results in the form of model behaviour from learners (par 1.2.2). Teacher training must prepare teachers for the reality in classrooms as this reality pertains to understanding the issues associated with at-risk learners because inadequate teacher training results in an inability to successfully engage these learners in meaningful learning (par 2.8 & 4.6.1.1).

Teachers must undergo a mind-set shift in order to successfully transform the lives of at-risk learners. In this regard, a certain type of teacher personality is needed to successfully educate at-risk learners, which must be fostered by teacher training (par 4.6.1.3). Diversity, which pertains to culture, socio-economic status and gender approaches of learners, must be included as a component of teacher training, exposing prospective teachers to the heterogeneous reality in South African classrooms. This will contribute to the development of well-rounded teachers capacitated to educate at-risk learners successfully (par 4.6.1.2). Difficulties of educating at-risk learners include misbehaviours as the result of some temporary condition of the learner and misbehaviours as an ongoing, repetitive matter related to the characteristics of the learner (par 2.4.2.1). Misbehaviours are rampant among at-risk learners and this inhibits the successful engagement of at-risk learners in meaningful teaching and learning. This has a negative influence on teachers teaching at-risk learners manifesting in these teachers developing a mind-set pertaining to nihilism in teaching at-risk learners (par 4.6.1.3). Teachers' teaching tasks would have been easier if their pre-service education had prepared them adequately for teaching at-risk learners because teachers only know about teaching at-risk learners when they are appointed at schools teaching such learners.

The Department of Basic Education does not offer any in-service training to teachers teaching at-risk learners. The limited preparation for teaching learners at risk pertains to enrolment for a course on education inclusivity as part of a bachelor's degree in education. Most prospective teachers leave teacher training with limited skills to teach learners at

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

risk; as a result, these learners fare poorly (Taylor, 2014). Since democracy the South African education system has encountered increasing numbers of at-risk learners, hence prospective teachers must be trained to teach these at-risk learners successfully (Van Zyl, 2019).

5.3.2 Challenges for teachers teaching at-risk learners

Apart from the poor academic attainment of at-risk learners because of the debilitating approaches used by teachers to engage these learners, the unsuccessful engagement of at-risk learners is attributed to detrimental factors such as peer pressure, neglect and domestic violence, resulting in grade retention, chronic absenteeism, aggression and abuse (par 1.2 & 4.6.2).

There is a greater tendency for at-risk learners to engage in delinquent behaviour and eventual dropout if intervention measures are not put in place. South African schools are filled with vulnerable learners and it is difficult for teachers to identify these learners, resulting in them resisting teachers and school interventions (par 1.2.3 & 4.6.2.1). At-risk learners have no control over themselves, presenting disruptions to learning during tuition times. Due to not having a significant adult in their lives, at-risk learners lack structure and routine resulting in them not being prepared and focused for the school day as is evident from not having their stationery and school books with them. Lack of parental support for these learners prevails as parents show lack of commitment and support for their children's education and their children's wellbeing. This behaviour from parents leaves the entire accountability for at-risk learners' wellbeing in the hands of their teachers. As nurturing and grooming provided by biological parents are non-existent with at-risk learners who are lacking trusted and committed primary caregivers, the task of nurturing is shifted to the teachers (par 2.2). When at-risk learners arrive at school tired, restless and hyperactive this is mainly attributed to substance abuse.

Although the school provides social services through a permanently employed social worker, having one social worker to see to the social support needs of over a hundred

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

vulnerable learners daily is not adequate (par 2.4.2.2 & 4.6.2.4). Interruptions created by the social worker during lesson time when learners have to attend counselling sessions or partake in a focus group workshop hamper successful learning. At-risk learners tend to target one another and perpetuate vicious acts relating to verbal abuse and physical fights in the classroom, which further hampers successful learning. They arrive at school despondent, demotivated and unwilling to accept the environment which they find themselves in because of the challenges they face at home and in their communities (par 2.4.2.1 & 4.6.2.4). Although the permanently employed social worker and teachers support at-risk learners emotionally and cognitively at school, little is done to support these learners in their homes and in the community (par 2.2 & 2.3).

The research site is the only school in the Western Cape that provides at-risk learners with a second chance at education and, according to their admission policy, they can enrol learners up to the age of 21 years. The research site is categorised as a special school due to the school's enrolment and admission policies, serving the most vulnerable of the exposed, namely at-risk learners. Although learners make use of this opportunity to set matters right with their education, the value of a second chance at education is misplaced by some learners retaining the same inhibiting approaches and attitudes towards life (par 2.6.1.3). In this regard teachers keep at-risk learners at school within a second chance education environment motivated by the values taught by the school that relate to family, respect, responsibility, perseverance and hope.

The fact that some at-risk learners hamper the progress of teaching and learning, daily impeding the success of educating them, relates to these learners struggling to learn at the pace of their peers (par 2.6). If this struggling to learn is not attended to, challenges to persevere with learning are encountered (par 4.6.2.6). There are committed and dedicated teachers teaching at-risk learners. However, there are also teachers who are less committed to the education of these learners by being absent from school and often communicating a message of lack of care for them (par 4.6.2.7). The disposition of teachers teaching at-risk learners must not be one of anti-at-risk learners, labelling these learners as dropouts, giving up in trying to engage them in teaching and learning. The

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

disposition of teachers teaching at-risk learners must be to always convey a message of trust and commitment encouraging at-risk learners to embrace the second-chance opportunity to education (2.4 & 4.6.2.7).

5.3.3 The influence of successful teaching on the learning experiences and life propositions of learners at-risk

Effective school practices create a conducive learning atmosphere for learning to thrive. Although the successful application of effective school practices contributes to successful learning, the question remains whether the techniques, processes and procedures which are successful with mainstream schooling yield equitable results with the teaching and learning of at-risk learners (par 2.6.2.1). The answer is that most learners enjoy learning experiences, requiring a mind-set makeover which at-risk learners at the selected school undergo. When at-risk learners set their minds towards their education, and with the necessary support from all sub-systems in the ecosystems (teachers, family, external environment), they flourish on the needed support and guidance for optimal growth to derive a broadened understanding of education and why it is necessary to achieve academically to be empowered at making better life choices (par 1.2.1 & 2.3). In this regard, at-risk learners' mind set shifts play an important role in their journey of transformation to a more constructive life with their retention at school attributed to teachers' support, school support, peer support and family and community involvement. Through the significant intervention by teachers in the education of at-risk learners, these learners can persevere and achieve in their educational encounters (par 2.6.2.1 & 4.6.3.1).

Apart from teachers and support workers playing a role in ensuring the success of educating at-risk learners, the Education Department supports teachers with curriculum planning and provides a financial subsidy for the day-to-day operations at the selected school. Parental support is very low at the selected school, but teachers and support workers ensure that learners receive the best education possible and endeavour to break the cycle of poverty (par 4.6.3.1). When low socio-economic status constraints of learners are combatted with effective school practices, it alleviates the chances of learners

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

dropping out and thus remaining in the vicious cycle of poverty. The process gives at-risk learners hope and courage to remain in the schooling system and to complete their secondary school education (par 4.6.3.2). The provision of nutritious meals for all learners and the provision of transport subsidies contribute to at-risk learners completing their school education (par 2.6.1.1 & 4.6.3.2).

In order to change the dynamics of problems faced by at-risk learners, schools develop a supportive school-culture that fosters connections with learners, parents and the community, and creates a school climate of high expectations and accountability (par 2.7). The degree of teacher and school caring and interactions with learners have a significantly positive impact on decreasing dropout rates for at-risk learners. Caring schools decrease dropout rates through an overall positive school climate that facilitates constant learner engagement (par 2.7 & 4.6.3.3). At-risk learners can be successfully educated despite inhibiting home and external environmental conditions (par 2.6.2), if financial support is provided to keep at-risk learners in school.

Constructive discipline serves in fostering long lasting attitudes towards life and as a tool to promote academic achievement among at-risk learners. When teachers invest their time and effort in the education of at-risk learners by means of constructive discipline, these learners become well-rounded human beings that want to achieve academically (par 4.6.4.2). Constructive discipline relates to developing trust and rapport with at-risk learners because these learners do not trust anyone due to trauma previously experienced. Assisting at-risk learners to succeed academically includes focused support from a caring and committed teacher. When at-risk learners are encouraged, cared for and supported adequately, they are likely to stay in the school system and complete their secondary school education (par 2.7 & 4.6.4.2).

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The main objective of this study was to understand how teachers of at-risk learners can be equipped to provide them with successful learning experiences. Considering the

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

findings from the collected data, recommendations based on both the literature study and empirical investigation are proposed. As teachers and parents of at-risk learners are stakeholders in supporting and motivating them to stay in the school system and complete their secondary school education, recommendations focus on teacher training, and mind-sets towards teaching learners at risk.

5.4.1 Recommendation with regard to research objective one

Research objective one was to determine how teacher training in South Africa equips teachers in educating learners at risk successfully.

RECOMMENDATION: Inadequate training at teacher training institutions debilitates teachers to engage at-risk learners in constructive education. To address this issue of inadequate training, South African teacher training must be bolstered and focused on at-risk learners, since most mainstream public and independent schools now serve at-risk learners of various degrees (par 4.6.1.1). For teacher training to provide adequate training to teachers teaching at-risk learners, teacher training must include a module on diversity, which pertains to culture, socio-economic status and gender approaches of learners. A training module on diversity will expose prospective teachers to the reality in classrooms, developing them into well-rounded teachers capacitated to educate at-risk learners successfully (par 4.6.1.2).

Teachers teaching at-risk learners must have a mind-set that understands and has sympathy with the behaviours of the learners they teach. Common practice in dealing with the behaviours of learners at risk must be highlighted in workshops by means of regular in-service training since teacher training in South Africa lacks such pre-service training. The content of these workshops must be focused on topics like discipline, motivation, perseverance, responsibility and goal setting. This will give the teachers full ownership and confidence in the education process of at-risk learners (par 2.4.2.1). Provincial Departments of Education must be responsible for in-service professional training to teachers teaching learners at risk (par 2.6 & 4.6.1.4).

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

5.4.2 Recommendation with regard to research objective two

Research objective two was focused on identifying teachers' challenges and experiences with teaching learners at risk. The unsuccessful engagement of at-risk learners in their schoolwork is because of peer pressure, neglect and domestic violence resulting in grade retention, chronic absenteeism, aggression and abuse (par 1.2 & 4.6.2).

RECOMMENDATION: Teachers of at-risk learners must have measures in place to help them understand the value of an education through a second chance at education. As learners' disposition towards education influences learning negatively when such dispositions are of negative intent, the school leadership and teachers must jointly develop a school culture which is value driven to enable at-risk learners to cultivate a better understanding of life and the essence of a second-chance at education (par 2.6.2.1 & 4.6.2.6). As learners' success in learning depends on their positive disposition towards life, at-risk learners who are successful in completing their high school education is attributed to the values taught at school (par 2.6.2.1 & 4.6.2.5).

As learners at risk do not enjoy the support of a dedicated primary caretaker, teachers must engage in dedicated teaching practices showing support and compassion for their learners (par 2.2 & 2.3). Teachers must encourage and motivate their at-risk learners constantly during tuition time and at school assemblies. Pastoral care motivates learners to succeed academically and to stay in school to complete their secondary school education (par 2.6.2.1). The notion of at-risk learners to drop out must be reprogrammed by skilled teachers who discern misbehaviour in a learner as that of someone who is in need of discipline and nurture (par 2.6).

Teachers of at-risk learners must demonstrate commitment to their education. Being absent from school often conveys a message of lack of care for at-risk learners (par 4.6.2.7). Teachers of at-risk learners must be present every day thus conveying the

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

message of commitment to their education; a message of trust and commitment must always be conveyed in classroom (par 2.4.4.2 & 4.6.2.7).

5.4.3 Recommendation regarding research objective three

Research objective three was focused on establishing the influence which successful teaching has on the life experiences and life propositions of at-risk learners.

RECOMMENDATION: Using effective schooling practices creates a conducive learning atmosphere for learning to thrive. The successful application of effective schooling practices contributes to successful learning, also with regard to the teaching and learning of at-risk learners (par 2.6.2.1).

Learners enjoy meaningful learning experiences, attributing to a positive mind-set makeover for learners at risk. At-risk learners' positive mind-set shifts play an important role in their journey of transformation to a more constructive life. Teachers of at-risk learners must therefore continue to provide significant teaching and learning interventions as these provide opportunities for at-risk learners to achieve in their educational endeavours (par 2.6.2.1 & 4.6.3.1).

Through the help of all support structures as referred to in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, at-risk learners derive a better and broadened understanding of education and why it is necessary to achieve academically, and why they are empowered at making better life choices (par 2.3). Therefore, life skill training must be provided to at-risk learners. Life skill knowledge pertaining to drug awareness, time management, computer skills training and constructive leisure time engagement will afford at-risk learners the opportunity to derive a broadened understanding of the value of an education and decisions on life choices.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

With parental support limited and with parents who had no education trying to ensure that the same condition is not repeated in the lives of their children, teachers and support workers must ensure that learners receive the best education possible seeing that education can be a means to break the vicious cycle of poverty (par 4.6.3.1). Schools must develop supportive school cultures that foster connections with learners, parents and the community, and create a school climate of high expectations and accountability (par 2.7). Creating a caring and supportive learning environment assists at-risk learners to thrive academically. Kennelly and Monrad (2007) confirm that caring schools decrease dropout rates through an overall positive school climate that facilitates constant learner engagement (par 2.7 & 4.6.3.3).

When teachers invest their time and effort in the education of at-risk learners, these learners become well-rounded human beings who want to achieve academically (par 4.6.4.2). As at-risk learners do not trust anyone due to trauma previously experienced, their teachers must cultivate a culture of trust and rapport. Teachers must assist at-risk learners to succeed academically by being motivated, cared for and supported emotionally, thus encouraging them to stay in the school system and complete their secondary school education (par 2.7 & 4.6.4.2).

5.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Prospects for research regarding teaching learners at risk are the following:

- The first suggestion for further study relates to establishing the correlation between school support and academic achievement of at-risk learners. This entails establishing the degree of school support towards the good academic achievement of at-risk learners.
- The second suggestion is to investigate strategies to involve parents of at-risk learners in their children's education because most of these parents play a very small role in the education of their children. Research about possible methods

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

that schools and the social systems might employ to assist such parents to improved care of their children will contribute to enhanced learning.

- The third suggestion for further study pertains to investigating school leadership measures relevant in addressing school dropout rates at schools catering for high numbers of learners potentially at risk of dropping out of the school system. Retaining more learners in the school system is possible through the development of good leadership structures in secondary schools.
- The last suggestion pertains to determining the success of learning experiences of at-risk learners for an improved quality of adult life engagement.

5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study on the challenges of teaching at-risk learners at a secondary school was limited to one independent school serving at-risk learners in the Western Cape.

The size of this sample, representing a typical qualitative study (par 3.3.1), is the most obvious limitation of the study. This cannot support the general theory on the challenges of teaching at-risk learners at secondary schools because research at different schools in various communities will lead to different findings.

The main aim of the research was to understand how teachers of at-risk learners can be equipped to provide their at-risk learners with successful learning experiences. These findings were reported in Chapter 4. Although no attempt is made to generalise the findings, the challenges experienced by the school pertaining to at-risk learners holds true for schools in similar conditions.

5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The main aim of the research was to find out what the challenges are when teaching at-risk secondary school learners. It further investigated the challenges that teachers of at-

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

risk learners face and solutions that can be implemented to successfully engage these learners in constructive education.

The study revealed the following solutions:

- Teacher training must accommodate a focus on at-risk learners.
- At-risk learners must understand the value of a second chance at education.
- Teachers must use appropriate teaching practice to support at-risk learners.
- Professional development in the form of in-service teacher training must equip teachers to teach learners at risk.
- Schools must create supportive school cultures that foster connections with learners, parents and the community.

The present study has focused on the inadequacies of teacher training in South Africa to prepare teachers to teach learners at risk. The study has also emphasised the need for in-service teacher training to engage at-risk learners in constructive education. If teachers of at-risk learners are provided with enough pre-service and in-service training to engage with learners at risk, this will contribute to successful learning for these learners.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

LIST OF REFERENCES

- Allensworth, E. 2013. The use of ninth-grade early warning indicators to improve Chicago schools. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)*, 18(1):68-83.
- Arthur, J. & Phillips, R. (eds.). 2000. *Issues in history teaching*. London: Routledge.
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L., Sorensen, C. & Razavieh, A. 2010. *Introduction to research in education* (8th ed.). California: Cengage Learning.
- Attride-Stirling, J. 2001. Thematic networks: An analytic tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 1, 385-405. DOI: 10.1177/ 146879410100100307 [Date accessed: 24 April, 2018]
- Bemak, F., Chi-Ying, R. & Siroskey-Sabdo, L., 2005. Empowerment groups for academic success: An innovative approach to prevent high school failure for at-risk, urban African American girls. *Professional School Counselling*, 8(5):377-389.
- Benson, P.L. 2003. Developmental assets and asset-building community: Conceptual and empirical foundations, in R. Lerner and P.L. Benson (eds.). *Developmental assets and asset-building communities: Implications for research, policy and practice*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum. 19-43.
- Lerner, J.V., Phelps, E., Forman, Y. and Bowers, E.P., 2009. *Positive youth development*. John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Berk, L.E. 2000. *Child development* (5th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bernard, H.R. 1994. *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (2nd ed.). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Bialobrzaska, M., Randell, C. and Winkler, G., 2012. CREATING A CARING SCHOOL.
- Booyens, M. & Crause, E. 2012. Excluded from education and work: Perception of at-risk youth. *Social Work Journals*, 48(3):255-257.
- Botha, R.J. 2002. Outcomes-based education and educational reform in South Africa. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 5(4), 361-371.
- Boyce, C. & Neale, P. 2006. "Conducting in-depth interviews: A guide for designing and conducting in-depth interviews", Pathfinder International Tool Series.
- Bradford, S., & Cullen, F. 2012. *Research and research methods for youth practitioners*.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

London: Routledge.

- Bronfenbrenner, U. 1979. *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. 1989. Ecological systems theory. *Annals of Child Development*, 6, 187-249.
- Burnard, P. 2008. A phenomenological study of music teachers' approaches to inclusive education practices among disaffected youth. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 30(1):59-75.
- Carey, G., Malbon, E., Carey, N., Joyce, A., Crammond, B. & Carey, A. 2015. Systems science and systems thinking for public health: A systematic review of the field. *BMJ Open*, 30(5):12.
- Carl, B., Richardson, J.T., Cheng, E., Kin, H., & Meyer, R.H. 2013. Theory and application of early warning systems for high school and beyond. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)*, 18(1):29-49.
- Cassim, L. 2015. *Postgraduate toolkit (DVD)* (2nd ed.). Johannesburg: Layla Cassim ERS Consultants CC.
- Census 2011: Statistics South Africa 2011. South African Population Census 2011. Indicators derived from the full population Census <https://youthexplorer.org.za/profiles/municipality-CPT-city-of-capetown/>
- Chambers, D. 2019. Western Cape schools 'can't cope' as pupils flood in from other provinces. <https://www.iol.co.za/weekend-argus/news/cape-schoolscannot-cope-with-influx-of-pupils-from-other-provinces-19094629> [01 February 2019].
- Chen, X. & Kaufman, P. 1997. "Risk and Resilience: The Effects of Dropping Out of School." Paper presented at the *American Association of Education Research (AERA)*, Chicago, IL.
- Chisholm, L. 2002. Religion, science and evolution in South Africa: The politics and construction of the Revised National Curriculum Statement for Schools (Grades R-9), in W. James and L. Wilson (eds.). *The architect and the scaffold: Evolution and education in South Africa*. Pretoria: HSRC/NAE. 51-59.
- Chisholm, L., 2003. The politics of curriculum review and revision in South Africa.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

- Chisholm, L., 2004. The Making of South Africa's Revised National Curriculum Statement '. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 36, pp.1-16.
- Choak, C. 2012. Asking questions: Interviews and evaluations, in S. Bradford, & F. Cullen (eds.). *Research and research methods for youth practitioners*. London: Routledge. 90-112.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. 2007. *Research methods in education*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Community Survey 2016: Statistics South Africa (2016). South African Community Survey 2016. Indicators derived from the full population Community Survey <https://youthexplorer.org.za/profiles/municipality-CPT-city-of-capetown/>
- Creswell, J.W. 2007. *Qualitative inquiry and research design* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Croninger, R.G. & Lee, V.E. 2001. Social capital and dropping out of high school: Benefits to at-risk students of teachers' support and guidance. *Teachers College Record*, 103(4):548-581.
- Cumming, T.M., Strnadová, I. & Dowse, L. 2014. At-risk youth in Australian schools and promising models of intervention. *International Journal of Special Education* 29(3):16-25.
- Dancy II, E. 2014. (Un)Doing hegemony in education: Disrupting school to prison pipelines for black males. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 47(4):476-493.
- Daniels, M.Q. 2015. *Restorative justice: Rehabilitating South African's youth*. Blurb: Cape Town.
- Davids, I., Theron, F. & Maphunye, K.J. 2009. *Participatory development in South Africa: A development management perspective* (2nd ed.). Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- De Lannoy, A., Fortuin, A., Mpofu-Mketwa, T., Mudiriza, G., Ngcowa, S., Storme, E. & Smith, C. 2018. *Unpacking the lived realities of Western Cape Youth. Exploring the well-being of young people residing in five of the most deprived areas in the Western Cape Province*. Cape Town: Department of the Premier: Western Cape Government, and Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit, University of Cape Town.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Denicolo, P. & Becker, L. 2012. *Developing research proposals* Reading: SAGE. Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. 2011. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*.

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa 2017a. National Senior Certificate Examination Report 2016. Pretoria: Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa. Available at <http://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Reports/NSC%20EXAMINATION%20REPORT%202016.pdf?ver=2017-01-05-110635-443>. [Accessed 11 February 2017].

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD). 2002. Middle Years Research and Development Project Report - Executive Summary. Available at www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/curricman/middleyear/research/MYR_ADExecSummary.doc

Development & Education, 60(1), pp.68–69. Available at: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=fgh&AN=85408152&site=ehost>

DeWalt, K.M. & DeWalt, B.R. 2002. *Participant observation: A guide for fieldworkers*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Donald, D., Lazarus, S. & Lolwana, P. 2010. *Educational psychology in social context*. (4th ed.). Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Due, P., Holstein, B.E., Lynch, J., Diderichsen, F., Nic-Gabhain, S., Scheidt, P., Currie, C. & The Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children Bullying Working Group. 2005. Bullying and symptoms among school-aged children: International comparative cross-sectional study in 28 countries. *European Journal of Public Health*, 15:128-32.

Dyer, C. 1995. *Beginning research in psychology*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Edwards, O.W. & Mumford, V.E. 2005. Children raised by grandparents: Implications for social policy. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 25:18-30.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

- Edwards, O.W., Mumford, V.E. & Serra-Roldon, R. 2007. A Positive youth development model for students considered at-risk. *School Psychology International*, 28(29):29-45.
- Eichelberger, R.T. 1989. *Disciplined inquiry: Understanding and doing educational research*. New York: Longman.
- Engagement, National Center for School, n.d. Serving At-Risk Youth. [Online] Available at: <http://schoolengagement.org/school-engagement-services/at-riskyouth> [Accessed Friday April 2018].
- Equal Education. 2018. *MATRIC RESULTS AND SOUTH AFRICA'S YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT CRISIS*. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://equaleducation.org.za/2017/01/09/matric-results-and-south-africasyouth-unemployment-crisis/>. [Accessed 10 July 2018].
- Flick, U.W.E. 2009. *An introduction to qualitative research*. London: SAGE Publishing.
- Flisher, A. J., Townsend, L., Chikobvu, P., Lombard, C. & King, G. 2004. Substance use and high school dropout. Poster presentation at the *American Public Health Association 132nd annual meeting*, Washington DC: November 6-10.
- Frame, E., De Lannoy, A., Koka, P. & Leibbrandt, M. 2016. *Multidimensional Youth Poverty: Estimating the Youth MPI in South Africa at ward level*. A Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit Working Paper Number 189. Cape Town: SALDRU, Calculated using Census 2011: More information on how the indicator is derived is found in SALDRU Working Paper Number 189 2016: University of Cape Town
<https://youthexplorer.org.za/profiles/municipality-CPT-city-of-cape-town/>
- Frymier, J. & Gansneder, B. 1989. The study of students at risk. *Phi Delta Kappa Bulletin*, 71:142-146.
- Gale, N.K., Heath, G., Cameron, E., Rashid, S. and Redwood, S., 2013. Using the framework method for the analysis of qualitative data in multi-disciplinary health research. *BMC medical research methodology*, 13(1):1-8.
- Gall, M.D., Borg, W.R., & Gall, J.P. 1996. *Educational research: An introduction*. White Plains, NY: Longman.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

- Gandara, P., Larson, K., Mehan, H. & Rumberger, R. 1998. *Capturing Latino students in the academic pipeline*. Berkley, CA: Chicano/Latino Policy Project.
- Giorgi, A. 2009. *The descriptive phenomenological method in psychology: A modified Husserlian approach*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- Grobler, A.A., Knight, M.R., Lens, W. & Lacante, M. 2014. Motivational predictors of successful transition from grade 11 to 12 in South Africa. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 29(4):693-709.
- Grobler, A., Lacante, M. & Lens, W. 2014. *Transition from secondary education to higher education: A three-year longitudinal cognitive-motivational analysis*. Bloemfontein, South Africa: SUN MeDIA.
- Guba, E.G. & Lincoln, Y.S. 1989. *Fourth generation evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Guzman, M. & Bosch, K. 2007. G07-1715 High-Risk Behaviors among Youth.
- Hamilton, S.F. 1986. "Raising standards and reducing the dropout rate," in "School dropouts: Patterns and policies". *TEACHERS COLLEGE RECORD*, 410-429, spring.
- Hammond, C., Linton, D., Smink, J. & Drew, S. 2007. *Dropout risk factors and exemplary programs: A technical report*. National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (NDPC/N).
- Harkonen, U. 2007. The impact of theories on the early childhood education culture - The impact of the new systems theory on the early childhood education culture, in U. Harkonen & E. Savolainen (eds.). *International views on early childhood education*. EBook. University of Joensuu. Savonlinna Department of teacher Education. In Press.
- Herr, E. 1989. *Counselling in a dynamic society; Opportunities and challenges*. Alexandria, V.A.: American Association for Counselling and Development.
- Holmes, A. 2013. Direct observation, in: F.R Volkmar (ed.). *Encyclopedia of Autism Spectrum Disorders*. New York: Springer.71-86.
- Horn, L.J. & Chen, X. 2000. *Towards resiliency: At-risk students who make it to college*. U.S Department of Education: MPR Associates Inc.
- Jamie, 2016. Youth at risk engagement. [Online]

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Available at: [https://www.msf.gov.sg/policies/Children-and-Youth/RebuildingChildren-and-Youth/Outreach-and-Support-for-Youth/Pages/Youth-At-RiskEngagement-\(YARE\)-Framework.aspx](https://www.msf.gov.sg/policies/Children-and-Youth/RebuildingChildren-and-Youth/Outreach-and-Support-for-Youth/Pages/Youth-At-RiskEngagement-(YARE)-Framework.aspx) [Accessed 7 April 2018].

- Jansen, J.D., 1998. Curriculum reform in South Africa: A critical analysis of outcomes-based education. *Cambridge journal of education*, 28(3):321-331.
- Jasen, J. 2013. *We need to act*. Johannesburg: Pan Macmillan.
- Johnson, H., Douglas, J., Bigby, C. & Iacono, T. 2011. The challenges and benefits of using participant observation to understand the social interaction of adults with intellectual disabilities. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 27(4):267-278, DOI: [10.3109/07434618.2011.587831](https://doi.org/10.3109/07434618.2011.587831)
- Jozefowicz-Simbeni, D.M.H. 2008. An ecological and developmental perspective on dropout risk factors in early adolescence: Role of school social workers in dropout prevention efforts. *Children & Schools*, 30(1):49-62. Retrieved from EBSCOHOST on [March 18, 2009].
- Kaufman, P. & Bradby, D. 1992. Characteristics of at-risk students in NELS: 88 (NCES 92- 042). *Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics*.
- Kennelly, L. & Monrad, M. 2007. Approaches to Dropout Prevention: Heeding Early Warning Signs with Appropriate Interventions. *National High School Center*. Available at http://www.betterhighschools.org/docs/NHSC_ApproachesToDropoutPrevention.pdf
- Kervin, L., Vialle, W., Herrington, J., & Okely, T. 2006. *Research for educators*. Melbourne: Thomson.
- Kominski, R., Jamieson, A. & Martinez, G. 2001. *At-Risk Conditions of US School-Age Children*. Washington. DC: US Census Bureau. Retrieved January 15, 2006 from: [HYPERLINK "http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0052.html"](http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0052.html) <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0052.html> .
- Korstjens, I. & Moser, A. 2018. Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice*,

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

24(1):120-124, DOI: 10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092

- Krosnick, J.A., & Presser, S. 2010. Question and questionnaire design. In P.V. Marsden & J.D. Wright (eds.). *Handbook of survey research*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited. 263-314.
- Kvale, S. 1996. *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. California: Sage Publications.
- Lamb, S. & Rice, S. 2008. *Effective Intervention Strategies for Students at Risk of Early leaving*. A report published by the Centre for Post- Compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning, The University of Melbourne [Accessed 14th August 2019].
- Landman, F. 2017. *Opinion*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/opinion/2017-06-26-living-arrows-educatesas-youth-or-risk-a-loss-of-social-cohesion/> [Accessed 17 April 2018].
- LeCompte, M.D., & Preissle, J. 1993. *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research* (2nd ed.). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Leone, P. E. & Mayer, M.J. 2004. Safety, diversity, and disability: Goodness of fit and the complexities of the school environment, in M.J. Furlong, M.P. Bates, & P. Kingery (eds.). *Best practices in school-based threat assessment*. Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science.
- Lerner, R.M. 2003. Developmental assets and asset-building community: A view of the issues, in R. Lerner & P.L. Benson (eds.). *Developmental assets and assetbuilding communities: Implications for research, policy and practice*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum. 3-18.
- Levin, H.M. 1986. *Educational reform for disadvantaged students: An emerging crisis*. (NEA Search). Washington, DC: National Education Association.
- Lewis, R. & McCann, T. 2009. Teaching “at risk” students: Meeting their needs, in L.J. Saha & A.G. Dworkin (eds.). *International handbook of research on teachers and teaching*. *Springer International Handbooks of Education, Vol 21*. Springer, Boston: MA. 242.
- Lichtman, M. 2010. *Qualitative Research in Education: A User's Guide* (2nd ed.). Chapter 4. “*Ethical Issues in Qualitative Research*.” pp. 51-67. Retrieved from:

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

- http://uk.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/27011_4.pdf Lorène, F. 2019. Qualitative research: Open and closed-ended questions. IntoTheMinds: Belgium. <https://www.intotheminds.com/blog/en/qualitativeresearch-open-and-closed-ended-questions/>
- Lynch, M. 2017. A Guide to Enriching the Crisis among Young Black Males. Retrieved from The Advocate: <https://www.theedadvocate.org/guide-ending-crisisamong-young-black-males/> (Accessed on 12 August 2019).
- Maree, J.G. 2012. Career adapt-abilities scale—South African form: Psychometric properties and construct validity. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 80(3):730-733. doi: 10.1016/j.jvb.2012.01.005
- Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. 1995. *Designing qualitative research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Martínez-Mesa, J., González-Chica, D.A., Duquia, R.P., Bonamigo, R.R., & Bastos, J.L. 2016. Sampling: How to select participants in my research study? *An Bras Dermatol*. 91(3):326-330. doi: 10.1590/abd1806-4841.20165254.
- Mashau, T.S. 2012. Pre-service teacher training in South Africa: Are student teachers offered adequate training about South African Education System. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 2(5):204-205.
- Mashau, T.S., Mutshaeni, H.N. & Kone, L.R. 2016. Teacher education: The South African context. *International Journal of Educational Sciences*, 14:1-2, 167-173, DOI: [10.1080/09751122.2016.11890490](https://doi.org/10.1080/09751122.2016.11890490)
- McDill, E.L., Natriello, G. & Pallas, A. M. 1985. *"Raising Standards and Retaining Students: The Impact of the Reform Recommendations on Potential Dropouts."* Baltimore, MD: Center for Social Organization of Schools, The Johns Hopkins University, Report No. 358, April 1985. Reprinted in slightly revised form in *REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH* 55(4), 415-433.
- McDuffie, K.A. & Scruggs, T.E. 2008. The contributions of qualitative research to discussions of evidence-based practice in special education. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 44:91-97.
- McLaren, K. 2000. *Tough is not enough-Getting smart about youth crime*. Wellington: Ministry of Youth Affairs.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

- McMillan, J.H. & Schumacher, S. 2010. *Research in education – Evidence-based inquiry* (7th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education.
- McWhirter, J.J., McWhirter, B.T., McWhirter, E.H. & McWhirter, A.C. 2017. *At risk youth: A comprehensive response for counsellors, teachers, psychologists, and human service professionals* (6th ed.). USA: Cengage Learning.
- Mertens, D.M. 2010. *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Morris, M. 2000. *School improvement: The contribution of careers education and guidance*. London: National Foundation for Education Research.
- Moser, C.A. & Kalton, G. 1971. *Survey methods in social investigation* (2nd ed.). London: Heinemann.
- Moustakas, C. 1994. *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mouton, J. 1996. *Understanding social research* (1st ed). Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- National Youth Development Agency. 2011. *The South African youth context: The young generation*. Pretoria: National Youth Development Agency.
- National Youth Policy. 2015. *National Policy 2020 Report*. Pretoria: National Youth Development Agency.
- OECD, 1996. *Successful Services for our Children and Families at Risk*, Paris.
- Pact, Inc. 2014. *Field Guide for Evaluation: How to Develop an Effective Terms of Reference*. Washington.
- Palmer, B.W. 2015. Study participants and informed consent. *American Psychological Association*, USA.
- Peyper, L. 2017. Migrants flock to Gauteng, Western Cape - *Stats SA* Jul 31 2017 21:30
- Porst, R. 2011. *Fragebogen. Ein Arbeitsbuch*. Wiesbaden: VS-Verlag.
- Progress Report to the Minister of Education October, 2007. Ministerial Committee on learner retention in the South African schooling system.
- REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA. 1996a. *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act No 108 of 1996*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA. 1996b. *South African Schools Act No 84 of 1996*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

- Richards, H.M. & Schwartz, L.J. 2002. Ethics of qualitative research: Are there special issues for health services research? *Fam Pract*, 19(2):135-144. 9. [[PubMed](#)] [[Google Scholar](#)]
- Rose, D.C., Brotherton, P.N., Owens, S. and Pryke, T., 2018. Honest advocacy for nature: presenting a persuasive narrative for conservation. *Biodiversity and conservation*, 27(7), pp.1703-1723.
- Rowland, C. & Allen, M. 2007. Emerging strategies and practices to improve teacher quality in at risk and hard-to-staff schools and subject areas. *National Comprehensive Center for teacher Quality*, Washington DC: NCCTQ.
- Rumberger, R. 2004a. *What can be done to reduce the dropout rate?* In G. Orfield (ed.), *Dropouts in America: Confronting the graduation rate crisis*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press. 243-254.
- Rumberger, R. 2004b. Why students drop out of school, in G. Orfield (ed.). *Dropouts in America: Confronting the graduation rate crisis*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press. 131-155.
- Sadegholvad, S., Yeatman, H., Omidvar, N., Parrish, A.M. & Worsley, A. 2016. Best strategies to improve school-leavers' knowledge of nutrition and food systems: Views from experts in Iran. *Int J Prev Med*, 7:119.
- Saldana, J. 2013. *The coding manual for qualitative researcher* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Sandelowski, M. 2004. Using qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 14, 1366-1386. DOI:10.1177/1049732304269672
- Schmuck, R. 1997. *Practical action research for change*. Arlington Heights, IL: IRI/Skylight Training and Publishing.
- School of Hope: Thembalitsa Foundation. 2013. Stories of Hope. <<http://sohthembalitsa.blogspot.com/>>
- Schwandt, T.A. 2000. Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry: Interpretivism, hermeneutics, and social constructionism, in N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (eds.). *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.189-214.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

- Smuts, M. 2018. Bad Education: It starts with how we train teachers. *Daily Maverick*; <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2018-04-04-bad-education-itstarts-with-how-we-train-teachers/> (4th April, 2018).
- Socias, M., Dunn, L., Parrish, T., Muraki, M. & Woods, L. 2007. California High Schools that Beat the Odds in High School Graduation. *California Dropout Research Project Report #6*. Accessible at http://www.lmri.ucsb.edu/dropouts/pubs_reports.htm
- Srivastava, A. & Thomson, S.B. 2009. Framework analysis: A qualitative methodology for applied policy research. *JOAAG*, 4(2):72-79.
- Suh, S. & Suh, J. 2006. Educational engagement and degree attainment among high school dropouts. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 29(3):11-20. Retrieved on March 17, 2007 from EBSCOHOST database.
- Suh, S. & Suh, J. 2007. Risk factors and levels of risk for high school dropouts. *Professional School Counseling*, 10(3):297-306.
- Tai, J. & Ajjawi, R. 2016. Undertaking and reporting qualitative research. *The Clinical Teacher*, 13(1):175-182.
- Taylor, N. 2014. *Initial Teacher Education Research Project: An examination of aspects of initial teacher education curricula at five higher education institutions. Summary Report*. Johannesburg: JET Education Services.
- Te Riele, K. 2006. Youth 'at risk': Further marginalizing the marginalized. *Journal of Education Policy*, 21(2):129-145.
- Townsend, L., Flisher, A.J., Chikobvu, P., Lombard, C. & King, G. 2008. The relationship between bullying behaviours and high school dropout in Cape Town, South Africa. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 38(1):21-32. Retrieved on April 2008 from EBSCOHOST database.
- Trede, F., & Higgs, J. 2009. Framing research questions and writing philosophically: The role of framing research questions, in J. Higgs, D. Horsfall, & S. Grace (eds.). *Writing qualitative research on practice*. Rotterdam: Sense. 13-25.
- Van Zyl, G. 2019. Poor quality teachers are holding back SA's education system. <https://www.biznews.com/sa-investing/2019/01/09/poor-quality-teachers-holding-back-saeducation-system>. (Accessed 9th January 2019).

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

- Wali, A.Z. & Saad, M.N. 2018. Exploring teaching practices that are helpful in addressing at-risk students in classroom. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 8(9):278-282.
- Wallace, L. 2013. At risk youth: A comprehensive response for counsellors, teachers, psychologists and human service professionals. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 60(1):68-69.
- Western Cape Department of Education Statistics 2017: Western Cape Department of Education Statistics 2010/2017. Administrative data on Matrix successes and dropouts for the period 2010/2017 provided by the PGWC
<https://youthexplorer.org.za/profiles/municipality-CPT-city-of-cape-town/>
- Western Cape Department of Social Development. 2018. *Helping Youth at Risk*. Cape Town: Western Cape Department of Social Development.
- Western Cape Youth Commission, 2008. *Western Cape Status of the Youth Report*. Cape Town: Western Cape Youth Commission.
- Wills, G. & Hofmeyr, H. 2018. *Academic resilience in challenging contexts: Evidence from township and rural primary schools in South Africa*. Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers: WP18/2018
<https://www.ekon.sun.ac.za/wpapers/2018/wp182018>. [Accessed on 25 August, 2019]
- Wiseman, J.P. & Aron, M.S. 1972. *Field Reports in Sociology*. London: Transworld Publishers.
- Withers, G. & Russell, J. 2001. *Educating for resilience: Prevention and intervention strategies for young people at risk*. Melbourne: Catholic Education Office, McKillop Family Services and Victorian Government Department of Human Services.
- Yin, R.K. 2003. *Case study research: Design and methods (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yin, R.K. 2009. *Case study research: Designs and methods (4th ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Youm, H.K. 2007. Processes used by music, visual arts, media, and first-grade classroom teachers for developing and implementing an integrated curriculum:

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

A case study. Update: *Applications of Research in Music Education*, 26:41-52.

Young, J.C., Waylen, K., Sarkki, S., Albon, S., Bainbridge, I., Balian, E. &

Watt, A. 2014. Improving science-policy dialogue to meet the challenges of biodiversity conservation: Having conversations rather than talking at one-another.

Biodiversity and Conservation, 23:387-404.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

ANNEXURES

Annexure A: Ethical clearance letter from the University of South Africa



UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2019/11/13

Ref: **2019/11/13/59781017/11/AM**

Dear Mr SA Oyewo

Name: Mr SA Oyewo

Student No.: 59781017

Decision: Ethics Approval from
2019/11/13 to 2022/11/13

Researcher(s): Name: Mr SA Oyewo
E-mail address: 074 332 5814
Telephone: 59781017@mylife.unisa.ac.za

Supervisor(s): Name: Prof HM Van der Merwe
E-mail address: vdmerhm@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: 083 442 1503

Title of research:

The challenges of teaching at-risk learners at a secondary school in Cape Town

Qualification: MEd in Education Management

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2019/11/13 to 2022/11/13.

*The **low risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2019/11/13 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.



University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2022/11/13**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

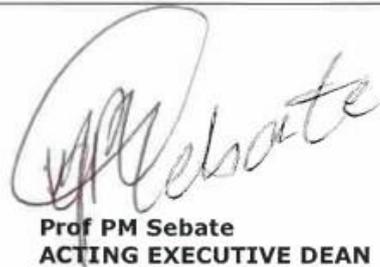
Note:

*The reference number **2019/11/13/59781017/11/AM** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,



Prof AT Motlhabane
CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC
motlhat@unisa.ac.za



Prof PM Sebate
ACTING EXECUTIVE DEAN
Sebatpm@unisa.ac.za

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Annexure B: Western Cape Education Department's approval letter to conduct the research at the selected school



Directorate: Research

Audrey.wynngaard@westerncape.gov.za
tel: +27 021 467 9272
Fax: 0865902282
Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000
wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20190919-9416

ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Mr Saheed Oyewo
Flat 17 Norfolk Height
Tokai On Main
Tokai
7945

Dear Mr Saheed Oyewo

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS IN TEACHING SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS AT-RISK: A CASE STUDY IN THE METRO CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CAPE TOWN

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **15 January 2020 till 20 June 2020**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard

Directorate: Research

DATE: 19 September 2019

Lower Parliament Street, Cape Town, 8001
tel: +27 21 467 9272 fax: 0865902282
Safe Schools: 0800 45 46 47

Private Bag X9114, Cape Town, 8000
Employment and salary enquiries: 0861 92 33 22
www.westerncape.gov.za

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Annexure C: Letter to the principal for permission to conduct research

Request for permission to conduct research at Thembalitsha- School of Hope

Title of Research Study- **Challenges and solutions in teaching secondary school learners at-risk: A case study in the Metro Central District of Cape Town**

Date: 16 September 2019

School Principal / School Owner
Thembalitsha Foundation- School of Hope
Unit 27A Waverly Business Park,
Kotzee Rd, Observatory, 7925
Cape Town.
Tel: 021 852 3425; Email: soh@hope.org.za

Dear Principal/Owner,

Re: Request to conduct interviews and observations

I, Saheed Adekunle Oyewo, am doing research under supervision of Hettie Van Der Merwe, a Professor in the Department of Education Leadership and Management towards a Master's degree in Education at the University of South Africa. I am inviting you to participate in a study entitled *Challenges and solutions in teaching secondary school learners at-risk: A case study in the Metro Central District of Cape Town*.

The aim of the study is to understand how teachers can be equipped to provide learners at-risk with successful learning experiences.

Your school has been selected because it provides specialised education to at-risk, vulnerable and age-inappropriate learners through inspiration, best-practise curriculum delivery and a holistic approach to intervention in education.

The study will entail conducting 30-40minutes individual interviews with your teachers, as well as observing each teacher in their classrooms for 45 minutes. The Western Cape Department of Education has granted me permission to continue with the research. Please find attached the letter of permission as well as the consent form to be read and signed by all participants.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

Feedback procedure will entail a two hours presentation to your teachers to validate the interpretation of the researcher.

For any additional information, please contact me at 074 332 5274.

Thank you in advance.

Yours sincerely,



Saheed Adekunle Oyewo

Researcher (UNISA)

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Annexure D: Consent letter for permission from participant to conduct interviews

Date: 6/02/2020

Ethics Clearance Ref No: 2019/11/13/59781017/11/AM

Title: **The challenges of teaching at-risk learners at a secondary school in Cape Town.**

DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT

I, Saheed Adekunle Oyewo, am doing research under supervision of Hettie Van Der Merwe, a Professor in the Department of Education Leadership and Management towards a Master's degree in Education at the University of South Africa. I am inviting you to participate in a study entitled *Challenges and solutions in teaching secondary school learners at-risk: A case study in the Metro Central District of Cape Town.*

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

This study is expected to collect important information that could assist teachers to educate at-risk learners successfully. The study will allow for the compilation of relevant solutions to educating at-risk learners in constructive learning.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You are invited because you are a teacher teaching at-risk learners. As a teacher teaching at-risk learners, you are faced with challenges daily and are regarded as being an information-rich participant to the study.

I obtained your contact details from the school reception after I sourced the school's contact details from the internet. 16 teachers in total will be sharing their perceptions and experiences relating to challenges and solutions to teaching at-risk learners at your school.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

Describe the participant's actual role in the study.

The study involves an individual interview with the teachers and a direct observation of teachers in their classrooms. Participants can expect semi-structured, open-ended questions. Some of the questions pertain to the following:

- Does teachers' training prepare teachers for the reality in classrooms? If 'yes', provide an example of teachers' training modules that does prepare teachers. If 'no', motivate your answer.
- How can teachers apply skills obtained in teachers' training successfully in their day-to-day classroom experience? Motivate your answer.
- Are teachers well trained on classroom discipline? If 'yes', provide an example of classroom discipline guidelines that you know and have applied in your classroom. If 'no' motivate your answer.
- What are your responsibilities as a teacher of the school?

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

- What role do you play in the school to improve the quality of teaching and learning?
- How do you pursue the academic vision of the school?
- How do you promote the culture of teaching and learning at the school?
- To what extent do you play your roles and responsibilities to aid the overall performance of the school? Motivate your answer

The duration of the individual interview and the direct observation is expected not to exceed an hour.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participating in this study is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

Participating in this study will assist you and other teachers teaching at-risk learners with solutions in teaching at-risk successfully. This study will also draw further attention to research focused on at-risk youth education.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

There are no possible negative consequences for the participants of this study. The only inconvenience is the time that you will need to avail yourself for the interview.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Your name will not be recorded anywhere, and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings. Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records. The anonymous data collected may be used for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings. A report of the study may be submitted for publication,

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report. Please keep in mind that it is sometimes impossible to make an absolute guarantee of confidentiality or anonymity.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet at the University of South Africa for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. If necessary, information will be destroyed. Hard copies of transcribed data will be shredded and electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer through the use of relevant software programme.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

Unfortunately, no payments or incentives will be made available for the participants of this study.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the Western Cape Department of Education, UNISA. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Saheed Adekunle Oyewo on 074 332 5274 or email ade@hope.org.za. The findings are accessible for a three-month period after the completion of the study. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Prof HM van der Merwe on 083 442 1503 or email Vdmerhm@unisa.ac.za.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you.

Signature



Saheed Adekunle Oyewo

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

CONSENT/ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY (Return slip)

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the **Semi-structured interview and the direct observation.**

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print) :

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher's Name & Surname (please print):

Saheed Adekunle Oyewo



Researcher's signature

Date

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Annexure E: Assent letter to conduct research with secondary school learners

Title of research: **Challenges and solutions in teaching secondary school learners at-risk: A case study in the Metro Central District of Cape Town**

Dear Learner,

Date: 14/10/2019

I am doing a study on **Challenges and solutions in teaching secondary school learners at-risk: A case study in the Metro Central District of Cape Town** as part of my studies at the University of South Africa. Your principal has given me permission to do this study in your school. I would like to invite you to be a very special part of my study. I am doing this study so that I can find ways that your teachers can use to educate you better. This may help you and many other learners of your age in different schools.

This letter is to explain to you what I would like you to do. There may be some words you do not know in this letter. You may ask me or any other adult to explain any of these words that you do not know or understand. You may take a copy of this letter home to think about my invitation and talk to your parents about this before you decide if you want to be in this study.

I would like to ask you to participate in a direct observation, which will take place during your normal tuition time. You will not be needed to take part in any other part of my study.

I will write a report on the study but I will not use your name in the report or say anything that will let other people know who you are. Participation is voluntary and you do not have to be part of this study if you don't want to take part. If you choose to be in the study, you may stop taking part at any time without penalty. No one will blame or criticise you. When I am finished with my study, I shall return to your school to give a short talk about some of the helpful and interesting things I found out in my study. I shall invite you to come and listen to my talk.

The benefits of this study is to derive solutions for teachers to ensure successful teaching of learners at your school.

There are no potential risk associated with you participating in the observation.

You will not be reimbursed or receive any incentives for your participation in the research.

If you decide to be part of my study, you will be asked to sign the form on the next page. If you have any other questions about this study, you can talk to me or you can have your parent or another adult call me at 0743325274. Do not sign the form until you have all your questions answered and understand what I would like you to do.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Researcher: Saheed Oyewo

Phone number: 0743325274

Do not sign the written assent form if you have any questions. Ask your questions first and ensure that someone answers those questions.

WRITTEN ASSENT

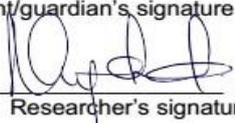
I have read this letter, which asks me to be part of a study at my school. I have understood the information about my study and I know what I will be asked to do. I am willing to be in the study.

Learner's name (print): Learner's signature: Date:

Witness's name (print) Witness's signature Date:

(The witness is over 18 years old and present when signed.)

Parent/guardian's name (print) Parent/guardian's signature Date:

Researcher's name (print)  Researcher's signature

Date:

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Annexure F: Interview schedule

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Questions for the school teachers

1. THE ROLE OF TEACHERS' TRAINING IN EQUIPING AT-RISK TEACHERS

1.1 How much value does teacher's training add to the performance of teachers teaching at-risk learners?

Probes:

- Does teachers' training prepare teachers for the reality in classrooms? If 'yes', provide an example of teachers' training modules that does prepare teachers. If 'no', motivate your answer.
- How can teachers apply skills obtained in teachers' training successfully in their day-to-day classroom experience? Motivate your answer.
- Are teachers well trained on classroom discipline? If 'yes', provide an example of classroom discipline guidelines that you know and have applied in your classroom. If 'no' motivate your answer.
- Are there different classroom management strategies taught in teachers' training? Motivate.
- Do successful teaching and learning take place in an at-risk school context? Motivate your answer.
- How does the school further promote a sound culture of teaching and learning in an at-risk school context? Motivate.

1.2 What do you understand as the roles and responsibilities of a teacher?

Probes:

- What are your responsibilities as a teacher of the school?
- What role do you play in the school to improve the quality of teaching and learning?
- How do you pursue the academic vision of the school?
- How do you promote the culture of teaching and learning at the school?
- To what extent do you play your roles and responsibilities to aid the overall performance of the school? Motivate your answer.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

1.3 What do you understand as classroom management techniques? Motivate your answer.

Probes:

- Out of all the roles you play as a classroom manager, does classroom management receive sufficient attention? If 'yes' elaborate on how you ensure this in your classroom. If 'no' motivate your answer.
- Do you think that at-risk learners can be successfully engaged in constructive learning? If 'yes', elaborate. If 'no', motivate why.
- What impact does poor classroom management has on successful teaching and learning in an at-risk context? Motivate your answer.

1.4 What are your understanding of at-risk learners and their context?

Probes:

- Were you made aware of at-risk learners in teachers' training? If 'yes', elaborate. If 'no' motivate.
- In your understanding, what factors places learners at-risk? Elaborate.
- Do you have pre-service knowledge of inclusivity? If 'yes', elaborate. If 'no' motivate.
- In your experience, are you able to cope and educate at-risk learners? Motivate your answer.
- What roles do you play in this at-risk learners' school context in educating at-risks learners? Motivate your answer.
- As an at-risk learners' teacher, do you receive enough support from the instructional leader of the school? If 'yes', elaborate. If 'no' motivate.

1.5 Do you believe that you are able to influence the academic performance of at-risk learners as a teacher at the school? Motivate your answer.

Probes:

- Can you influence the academic performance of at-risk learners through your role as a teacher? If 'yes', how are you able to do so?

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

If 'no', what other roles will influence the academic performance of learners?

- Do you collaborate with instructional leader of the school with regards to more effective teaching and learning? If 'yes' do these meetings influence the academics of learners? If 'no', do you believe that collaboration with staff members can be meaningful?

2. TEACHERS' CHALLENGES AND EXPERIENCES

2.1 What is your understanding of second chance at education?

Probes:

- Do at-risk learners value second chance at education? Motivate your answer.
- Are at-risk learners successful in second chance at education? Motivate your answer.
- Is second chance at education a frequent topic of discussion amongst staff members?

2.2 How does the school uphold the values of second chance at education?

Probes:

- How do at-risk learners value second chance at education?
- How do staff members value second chance at education?
- How do parents value second chance at education?

2.3 What are possible challenges during the course of a school day? Mention as many as possible and explain the influence on successful teaching and learning of each activity.

Probes:

- Which behavioral pattern presents itself daily?
- Does this behavioral pattern hamper successful teaching and learning of at-risk learners' in general?

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

- In your experience, which school activities do not contribute to the successful engagement of at-risk learners?
- What is the biggest presenting issue that undermines the successful teaching and learning of at-risk learners?
- To what extent does at-risk learner's disposition influence successful learning?
- To what extent does teacher's disposition influence successful learning?
- To what extent does at-risk learner's absence influence successful learning?
- To what extent does teacher's absence influence successful learning?
- To what extent does social service support influence at-risk learner's attendance to school?

3. THE INFLUENCE OF SUCCESSFUL TEACHING ON THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND LIFE PROPOSITIONS OF AT-RISK LEARNERS.

Probes:

- Is successful teaching possible in an at-risk learners' school context? Motivate your answer.
- What is the influence of successful teaching on the learning experiences of at-risk learners? Elaborate on your answer.
- In your experience, does successful teaching influence positive learning experiences for at-risk learners? Motivate your answer.
- In an at-risk school context, does successful teaching positively influence the life propositions of at-risk learners?
- In a case of an at-risk learner been successfully engaged in learning, does the successful engagement positively influence the life propositions of such learner? If 'yes', to what extent is this? If 'no', motivate.
- As a teacher at an at-risk school, do you positively influence your learners in successful learning experiences? If 'yes' elaborate on how you have positively influence at-risk learners in you class. If 'no', motivate on the reason why not.

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

Annexure G: Observation schedule

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

DIRECT OBSERVATION OF PARTICIPANT IN CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

ACTIVITY-CONVERSATION	OCCURENCES- KEY INDICATION OF CONVERSATION WITHIN A THRITY-MINUTES PERIOD																													
Per Minute Capturing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Behavioural Actions/ Issues: Anger (A) Vulgar (V) Non- Vulgar (NV) Violent (VI) Non- Violent (NVI) Destructive (D) Fidget (F) Hyper-Activity (HA) General Inappropriate Behaviour (GIB)																														
Learner to Learner							/	/	/																					
Learner to Learners																														
Learner to Teacher				/	/	/																								
Teacher to Learner																														
Teacher to learners																														
Learner to Self																														
Teacher shouts at Learner																														
Learner shouts at Teacher																														
Engaged in learning				✓	✓	✓																								
Non-task							✓	✓	✓																					
TOTAL PER ACTIVITY																														

Schedule key

✓ = Nature of the conversation

/ = Participants in the conversation

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY
SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

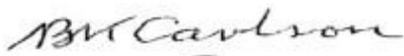
Annexure H: Letter of language editing

8 Nahoon Valley Place
Nahoon Valley
East London
5241
6 September 2020

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I hereby confirm that I have proofread and edited the following thesis using the Windows 'Tracking' system to reflect my comments and suggested corrections for the student to action to produce a clean copy for examination purposes:

The challenges of teaching at-risk learners at a secondary school in Cape Town by SAHEED ADEKUNLE OYEWU, a thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION in the subject EDUCATION MANAGEMENT at the UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA.



Brian Carlson (B.A., M.Ed.)
Professional Editor

Email: bcarlson521@gmail.com

Cell: 0834596647

Disclaimer: Although I have made comments and suggested corrections, the responsibility for the quality of the final document lies with the **student** in the first instance and not with myself as the editor.

**THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHING AT-RISK LEARNERS AT A SECONDARY
SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN**