

**THE DROPOUT OF FOUNDATION PHASE LEARNERS WHO EXPERIENCE
BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL IN THE AMAJUBA
DISTRICT, KWAZULU- NATAL**

by

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DECLARATION

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THE DROPOUT OF FOUNDATION PHASE LEARNERS WHO EXPERIENCE BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL IN THE AMAJUBA DISTRICT, KWAZULU-NATAL

I declare that the above dissertation of limited scope is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation of limited scope to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

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

Signature: _____

Date: _____

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late grandmother, Mrs N F Hlubi. She wished me success and encouraged me to believe in the importance of education.

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ACRONYMS

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CDE	Centre for Development and Enterprise
DBE	Department of Basic Education
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HoD	Head of Department
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
NCE	National Commission on Education
SAPS	South African Police Service
SGB	School Governing Body
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNISA	University of South Africa
WWW	World Wide Web

ABSTRACT

The implementation of inclusive education in South Africa faces several challenges, including addressing the dropout of learners experiencing barriers to learning. Since learner dropout at an early age in the foundation phase is a challenge for schools, a qualitative research methodology following a case study design was used in this study to explore factors contributing to the dropout of foundation phase learners. The purpose of this study was to identify and investigate the various factors contributing to the rate at which foundation phase learners experiencing learning difficulties in the Amajuba District of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) dropout. A qualitative research approach using face-to-face and group interviews and observation to collect data was used because learner dropout is a behavioural pattern in society that can be better understood using this approach. The sampling of the study was made up of six foundation phase teachers, six parents, two Heads of Department (HoD) and the principal in one primary school. Based on the findings of this study, what emerged persuasively is that, in addition to the impact of the school and environmental factors, the role of parents in the education of their children and the home environment are highlighted as important factors affecting learner dropout. Recommendations were made that schools pursue strategies to ensure parents' involvement, combat bullying, reduce class size and continue professional development for teachers. Finally, the study concluded that the parents' illiteracy, negligence, teacher and learner absenteeism, child-headed families, poverty, child abuse and bullying are factors that cause the dropout of foundation phase learners.

Keywords: *barriers to learning, challenges, environmental factors, Foundation Phase, inclusive school, learner dropout, parental non-involvement.*

CHAPTER ONE

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND INTRODUCTION

Many learners in the Amajuba District come from disadvantaged family backgrounds, categorised by high levels of poverty, the devastation of HIV and AIDS, violence, abuse and even the complete absence of parents where another child is the head of the household.

According to Sebatane (2009) most children receive primary care from family members. If their immediate family members fail in their duties, extended family members take up the task of taking care of children. They however often experience neglect and end up dropping out of school. Sabatane (2009) further maintains that it is with these observations in mind that it could be concluded that children who go through the foster care system are more likely to drop out. This, in turn, renders this system problematic since many socio-economic and psychological issues such as a high level of child abuse is prevalent (Sebatane, 2009).

According to the State of the World's Children Report (UNICEF 2007), learners who are raised by foster parents and foster families often opt to run away from their homes and dropout of school because of the abuse (physical, emotional and sexual) that they experience in their homes. At times, these children are also forced to leave school because they are forced to work including in hard-labour (UNICEF, 2007). According to Nojaja (2009), learning can only take place effectively if parents cooperate in the schooling process and actively partner with the school to ensure optimal learning. This view is supported by Mmotlane, Winnaar and Wa Kivilu (2009) who, as cited in Mbajjorgu, Christian, Maake, Kayoka, Masafu, Moise (2012) argue that, over the past years, a greater number of South African parents have not been participating in the schooling of their children. Moreover, parents whose children had dropped out showed little interest in participating in the personal and academic lives of their children (Makwinja-Morara, 2007, as cited in Munsaka, 2009).

Dei (2003) also argues that some learners dropout of school because they experience dissatisfaction with the school and simultaneously refrain from engaging in any school activities. Furthermore, it is important to note that in an effort to ensure that learners do

not drop out of school, teachers and administrative staff should establish connections between the community, families and the school (Dei, 2003).

The White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education (DoE, 2001) maintains that children from poor families face an increased risk of dropping out of school and repeating school grades. Moreover, according to Mnguni (2014), South Africa is plagued by a high dropout of learners at the national, provincial and local level of education. The South African Child Gauge (2010) shows that learners who have one or two illiterate parents, who come from poor socio-economic background, or are orphans, are at a higher risk of dropping out school or not being enrol in school.

In Kenya, approximately “1.7 million children are out of school, of which 1,012,184 are reported to be in child labour, though the number keeps fluctuating with the seasons”. According to Ruto, Ongwenyi and Mugo (2009) the fact that over one million children are out of school is an indicator of a problem yet to be addressed in education programmes. The Macro Indicator Report of the Department of Basic Education [DBE] (2013) suggests that most grade 10 and 11 learners repeat these grades but the number of learners who enrol late for school is decreasing.

The report further maintains that the repetition of grades does not offer a solution for failure and that it is not determined by learner’s learning outcomes. Moreover, the report maintains that about 40 % of youth pass grade 12, highlighting the fact that although many learners spend a significant number of years in the schooling system, not many obtain satisfactory results. Since 1994, according to Taylor, Fleisch and Shindler (2008), repetition of grades and dropping out of school has been a widespread phenomenon in South African schools. They further maintain that this is as a result of language barriers such as inadequate language skills and other necessary learning skills.

Motala (2015) argues that reducing and ultimately eradicating dropping out and repetition of grades amongst primary school learners has been the objective of South Africa’s post-apartheid education system. The 1990 Jomtien Conference on Education for All concluded that retention, access, completion primary school and the quality of education were some of the challenges faced by African children in schools. It was also estimated that, in 1992, 1.6 million children aged between six and thirteen years were not in school and that by 2004, only 51- 62% of enrolled black learners would reach grade 8

According to Woolard (2002) about 15% of adults in the population cannot read or write, while 9.2% of children are not receiving enough vitamins and minerals. In 1995, the poorest households spent 51% of their income on purchasing food. Moreover, 23% of children, based mostly in rural areas who are six years and below born to illiterate mothers, exhibit malnutrition (Aliber, 2001).

Dei (2011) argues that children are most likely to leave school at the age of ten and become illiterate due to the high levels of dropping out and repetition of grades. Furthermore, primary schools become overburdened, over and above being under-resourced because they are accommodating 50% more learners than their capacity.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The background to this study reveals that inclusive education, in the context of the South African education system, is challenged by the dropping out of learners due to language difficulties. Howell (2007) argues that these 'barriers to learning' explain why there are learners who are unsuccessful in their learning. Furthermore, this may explain why having 'special needs' can be considered a 'barrier to learning'; the challenge this presents is that those learners whose learning difficulties arise from having medical problems that affect their learning cannot blame the educational system for their failure (Howell, 2007).

Many learners in the Amajuba District come from poor, child-headed, HIV and AIDS infected or affected families where there is often also a high rate of violence and abuse. According to Sebatane (2009), most of these children receive primary care from family members. Furthermore, if their immediate family members fail in these duties, extended family members take up the task of caring for these children. Often, these children experience neglect and end up dropping out of school (Sebatane, 2009).

1.1 INVESTIGATIVE QUESTIONS

1.2.1 Primary investigative question

What factors contribute to the dropout of foundation phase learners who experience barriers to learning in an inclusive school in the Amajuba District, Kwazulu-Natal (KZN)?

1.2.2 Secondary investigative questions

- How do environmental factors contribute to the dropout of foundation phase learners experiencing barriers to learning in an inclusive school in the Amajuba District in KZN?
- How do school-based factors contribute to the dropout of foundation phase learners experiencing barriers to learning in an inclusive school in the Amajuba District in KZN?
- How does parental non-involvement in the education of their children affect learner dropout in an inclusive school in the Amajuba District in KZN?

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

1.3.1 The primary aim of the study

The primary aim of the study is to identify and explore the factors contributing to the dropout of foundation phase learners who experience barriers to learning in an inclusive school in the Amajuba District, KZN.

1.3.2 Objectives

- To determine how environmental factors, contribute to the dropout of foundation phase learners.
- To investigate how school-based factors contribute to the dropout of foundation phase learners
- To assess how parental non- involvement in the education of their children affects learner dropout.

1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Cloete and Wissink (2006) argue that the more learners drop out, the greater will be the number of young, immature citizens who have a lower education, no skills and who are unemployed. Furthermore, Dekeza-Tsomo (2012) posits that young people in South Africa are more susceptible to contracting and being affected by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Subsequently, they are most likely to use drugs excessively and be engaged in criminal activities, while also experiencing high levels of poverty (Dekeza-Tsomo ,2012). This means that the social and economic development of the country is being arrested by the lack of educated young people, who are mostly dropouts and are engaged in illegal activities.

Teachers often conclude that learners drop out because they are lazy, whereas some learners cannot cope with the obstacles they face. This study therefore sought to explore the factors that contribute to the dropout of foundation phase learners who experience learning difficulties in an inclusive school located in the Amajuba District of KwaZulu-Natal. It is hoped that understanding these factors could assist to get these learners back into school.

The current study may provide researchers with useful data in the field of inclusive education for children experiencing learning barriers. Since there is a lack of information on the factors that contribute to the dropout of learners in the foundation phase, this study will fill that void. Moreover, this study will add knowledge for teachers on how to assist learners at risk of dropping out in their classes. Policy-makers and administrators could also gain information for decision making with regard to the dropout of learners.

1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW

In every country, education is believed to be a key to success, especially in recent times. In fact, without it, one can barely survive. According to Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002:209), dropping out of school is a major problem in our society, as it is in much of Africa, because of the high numbers involved the waste of human potential and the escalation of problems that are essentially preventable.

The National Commission on Education (NCE) (1996) asserts that some schools in poor communities, although experiencing serious challenges such as hunger, homelessness, illiteracy, unemployment, gangsterism, drug abuse, and a fatalistic mind-set, produce learners who are not happy and motivated. It also maintains that school-based factors, environmental factors and parental non-involvement, amongst other factors, contribute to the high rate at which learners dropout of school.

1.5.1 Environmental factors and learner dropout

May and Govender (1998:9) state that poverty essentially concerns the inability of individuals, households or communities to reach and maintain a socially acceptable minimum standard of living due to a lack of resources. With specific reference to the Amajuba District, many learners come from poor, child-headed, HIV and AIDS infected or affected, and violent and abusive families. These learners find it difficult to cope at

school, and there is a lack of resources in the community to help vulnerable children. Moreover, these learners do not have a healthy peer support group as destructive learner-to-learner relationships in the classroom, school and community creates a debilitating emotional climate. Conversely, positive relationships provide a tension free environment for the learner, enabling him/her to learn more and complete his/her schooling. If the relationships among peers is not good, it adversely affects their learning.

1.5.2 School factors and learner dropout

Ekstrom (1986) highlights the following points about learners who left school before completion:

- they performed poorly in tests, having low marks;
- did less homework than others;
- they had more incidents reflecting a lack of discipline recorded at their schools;
- bunked classes regularly;
- had more demerits, resulting in suspension;
- had been arrested for offences;
- were frequently absent and late for schooling.

1.5.3 Parental non-involvement and learner dropout

Parental involvement is essential for optimal learning and development. Parents are recognised as the primary caregivers of their children and as the central pillar of the education system. Additionally, they are critical stakeholders in governance of schools and facilitating community ownership of educational facilities.

UNESCO (2011:340) found that there are other factors contributing to the high rates of school dropout, including the negligence of parents. Many foundation phase learners have single parents who are illiterate or have low educational qualifications. These parents do not support their children when they have homework. Learners are afraid and become truant, and parents are unaware since there is a gap in communication with the school.

According to Khajehpour and Ghazvini (2011:1208), when parents are enthusiastic about their children's school work, learner performance is enhanced, and the learner does not leave school. This aspect will be covered in greater detail in Chapter Two.

1.5.4 Contribution to the field of study

The current study will provide researchers with useful data in the field of inclusive education for children experiencing learning barriers. Since there is little information on the contribution of different factors to the rate at which learners in the foundation phase dropout, this study will fill that void. Moreover, this study will add knowledge to novice and experienced teachers on how to assist learners at risk of dropping out in their classes. Policymakers and administrators in education will also gain useful information on how to make decisions about the dropout of learners.

1.5.5 Structure of the study

This dissertation has six chapters, which are as follows:

Chapter One provides the introduction and background of the research, the problem statement, investigative questions and objectives, rationale for the study, supported by a preliminary literature review, as well as a concise summary of the chapter.

Chapter Two reviews the literature relevant to the study, namely: the environmental factors, school-based factors, as well as parental non-involvement that contribute to learner dropout.

Chapter Three explores how the study's research was designed, as well as the methods used to conduct the research, the population sampled and the ways in which the data was collected and analysed, as well as the ethical considerations that were complied with.

Chapter Four presents how the data collected in this study was interpreted and analysed. It also describes the school and participants of this study, and discusses the findings of the study.

Chapter Five provides the study's recommendations under various sub-headings.

Chapter Six provides an overview of the study, its findings, recommendations, limitations, as well as a conclusion.

1.6 SUMMARY

The current chapter discussed the background and the introduction to the study, the problem statement, investigative questions and objectives, followed by the rationale for the study. The next chapter will present a discussion of the literature reviewed by the researcher. This will help in gaining information as it will analyse and report on what other scholars have found about the dropout of learners. It will also help with the understanding of the project of the study, as well as clarify it.

CHAPTER TWO

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The current chapter provides a review of the literature that is relevant to the dropout of foundation phase learners experiencing barriers hindering their learning in an inclusive school in the Amajuba District of KwaZulu-Natal.

Worldwide education is regarded as an essential tool to open pathways to success. Without it, one can hardly survive. Yet, according to Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002), the high rate at which learners drop out of school and the widespread nature of this problem in Africa constitutes an enormous waste of human potential.

The reason for a learner dropping out is often called the originator of dropout because it refers to the critical event that leads to dropping out. This incident, however, is the culmination of a much longer process of separating from school that is started long before the date that a learner stops attending school. According to Strassburg, Gibert and Russel (2010) there are various factors that collectively contribute to the rate at which learners drop out of school, notably:

- environmental factors
- school-based factors
- Factors that contribute to parental non-involvement

2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS AND LEARNER DROPOUT

The environment regulates how a learner performs at school. May and Govender (1998) argue that poverty is the condition created by a lack of resources whereby communities, households and individuals fail to sustain a standard of living that is acceptable to society.

According to Payne (2003), there are different types of resources that are needed to maintain this minimum standard of living including financial (e.g. money); emotional (the ability to control how one responds to emotional stimuli); cognitive (e.g. the acquired ability to read and write); physical (e.g. mobility) and spiritual resources (Payne, 2003). Other types of resources are support-structure oriented, relationship-oriented, as well as knowledge-oriented (Payne, 2003). Perrin (2007) states that having low intellectual cognitive abilities could be a result of learners enduring physical abuse.

2.2.1 POVERTY

Performing poorly academically can be a consequence of living in poverty. Learners living in poverty have a higher chance of experiencing emotional and social challenges. Academic achievement can be predicted by socioeconomic status (Cedeño, Martínez Arias & Bueno, 2016; Reardon & Portilla, 2016). This may cause chronic stress which may lead the learner to dropout.

Many parents of poor learners cannot afford school resources and school trips. As a result, the learner loses self-confidence which could result in poor academic performance and could ultimately lead to, them dropping out.

Although succeeding or failing at school is not predetermined by a learner's socio-economic background, a disproportionate number of learners who come from less fortunate homes are more susceptible to failure and dropping out of school (DoE, 2008). Strassburg et al (2010) argue that poverty negatively impacts the schooling experience of learners because they have to meet many costs such as buying school uniform. This shows that even though there are policies designed to guarantee that poor learners gain access to basic education, such costs may hinder these learners from obtaining an education.

The argument that there is no correlation between poverty and poor school attendance is further highlighted by B Fleisch, J Shindler & H Perry (2012), who maintain that there is no direct relationship between the lack of attendance of basic schooling by learners and their measured levels of poverty. Living with disability and having a poor family support structure are also determinants of whether a learner attends school. Poverty is therefore not the only cause of a lack of attendance (Fleisch, 2010) as other factors can also have an impact such as being an orphan, not receiving social grants, living without biological parents and living in a remote area (Fleisch et al., 2010).

2.2.2 IMPACT OF HIV AND AIDS

The HIV and AIDS pandemic caused many young learners to become orphans. This results in many children having to assume the role of being the primary caregivers of their siblings. This makes it difficult for the children to be in school, and even their younger siblings who are still in primary school may not complete their schooling. Therefore, HIV and AIDS affects teaching and learning negatively. According to Buchel (2006), children between the ages of two and eighteen years without mothers constituted about 3.3% while the number of children who would have lost a caregiver by the time, they were nine years

constituted 10% which would increase to 15% by the time they were fourteen years. This means that after losing their parents, some of these children would have to assume the role of being a primary caregiver in their households.

Brookes, Shisana and Richter (2004) found that 3% of the children aged between twelve and eighteen years were primary caregivers (heads) in their households. Their study further shows that there is not enough money to buy clothes and food in the households of 45% of these children. Most child-headed households rely on social grants for their survival (Brookes et al., 2004). The academic performance of these children is negatively impacted because they perform labour intensive chores, take care of family members and younger siblings who are ill (Buchel, 2008).

2.2.3 PEER PRESSURE

Many learners may succumb to peer pressure because they want to belong to a peer group. A peer group could ensure the positive shaping of a learner's character as they are able to influence their performance and actions. On the other hand, peer pressure could also cause some learners to do things without thinking about the consequences of their actions. For example, learners of different ages and grades from one family may be absent from school without a valid reason. An older sibling would then write a letter to the school, purporting to come from one of the parents, explaining ill-health as a reason for the absence of the children. In this regard, Rammala (2009) states during childhood and adolescence, many experience are new as they engage in actions for the first time. Most children and teenagers experience emotions that they may struggle to understand and process and these emotions may fluctuate between extreme happiness and sadness as they are on a steep learning curve (Rammala, 2009).

2.2.4 DRUG ABUSE

One of the significant causes of repeating grades and dropping out of school is substance abuse. Drugs are often easily obtained by learners and their use is prevalent even in the foundation phase. Many children use and abuse drugs at school and this has a negative impact on how they perform at school because it has an adverse effect on their learning and development. Drugs are known to affect the brain and excessive use could result in school dropout. According to Pretorius and Le Roux (1998), children who come from

families that have poor relationships between members, i.e., families that have parents who do not set good examples for their children, neglect their children's schooling and who are not dependable, tend to abuse (Pretorius & Le Roux, 1998).

Adolescents tend not to use drugs if they have good relationships with their parents, if their parents are affectionate and have good communication with them, as well as maintaining reasonable standards of behaviour themselves (Baumrind, 1991; Greenberger & Chen, 1996; Grotevant, 1998; Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Mwamwenda (2004) asserts that drug use and abuse is a recourse for many learners to escape from their emotional turmoil, to conform to peer pressure and defy authority.

2.2.3 GANGSTERISM

In the school context, experiencing language problems as well as poverty and not performing well at school makes learners more vulnerable to the influence of gangs. Learners who experience such socio-economic challenges tend to view themselves as failures in the school environment leading to the following behaviour, namely; poor academic performance, experiencing difficulties in learning, bunking classes, and absenteeism without a valid reason.

Low self-esteem furthermore causes anti-social behaviour, which results in learners dropping out of school. Families, teachers and learners are burdened by gangsterism in schools. Gangs interrupt classes and have a negative influence on learners who are the targets of their bullying. They steal other learners' properties such as backpacks, books, exercise books, money and clothing. Verbal threats and sexual harassment also discourage some learners from attending school and results in some learning dropping out of school.

Dealing with gangsters deprives teachers of the time to focus on teaching creating an ineffective teaching and learning environment. Gangs disturb classes and disrupt educational goals that teachers are already struggling to achieve while contributing to learner drop out. Harber & Muthukrishna (2000) argue that schools situated in previously disadvantaged communities such as townships are frequently burdened by gangsterism. Consequently, gangsters even steal from, murder and rape learners and teachers because these communities exhibit a high level of poverty, unemployment, a history of violence and it is easy for the members of such communities to access guns (Harber & Muthukrishna, 2000).

The children in these schools often do not receive adequate support in their homes and may suffer from physical, emotional, substance and sexual abuse. From a tender age, they may witness domestic violence. When families become dysfunctional, children may decide to be involved in gangs and they may even choose to leave their home. They also prefer to spend their time in the streets, where they are often involved in criminal activities.

2.3 SCHOOL FACTORS AND LEARNER DROPOUT

Dei (2003) argues that inclusivity and acceptance must first be experienced in the home by learners as knowing and accepting oneself is related to how one learns. It is imperative for teachers to recognise that their learners are different, and from multi-cultural backgrounds and that social differences significantly influence learning outcomes. It is therefore important that teachers use social differences to encourage strength, power and identity and the cultural background of learners must be taken into account by teachers (Dei, 2003). Mandela (2002) posits that education can be used to encourage the development of the individual. He believed that “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”. When an individual is empowered with education, such individual has a better chance to succeed in life.

Strassburg et. al. (2010) argues that learners lose interest in school and eventually drop out because they experience complex societal problems such as (teenage pregnancy, substance abuse), financial problems as well as in-school difficulties such as receiving inadequate support and motivation.

2.3.1 QUALITY EDUCATION

In South Africa, there are numerous signs that indicate the challenges in education. There are several issues and influences that prevent learners’ success at school and increase the risk of them dropping out. There is a high enrolment rate each year and increasingly meagre Grade 12 results. It is therefore evident that more attention needs to be paid to quality education. To underscore this, in February (2011) Mrs. Motshekga, the Minister of Basic Education, said “I do not believe the system is in crisis, I blame this on the lack of discipline and focus by teachers.” In July (2019) she blamed the “amount of time spent by teachers on clerical tasks and dealing with disciplinary problems in class” for many of the problems in schooling.

According to UNESCO (2007a), a lack of adequate teacher training, overcrowding in classes and a lack of educational resources results in poor-quality education and consequently this results in the perpetuation of a long cycle of poverty as learners stand to inherit the poverty of their families.

According to the Educational Labour Relations Council (ELRC) (2003), the provision of equal, active and organised education is hindered by poverty because it creates sociological and socio-economic difficulties. Receiving quality education and adequate resources is a constitutional right of poor schools and learners (ELRC, 2003). A sliding scale is used to subsidise South African schools, which are categorised into five quintiles, ranging from the most impoverished to the most privileged (ELRC, 2003). If the members of a community in which a school is located are regarded as living in varied levels of poverty, the school may be considered inferior (ELRC, 2003). The same principle used to determine a school's status is used to ensure that schools are more inclusive and that poor learners are exempt from paying school fees (ELRC, 2003).

2.3.2 BULLYING

Bullying is a significant issue in primary schools. There are different kinds of bullying that occur and cause harm to learners. According to Egan and Perry (1998), it is difficult for vulnerable learners to maintain good health and safeguard their well-being if they repeatedly experience bullying. Learners who bully others or who are victims of bullying may be susceptible to mental illness, and this may impede them from reaching their maximum potential in learning. Peer pressure may cause a learner to become a bully.

2.3.3 ABSENTEEISM

Absenteeism of learners is a huge problem in public schools. According to Marburger (2001) an educator becomes easily irritated and learners become uncomfortable when learners are absent from class. Furthermore, the classroom environment inevitably loses its vibrancy and becomes unpleasant (Marburger, 2001). Many parents do not know that their children bunk school and teachers think that they are absent and that they are at home. When there is no effective communication between parents and schools, it is not easy to manage the absenteeism of learners. This is a severe burden to effective learning and teaching and results in learner dropout.

Malcolm H, Wilson V, Davidson J & Kirk (2003) define learner absenteeism as the common and regular absence from school that is a consequence of the socio-economic status of a

learner. Consequently, the more a learner is absent from school, the more their academic performance declines (Malcolm et al., 2003). Some teachers also have a habit of being absent or early leaving, especially on Mondays and Fridays or on paydays. When a teacher is absent from the classroom, learning is disrupted because, in the minds of the learners, that period is viewed as a “free period”. Once that teacher is repeatedly absent, learner performance could be negatively affected and could lead to learners dropping. According to Segal (2008), the overall learning environment is disrupted by absenteeism.

2.3.4 UNDER – QUALIFIED TEACHERS

Many educators of foundation phase learners do not have the necessary qualifications and are unaware of what is expected of them with regard to ensuring that every learner who experiences learning difficulties is properly accommodated in the classroom. When these teachers are not guided or monitored, learners may be disadvantaged. It is therefore essential that the curriculum is designed in a manner that enables under-qualified teachers to be practically supported by qualified teachers.

According to Taylor and Vingevoold (1999) many learners in the foundation phase are unable to read and write because their educators fail to teach these skills. They further maintain that educators only teach for 16.1 hours of the 35-hour week and spend the remaining time on administrative duties. They also arrive late and leave school early (HSRC, 2005).

2.4 PARENTAL NON- INVOLVEMENT AND LEARNER DROPOUT

Parental involvement is essential for optimal learning and development. Consequently, parents are considered a central pillar of the educational system because they are responsible for the provision of basic care for their children. Additionally, they are critical constituents in the governance of schools and supporting community ownership of these facilities. If a family lives in poverty, it becomes more difficult to be a good parent and as a result, parenting becomes erratic and punitive, resulting in even greater level of poverty as such. Parenting negatively affects the learner’s ability to perform well at school and dropping out.

2.4.1 PARENTAL ILLITERACY

Some parents in the Amajuba District are illiterate and, immature and have not completed their secondary schooling rendering them unable to assist their children with school activities. Sometimes, they are reluctant to ask neighbours for help and when invited to the

school, they often do not cooperate. Parents are faced with socio-economic challenges such as a lack of adequate basic healthcare, illiteracy and single parenthood. Negative past experiences with schooling may moreover result in them resenting and mistrusting the education system.

2.4.2 LACK OF PARENTAL SUPPORT

Some parents who are unable to help their children with homework. UNESCO (2011) argues that learners are more likely to drop out of school if they do not receive parental support and if they are rejected by a parent. An unwillingness to accept the responsibilities that come with parenting may cause a parent to reject their child. Consequently, this adversely affects a learner's academic performance more than the parent's level of education and as a result, children who have illiterate parents are more likely not to receive enough adequate parental support (UNESCO, 2011).

Furthermore, if parents do not adequately care about and participate in the schooling of their children, their children become disinterested in school and eventually dropout. According to Khajehpour and Ghazvini (2011) learners are more likely to stay in school and perform better if their parents attend school meetings, and render voluntary service in assisting with school activities.

2.4.3 PARENT – SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Parents who are employed do not always have time to provide adequate support for their children's schooling. Even those who do not work are sometimes reluctant to communicate with educators. In highlighting the value of communication, Stone (2006), suggests that learners are less likely to drop out of school if there is adequate communication between learners, educators and parents. Fall and Roberts (2012) argue that learners are encouraged to stay in school and gain a positive outlook towards schooling if their parents frequently enquire about their progress.

Effective schooling can only occur if parents are involved in their children's schooling, if they cooperate and partner with the school to ensure a positive schooling experience (Nojaja, 2009). Learners tend to drop out of school if they are burdened with the task of taking all the decisions related to their schooling.

2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since a theory requires a framework for understanding its application to the topic being investigated, Poor Family Socialisation Theory is the foundational framework for this inquiry as it is relevant to the phenomenon under investigation, that is, learners with barriers to learning dropping out during the foundation phase of their schooling.

2.5.1 Poor Family Socialisation Theory

Developing a child receives its first and most important socialisation from its family. The most critical and foundational life experiences, including the importance of success in schooling is shaped by the family. According to Višňovský (2007:29), Hroncová (1996:56) and Kováčiková (2006:46) the most significant roles of the family are the following:

- **Economic:** If the family has a low income, this may affect the child's socio-economic status. This means staying at a poor neighbourhood where majority of the people are illiterate and crime is sky high.
- **Educational:** The caregivers must provide sufficient educational support such as school fees, uniform, stationery and help with homework among others.
- **Emotional wellbeing:** Children's personalities are different; some are extroverts some are introverts and they deal with issues that they face at school differently. Therefore, the parents must give emotional support to their children.
- **Mental health:** Children may be depressed because of the overwhelming world that they face every day. Their mental health needs to be in a good state so they can excel in their school work.
- **Protection and security:** The school and the community may be dangerous places for children because of the violence, bullying, abuse and crime. It is of utmost importance that the child feels safe to walk to and from school. If not, the child may be reluctant to attend school.
- **Socialisation:** The child needs to know how to behave in a manner that is acceptable at school, home, on social media and with peers. Poor socialisation may cause the child to struggle academically.
- **Recreation:** How a child spends time when not at school is important to the child's education. Fun activities will enhance the learner's mental health, self-esteem, confidence and discipline.

2.17 SUMMARY

A review of the relevant literature relevant has been presented in this chapter. It presented different arguments on how environmental factors, school- based factors and parental non-involvement contribute to the high prevalence of learners in the foundation phase dropping out of school and the theoretical framework. The next chapter explores how the study's

research was designed, as well as the methods used to conduct the research, the population sampled and studied, the ways in which data was collected and analysed as well as ethical considerations that guided the study.

CHAPTER THREE

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This research used a qualitative method of inquiry, following a case study design to explore factors that contribute to the dropout of foundation phase learners who experience barriers to learning in an inclusive school in the Amajuba District in KZN. This chapter explores how the study's research was designed, as well as the methods used to conduct the research, its theoretical framework, the population sampled and studied, the ways in which data was collected and analysed. The ethical considerations, credibility and trustworthiness of the study will also be discussed.

3.2 INCLUSIVE SCHOOL IN AMAJUBA DISTRICT IN CONTEXT

The inclusive school that participated in this research can be found in the rural area of Newcastle, which is in the northern part of KZN. It is also considered a large school in the Amajuba District. While the school has suitable buildings to accommodate learners with physical disabilities, it lacks other resources such as proper playgrounds for learners with various disabilities.

In addition, the school is overcrowded and there are inadequate classroom facilities which results in at least three teachers sharing a classroom. Most learners in the Amajuba District come from poor, child-headed, HIV and AIDS infected or affected families where there is often the prevalence of violence and abuse. The immediate family offers primary care of their children and where they fail to do so, members of the extended family provide primary care of the children.

3.3 METHODS OF INQUIRY

According to Maree (2012), understanding the processes as well as the socio-cultural context that influence the patterns of a person's behaviour is the fundamental concern of a qualitative methodology of research. Qualitative research relies heavily on data, its finding

and conclusions are acquired from this data which is moreover and does not reflect reality objectively, and as a result, this research methodology is considered inductive (Burck,2005 & Babbie in Mouton, 2007). With this in mind, I used a qualitative approach for my study because the dropping out of learners can be better understood using this approach.

Qualitative Research Methods:

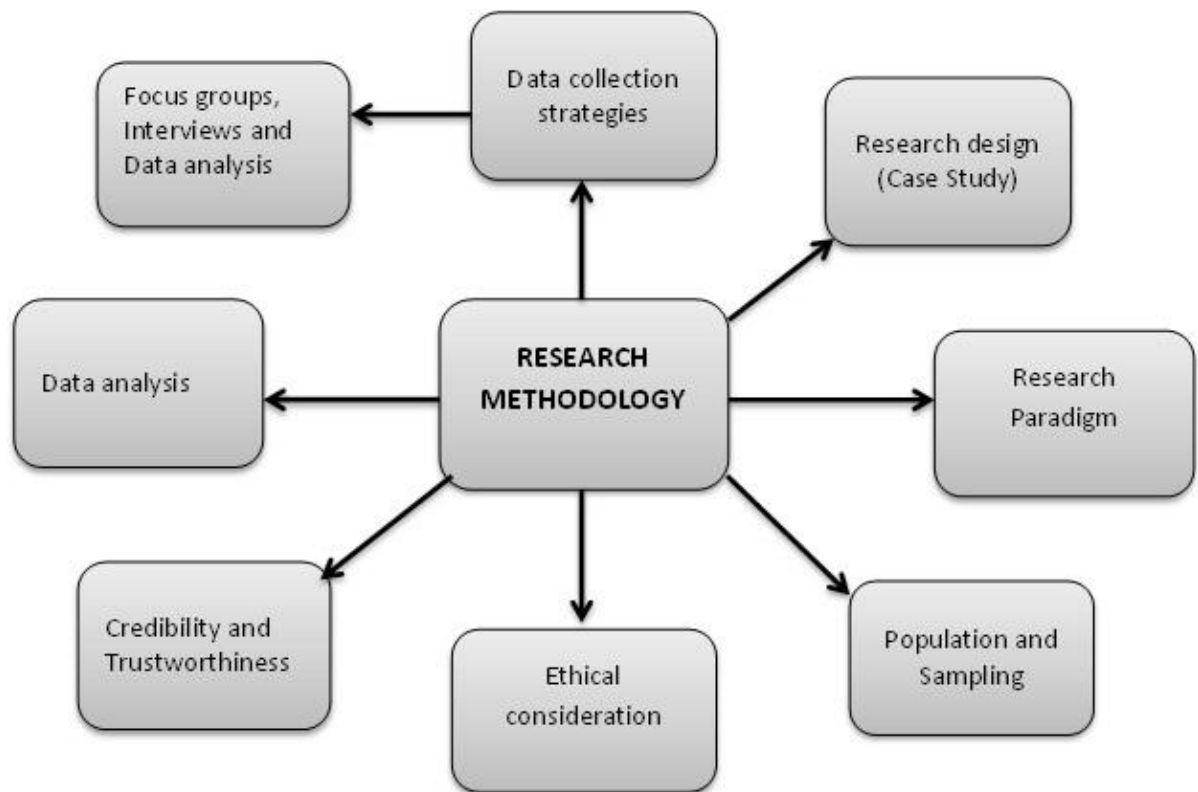


Figure 3.1: Research Methodology

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

A case study with a qualitative design was followed by this inquiry. The purpose of this study was to identify and investigate the various factors contributing to the rate at which foundation phase learners experiencing learning difficulties in the Amajuba District of KZN dropout. It considered two types of case studies namely: descriptive and interpretative case studies. Methods which relied on interpretations helped me to acquire more information about the nature of dropping out.

3.5 RESEARCH PARADIGM

An interpretivist paradigm was used to conduct the study as this enabled me to acquire more information and a clearer perspective on the phenomenon (the dropout of foundation phase learners) being investigated as I engaged closely with the participants. Interpretivists believe that data cannot be collected or removed from the context and as such promote the 'generation' 'discovery' or 'construction' of knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Yanow, 2014). The interpretivist paradigm is suitable for this study because knowledge was generated from the participants.

3.6 LOCATION

Face-to-face and group interviews and observations were conducted in a classroom at an inclusive school in the Amajuba District of KZN. These interviews took place at different times. Six teachers were interviewed separately from the six parents, two HoDs and the school principal.

3.7 POPULATION

Six foundation phase teachers, the parents of six learners who had dropped out of the school, two HoDs and the school principal were the participants who made up the sample of this study. The structure of the target population was diverse and involved people of different ages, those who identified as male and female and people who had different educational qualifications.

3.8 SAMPLING

Purposive sampling was used for the research as selected individuals who were able to discuss the reasons for learners dropping out as it was my goal to acquire insightful information on the phenomenon being investigated. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), if one chooses individuals who are better equipped to offer insightful information needed in a study, this process is called purposeful sampling. It is also about individuals who are information rich. This approach helped me to select participants based on the criteria as per the emerging investigative questions. In addition to their familiarity with the dropout phenomenon, the criteria used to choose participants was as follows:

- A parent was selected if he/she was a parent of a learner who had dropped out of school;
- The principal was selected in his capacity as the school manager;
- Two Heads of Department were selected as senior staff in the foundation phase, and
- Six teachers who had more than five years of teaching experience at the school were also selected.

3.9 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

An interview schedule was designed and utilised as an instrument for data collection. The interviews with six parents and six foundation phase teachers provided data for the study. Face-to-face individual, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with the two foundation phase HoDs and the school principal. The learners' attendance registers which were requested on the day of the interview were reviewed to assist in identifying and understanding the various factors that contributed to the rate at which learners dropout of school.

3.10 STRATEGIES FOR COLLECTING DATA

Data was also collected through focus group interviews which were held separately with (i) the six foundation phase teachers and (ii) the six parents. Face-to-face individual interviews were used to collect data from the school principal and the two HoDs. A voice recorder and a notebook were used to take audio recordings and notes respectively. All participants were informed about what the study aimed to achieve verbally and in writing. Upon being requested to participate, practical arrangements for the interviews with the two focus groups were agreed upon with the participants ensuring that;

There was no disruption of school activities. The participants were informed that they had the right to participate or decline the invitation to do so without suffering any loss or inconvenience. After the interviews, I presented an opportunity for the participant to add anything to what they had shared and thanked them for their participation. Belzile and Oberg (2012) argue that using focus groups allows a researcher to understand how shared meanings are constructed and how group interactions as well as their dynamics influence the process.

3.11 DATA ANALYSIS

In order to be of relevance to the investigative questions and the objectives of the research, the data collected was interpreted. I also categorised and grouped responses by coding the verbatim transcriptions of the recorded focus group and semi-structured individual interviews.

I re-read the interview records and played the recorded data repeatedly to enable me to become familiar with the data and to achieve an understanding of the participants' responses. Furthermore, paraphrased the participants' answers to the investigative questions and shortened their responses to understand them better.

A method that analysed data based on its themes was used to identify, analyse and report the data's themes and patterns. Data was evaluated based on information collected from all the participants. Compelling quotes and extracts were selected to illustrate the themes. pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity and confidentiality for the participants.

3.12 CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

In order to provide insightful information on the phenomenon being studied, I extracted rich and extensive information regarding the participants as well as their backgrounds. To produce findings that were convincing and to improve the credibility of the inquiry, I also presented findings that were negative and inconsistent. "Trustworthiness" is a term used for the researcher's ability to convince the reader that the information and the findings presented are valid and that the research is consistently of a high quality (Lincoln & Guba in Johnson & Turner, 2003).

Continuous reflection was undertaken to prevent and eradicate any bias in the study. According to Rubin and Babbie (2007), trustworthiness outlines how a study is consistent in its measurements. In this research, a comparison of the level of agreement between the views and experiences of the participants was used to prove its trustworthiness. The following criteria is used to establish "trustworthiness in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, conformability and authenticity" (Creswell, 2009:539).

3.12.1 Credibility

Trochim and Donnelly (2007:149) state that credibility involves establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participant in

the research. As qualitative research studies explore perceptions, experiences, feelings and beliefs of the people, it is believed that the respondents are the best judges to determine whether or not the research findings have been able to reflect their opinions and feelings accurately. Hence, credibility which is synonymous with validity in qualitative research is judged by the respondents being afforded the opportunity to confirm and approve the research findings. Time was spent with the participants in order to achieve this.

3.12.2 Transferability

'Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings' (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007:149). Erant (2004) refers to transferability as the ability of findings to be applied to a similar situation and deliver the same results. The researcher compared some previous studies' findings captured in the literature with the findings of this study, and common results were achieved.

3.12.3 Dependability

According to Trochim and Donnelly (2007:149), dependability entails obtaining similar results when something is observed more than once. The objective of dependability is to ensure that the same study conducted will result in similar findings and conclusions (Creswell, 2012). This study had similar findings as studies previously conducted.

3.12.4 Conformability

Conformability is a qualitatively-oriented criterion which indicates that the product of the inquiry does not have researcher biases (Babbie & Mouton: 2001). For the purpose of conformability, I ensured that quality was demonstrated by coding the data to systematically search for congruency in the participants' response during the interview. There were similarities amongst the responses of the teachers, HoDs, parents and the principal.

3.12.5 Authenticity

Informed consent was given to the participants before the interviews. The researcher nurtured a caring and trusting relationships with the participants. Correct inquiry procedures were rendered to ensure transparency to all participants. The researcher ensured fairness

by not exploiting participants values so as to disadvantaged them. Therefore participants were free to give honest responses to the interview questions.

3.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Ethical Clearance Certificate was granted on 17 May 2017 by the University of South Africa Research Ethics Committee. The permission to conduct research was sought from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, and from the principal of a selected inclusive school. The participants were requested to complete informed consent forms in which they agreed to take part in the research and were informed that they could withdraw from participating at any time and that participation was voluntary. Participants were informed of the nature and purpose of the study so that they could make informed decisions on whether or not to take part.

Ethical concerns in research fall into four categories, namely, informed consent, confidentiality, honesty with colleagues and protection from injury. Pseudonyms were used to protect the participants' identities and to keep the information that they shared confidential. The participants were also assured that the data collected would not be shared without their authorisation.

All participants' information and responses shared during the study were kept private, and the results are presented in an anonymous manner in order to protect the identities of the participants. Data is securely stored in soft and hard copies for five years; digital format copies are stored in a locked cupboard in my study room as is required.

3.14 INFORMED CONSENT

Participants were given the consent form before participating in the interview. They were informed of the nature and purpose of the study so that they could make informed decisions on whether or not to take part in the research process.

3.15 CONFIDENTIALITY

It is important to uphold the concept of confidentiality to protect research participants from harm, stigma and vulnerability and to protect the privacy of all people involved to build trust and relationship with study participants, and to maintain ethical standards of the research

process. I ensured that no one had access to individual data or the names of the participants and that the data could not be linked to any particular participant.

3.16 PROTECTION FROM HARM

I informed the participants beforehand about the impact of the investigation and offered them opportunities to withdraw if they wished to. Potential risks were assessed and adequate precautions were taken to minimise and mitigate these risks. During the interviews, references were not made to specific learners who dropped out, as this could be a sensitive issue, particularly for those parents whose children may have dropped out of school for a variety of reasons.

3.17 FEEDBACK ON THE STUDY

I will arrange for the participants to receive feedback on the findings of the research through information sharing at the school. The full study will also be available on request as my contact details were provided to all participants.

3.18 SUMMARY

Chapter 3 explained the research methodology and design, research paradigm, location, population and sampling, data collection instruments and strategies. Data analysis, the issues of credibility and trustworthiness the ethical considerations including, informed consent, confidentiality, protection from harm and feedback of the study and a summary of the chapter were also presented.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Data analysis and interpretation from the focus group interviews of six parents of learners who dropped out and six foundation phase teachers is discussed in this chapter. Data was also analysed and interpreted from the individual semi-structured interviews with the two Heads of Departments and the school principal.

The purpose of the study was to identify and describe the factors that contribute to the dropout of foundation phase learners who experience barriers to learning in an inclusive school in the Amajuba District KZN. Themes were used to analyse data collected through focus group and semi-structured interviews.

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- To determine how environmental factors may contribute to the dropout of foundation phase learners;
- To investigate how school-based factors contribute to the dropout of foundation phase learners;
- To assess how parental non-involvement in education affects learner dropout;

The data collected was sub-divided into three categories: environmental factors, school-based factors and parents' non-involvement. Different questions were used in each theme from the interview schedule. Follow-up questions were asked as these emerged during the interviews.

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS

De Vos.et. al. (2005:335) note that data collection and analysis typically go hand in hand in order to build a coherent interpretation of the data. This view is supported by Zimmerman (2016) who states that data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes and other material. The interview schedule was used in data collection and coding was also used to analyse the data that had been collected. The table below illustrates how data was collected, analysed and interpreted in this study.

Table 4.2: Themes

THEMES:		Principal	HoDs	Educators	Parents
1	Environmental factors	Face-face interview	Face-face interview	Focus group interview	Focus group interview
2	School-based factors				
3	Parental non-involvement				

THEME 1: Environmental Factors

4.3 PRINCIPAL (*Face-to-face interview*)

Responding to the question, “What are the contributing factors to learner dropout” the school principal mentioned a number of causes. He made it clear that the school is located in a rural area, that many children come from poor backgrounds, some with unemployed parents who rely on child support grants for their survival. He stated that the majority of parents in the community were uneducated and negligent.

“I can mention a number of factors contributing to the learner dropout problem. Some are school factors and some are home-related. Insufficient adult supervision is among the causes of learner dropout. The first cause of learner dropout is nothing but negligence on the parent’s side. Learners come to school with empty stomachs, some without the required learning material while some are dirty with fear written on their faces. Those learners who always show fear used to be the victims of various forms of abuse.

“Our school is located in a rural area of poor families some with unemployed parents relying on government child support grants for a living. It is unfortunate that the very same parents receive child support grant but they don’t use it for their children’s needs but they do their own things”.

The principal insisted on the parents' negligence which is a lack of adult supervision. *It is also a painful experience to see young children coming to school barefoot during winter. According to this participant, some learners have no one to ensure that they take a bath before coming to school, and that they have something to eat.* The participant made it clear that learners are facing severe and varied hardships in their homes. The participant continued stating the following:

"Some parents are alcoholics who spend all their money on liquor and fail their own children. These parents use to be single mothers who also dropped out from school and they don't take good care of their children. Another problem is that some learners come from child-headed families whereby an older child acts on parents' behalf taking care of others while he/she is also young"

It is an unfortunate situation that some learners come from child-headed families because they are orphans, but in some cases, parents are alive but they neglect their children. Some leave the children unattended, and others leave them with grandparents. I therefore conclude that many children end up being victims of various forms of abuse.

In his response to the question: *'In which term does the school experience learner dropout the most'*, the participant said:

"In as much as we experience learner dropouts throughout the year, this become worse during the winter seasons. We have learners coming from poor family backgrounds whereby some of the learners do not have warm clothes for winter. As a result, some end up being absent and ultimately, they do not report back to school even after the cold season. It is clear that some parents are negligent when it comes to the welfare of their own children. It is the primary responsibility of any parent to ensure that the child is taken care of in all forms. Some of our learners come to school without shoes and the parent claims not to have money to buy them some shoes. Some parents cannot be found even if we try to trace them".

With reference to the information given by the participant above, it is evident that the winter cold is among the factors that contribute to learner dropout. Some learners withdraw from school because they cannot tolerate the cold weather and because there is no one who encourages them to go to school. This indicates that negligence or parent non-involvement in school matters is a serious factor contributing to learner dropout.

This data indicated that there is still a large number of parents who do not take good care of their children. The question is why parents are so negligent when it comes to their children's education and welfare.

HoD's (*Face-to-face interview*)

In response to the question of what causes learner dropout in the phase, HoD 1 offered a plethora of reasons including the lack of education of parents, family conflicts leading to divorce and parents' separation, the lack of parental involvement in school matters, bullying and children being left alone in the household among other reasons.

"Little involvement of parents in school activities is among the causes of learner dropout. Some parents do not know even teachers teaching their children because they stay away from school during registration period, they don't attend meeting organised by the school. It is embarrassing to understand that they don't come to school even if they are called specially for the reasons that affect their child"

HoD 2 provided similar reasons for learners' dropping out. She also offered possible solutions to overcome this challenge:

"Little involvement of parents in school activities is a serious challenge in this matter. Parents don't come to school unless there are job opportunities advertised. Sometimes teachers make sacrifices to reach out to families only to find that parents are not even there. The family is headed by another child who also needs parental guidance"

Based on the above responses, it is evident that most parents are perceived to be negligent. It is unacceptable for a parent not to know the teacher who is teaching his/her child and that they are unwilling to attend schools meeting when they are specifically asked to. It is unconscionable that some children end up dropping out because of the negligence of their parents. It is also irresponsible for a parent to stay away from school including during registration. Cooperation between the school and parents is important for children's progress in their learning. Parents need information about school matters but the challenge remains that they are not always willing or able to participate.

EDUCATORS (*Focus group*)

Educators also presented a number of factors that result in the learners' dropout from school. Some of their responses were common depending on their experience. All responses indicated that learner dropout is a severe problem in their school. They

furthermore indicated that large classes, the lack of parental support, poor teachers training and various social problems have a negative impact leading to learners dropping out.

With reference to the question, “How does the school environment promote quality teaching and learning?” Educator 1 said:

“The school use to organise parents’ meetings, sometimes grade meetings whereby each educator gets an opportunity to talk to parents face-to-face pertaining to academic matters and other social related matters facing learners.”

Educator 2 made it clear that their attempts were always in vain because they do not get the attention they need from the parents:

“We used to organise meetings with parents in order to share challenges we are facing and also to involve them in their children’s education. Unfortunately, the attendance used to be poor while some parents would send others to represent them and others claim to be at work and send other children who know nothing about the problems we are facing with that particular child”

Educator 3 said:

“Our principal is trying his best to buy all teaching and learning material including sport equipment to entertain learners. As educators we also organise phase developmental workshops to share our experiences and also to equip each other so that we can deal with any kind of challenge we can face”

According to Educator 2, external intervention is also welcome. She stated that sometimes they involve South African Police Service (SAPS) to bring raise awareness of crime and on other occasions, they invite representatives from the Department of Social Development.

“We used to invite people from various government agencies such as social welfare; people from health department to teach our learners more about health matters. Sometimes we involve SAPS just to warn our children about the dangers of crime and for their own safety in school and in their respective homes”

On the question of what they thought were the causes of learner dropout in their grades, the two HoD’s offered various responses:

HoD 1’The lack of parental involvement is a serious cause of this problem. Nowadays we have parents who are very negligent when it comes to their children’s education. These parents leave their children early in the morning for work while children have to prepare for

school without the supervision of an adult. Some of the children end up being the victims of various forms of abuse. When parents come back in the afternoon, they don't even bother themselves with child's school matters, they don't even check their school work"

HoD 2 "The child feels neglected and starts developing resentment on school matters".

Educator 3 said:

"Our learners lack motivation. Numerous parents do not communicate school matters with their children. As a result, a child sees no need for school and look at it as something which makes no sense in his/her life. The very same parents cannot even come to school to check on the progress of a learner even during parent meetings organised by the school.

Some of our learners live with very old grandparents who cannot come to school due to health-related issues. This is what we use to experience when we do home visits as the school. These home visits are being motivated by challenges we are experiencing with some learners"

HoD 1 revealed educator related problems, saying that some educators do not understand problems being experienced by different families and those educators end up scolding learners if they show signs of withdrawal. According to this HOD, some educators are ignorant, and their behaviour also contributes to learners' dropout.

"Sometimes fingers are pointing at us as the cause of this learner dropout problem. There are educators in the school who are now well trained as to how to deal with psychological issues of youngsters. Instead of locating the cause of a child's withdrawal, an educator simply scolds the child and the child feels intimidated and starts hating school. It is important for us as educators to reach out and locate the source of the child's withdrawal"

Responding to the question; "How is the attendance of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds in their grades" HoD 2 complained about the high rate of absenteeism among these learners:

"The attendance of these learners is very poor, particularly on Mondays or Fridays. When their brothers or sisters are writing their examination in the neighbouring high school, these youngsters do not come to school. When their brothers are at home after their examinations, these youngsters do not come to school as well"

"Their attendance is always poor in a way that I have tried to call some of their parents but this has been in vain. Parents simply send their representatives, claiming to be committed.

It is this behaviour that leads to some learners not to come to school at all. That is how they end up dropping out completely.

These learners do not come to school. Their attendance is like paying a visit to school. At the end they come up with a series of reasons for their absence. It is so unfortunate that it is a challenge on its own to authenticate this with parents who do not come to meetings as well”.

Response provided by the HoD’s above indicated that school attendance by learners from disadvantaged backgrounds is abysmal. It is clear that the high rate of absenteeism ultimately leads to dropping out. The participants stated that they previously called parents in order to address absenteeism but those efforts were in vain because parents did not attend meetings and even sent someone in their place after agreeing to attend.

PARENTS (*Focus group*)

Responding to the question about the importance of education for the future of her child. Parent 1 stated that:

“In as much as I understand the importance of education, I am concerned about the money we have to pay from time to time. It looks like the principal and teachers are not aware of the hardship we are facing as parents. We have to pay for trips organised by the school. We have to pay for grade R and grade seven graduation ceremonies and many more events”.

Parent 1 gave a confusing response, blaming the school for requesting money from parents for learners to take part in certain excursions and school organised events. This parent made it clear that as parents they do not have money. She continued saying the government committed to providing free and compulsory education for children.

It was clear that this parent also perpetuates this problem of learner dropouts because some learners did not want to go to school if they had not money. Some felt isolated as they were not taking part in the school event or trip because their parents were unable to pay for them, claiming that they did not have money to pay for school activities.

Parent 2 said:

“Not all of us as parents understand the importance of education. Some of us are sending children to school just because it is a habit or because others are doing so. Some see the need because there is no one educated in the family. You can see that when the school

calls us as parents for the meeting, most parents do not come, instead they send others to listen on their behalf, putting forward their own commitments”.

Parent 3 stated the following:

“Yes, education is very important for our children’s future but as parents, we are letting our children down. One of us right now said they don’t have money to pay for school organised events but each month they receive child support grants from the government. That is the money we need to spend on our children’s educational needs. Parents need to be taught that these grants must be spent on children’s needs and not on our own needs”.

Parent 4: “It is so embarrassing that parents of today are children themselves, most of them are dropouts who do not see the importance of education for their own children. As they complain about funds required by the school, they are also misusing those grants on useless things like buying expensive cell phones, airtime, data, beautifying themselves and some spent it on alcohol. This shows that some parents do not see the importance of their children education”.

Parent 4 continued to say *“There are learners who use to intimidate others every day in school. Some children do report the matter either to educators or to their parents, but some just keep silent suppressing that fear inside. Those who cannot disclose the matter end up developing resentment towards the school and start to withdraw”*

This parent envisaged that learners’ safety in school needs to be given full attention as some learners end up resenting school because they do not feel safe on their way to school and within the school premises. It is therefore clear that bullying also plays a negative role in the problem of learners dropping out.

All responses provide by the parents above, indicated that they too contribute to the problem of learners’ dropout. The school communicates with parents in order to circumvent this problem, but parents simply distance themselves from all school activities. Based on the data collected, it is evident that the school attempted to reach out to parents through home visits, but even this was fruitless. This means that parents send children to school and shift all responsibilities to educators. Most of them are nowhere to be found even when they are required for urgent matters. Some parents seem not to take care of their children, but they live off their children’s support grants, and fail to pay for their children’s educational needs.

THEME 2: School-Based Factors

4.4 PRINCIPAL *(Face-to-face interview)*

On the question of; “what contribution could the school make towards encouraging the learners who had already dropped out of school to re-register” the principal responded that this was a severe challenge since some learners simply disappear and the school cannot get hold of the parents, saying:

“To trace a learner is a challenge to get hold of a parent is a serious challenge too. Some learners simply disappear, and we use to send our support team to find out what the problem is unfortunately, our attempts use to be fruitless because of the parents. We cannot do anything without the support from parents especially if a learner’s problem is home-based. To get those learners who dropped out back to school is a hectic exercise indeed”.

On the question of how the school helps the non-involved parents in their children’s learning: the principal also mentioned that they rely on the school support team and social workers who visit concerned families to find out what the matter is. He also mentioned that sometimes they communicate telephonically with parents, which is mostly in vain.

“To get hold of non-involved parents is always a challenge. We used to send our school support team also; sometimes we involve social workers if we see that parents are nowhere to be found. No matter how we try, it is always a challenge to involve parents”

On the question: “What measures could the principal recommend for reducing the problem of the dropping out of learners from school” the principal said that they need cooperation among all stakeholders. He emphasised the importance of parents, in particular, saying they were the ones who distance themselves from the school and they neither come to parents’ meetings nor assist their children with their school work. He also insisted that most parents did not come even when they were called for urgent matters that involved their children.

HoD’s *(Face-to-face interview)*

In response to the question: “To what extent do parents get involved in school activities?” HoD 1 stated that parents need orientation which required them to avail themselves.

“Parents need orientation so that they will understand their role in education. They need to understand what is expected from them”

HoD 2 agreed that parents need to be oriented but the challenge remains how to get hold of them as they always distance themselves from the school. She stated that they do not find them even if they conduct home visits, saying:

“We are playing our role as educators. Parents are expected to play theirs. Unfortunately, most of the parents are nowhere to be found when they are needed. When we call them, they make a series of excuses and ultimately, we don’t get hold of them. By paying home visits our intention is to intervene in some home-related challenges that directly affect the child’s education”.

On the question: “What strategy does the School Management Team have to minimise the dropout of foundation phase learners?”

HoD1 mentioned a few aspects that required the participation of both the school and the parents:

“We used to conduct home visits if necessary, in order to get the whole background of where the learner come from and the life style of everyone at home. We are doing this because it is very important and easier to handle and combat this problem if there is collaboration between the school and parents. We also get assistance from our School-Based Support team. We also assign learners some duties that will expose them if they are absent or they are not performing their duties”. She continued, saying:

“It is important to act on parents’ behalf. I mean as educators we simply entrust ourselves fully to the learner by trying to motivate that particular learner. We do this in many different forms like putting up a reward for someone who will do well in a certain activity, congratulate the learner if s/he has done well and encourage them to do more”

“As a strategy of retaining them, we also take local excursions to SAPS, social welfare, fire fighters and more. We also take them out in order to explore other forms of life. They play various games that might relieve their minds out of the school and out of the homes. Those who are aggressive become intimidated when they get to the police station because we use to tell them that if they do unacceptable things like beating others, they might end up there. This is another way of warning them against unacceptable behaviour that they use to show to others”

HoD 2 made mention of a number of exciting strategies they have that may help to retain learners who are at risk of dropping out. The Involvement of the Department of Social Development could assist in matters pertaining to their homes in order to obtain more information about a child and their parents, particularly in relation to their behaviour. To be

taught about the consequences of unacceptable behaviour which include fighting, alcohol, drugs and absenteeism is important for learners' growth and development. The police provide an effective warning, telling them where they could end up. It is unfortunate that in some scenarios, parents are very passive, and they assign all their duties to educators expecting to carry all the responsibility. According to Snowman, Mc Cowan and Biechler (2009), of all professions that focus on the development of learners, teaching is regarded as one of the most complex arguing that teaching is not a "simple, straightforward enterprise".

The literature revealed that every 26 seconds in the United States, a child drops out of school. The high dropout rate in South African schools does not affect the future of an individual learner concern but; it affects us all. The findings of the study revealed that a collaboration of school management, educators, parents and the community at large could impact on combating this challenge.

Responding to the question "what can be done in the foundation phase to reduce learner dropout?" HoD 2 stated:

"We have nothing to do with this challenge if parents stay away as they used to. We need to work together as educators with parents, school management and the community at large. The involvement of community members is of cardinal importance since some of the community members look at the school or the children as not their business. We cannot ignore the fact that to raise a child is the responsibility of everyone in a community".

HoD 2 indicated that the use of technology in schools could help keep young children in school. She argued that they are very interested in technology so that could be another good strategy to keep them in school. Sports and excursions were also regarded as strategies that could help to keep learners in school.

"It is very important to take learners out to visit certain places that will refresh their minds in another environment. It is also important to let learners participate in sporting activities and to introduce technology-based education. It is so unfortunate to know that we are still having a number of schools that do not offer computers in their curriculum. The youngsters are very interested in technology".

Based on the data provided above, it is evident that a positive school environment supported by parents, educators and community members at large can reduce the number of learners who are dropping out of school. At present, it is however clear that there is no cooperation among these stakeholders.

EDUCATORS (*Focus group*)

Various symptoms of learners who are at risk of dropping out had been mentioned by educators.

“Truant behaviour is among the symptoms of a learner who is at risk of dropping out. A learner seems to be absent while s/he is present. I mean they are passive, not willing to participate in any class activities assigned. Some don't even play with others during break times. Fear is written on their faces. They isolate themselves from others and they are always quiet”

Educator 1 suggested more symptoms, saying:

“These learners are bullies towards others. They used to tell lies about their health condition with an intention of withdrawing from an activity which is being done. They have a number of excuses in order to dodge an activity. The worse part about them is that they are very aggressive. This might be the result of certain forms of abuse that they encounter in their respective homes. They also tend to come late to school even if they reside not too far from the school”.

Educator 2 said:

“Their school attendance is very poor. They don't avail themselves five days per week in school. What I can say is that they tend to be absent from time to time. They also bunk classes, hiding in the toilets during school hours. When they are present, they keep on asking for the toilet. When you ask for homework, they simply remain silent or they cry for no reason”.

The plethora of symptoms shown by learners who are at risk of dropping out is of concern. Educator 3 indicated that they are facing these challenges on a daily basis. The worst part is that these learners are also aggressive; they demonstrate anger which might lead to them fighting and this aggression is directed to other learners and educators.

It is clear that an immediate parent intervention is required because if a learner does not participate in educational activities indicating that on an emotional and intellectual level that learner is already out of school. At the very same time, it is essential that educators are able to identify these learners before they dropout. The problem appears to be that sufficient preventative measures are not being taken by both the parents and the school to circumvent this dropping out before it actually occurs.

Owing to that fact that the problem of dropouts persists, it is clear that the school has not done enough to address this challenge and the same applies to the parents. It is crucial to tackle this matter as soon as possible because, if it is ignored, learners who drop out of school often end up in the streets while others end up consuming alcohol and other dangerous drugs without completing their primary school education.

On the question: “How do educators support vulnerable learners who are experiencing barriers to learning?” some educators admitted that they do not know how to support these learners while others gave an understanding to “attempt to do more”

Educator 4 stated “I give them additional time to do their work or activities. I avail more time to them for individual attention but it is a challenge on its own because of overcrowded classrooms I let them sit in-front of the class and next to me at all times. I also use different teaching strategies and interesting resources for these youngsters”.

“I simplify their activities and try to make these more interesting so that they don’t get bored”

“I do not know how to help or to support these learners because they are failing even to follow simple instructions and they are always showing withdrawal symptoms”.

On the question: How do they prevent bullying in their respective classrooms and the school as a whole?

Educators mentioned school and classroom-based precautions, as follows:

Educator 5 “We make them say the classroom rules every morning and also give them an explanation of the rules. We also ask them questions based on the classroom rules to find out if they do understand everything that was said. By so doing we are teaching them to abide by the rules, tell them about the consequences of contravening the rules like stealing, beating others or intimidating them”.

PARENTS (Focus group)

With regard to the question on the importance of education for the future of their children, participants gave various responses with the prevailing attitude that education was extremely important for their children’s future. The challenge however remains that even though they were positive, their actions are inconsistent with what they said. They are the ones guilty of not attending parents’ meetings, justifying their wrongdoings with various excuses.

Parent 1 stated “Education is very important for my children. I believe all of us here we need to see our children living better lives than us one day. Education is an only tool they can use to achieve this objective”

“What can my child be without education? I even tell her that without education she is nothing. I always ensure that she goes to school” (Parent 2)

“When I see educated children out there, I wish my child can also be educated. I know and believe that one day my boy will be something big in the society” (Parent 3)

“I attended his Grade R graduation and I was so happy, and I know that one day he will graduate for his own university degree. I know that this dream will come true one day”. (Parent 4)

“Education is very important for every child and, as parents, we all know that that is why we send our children to school” (Parent 5)

It was very positive to obtain such responses from parents however, the main concern remains whether they practically support their children to achieve these objectives or whether they are just saying so. As parental involvement is required for the problem of dropping out to be conquered to address other education related challenges.

THEME 3: Parental Non-involvement

4.5 PRINCIPAL (Face-to-face interview)

Responding to the question: “How does the school help to address the non-involved parents in their children’s learning?” the principal indicated that this is not an easy task. He said no matter what the school does to involve parents of at-risk learners most of them keep distancing themselves from the school.

“We are still facing a serious challenge with parents who are not willing to be part of their children’s education. Sometimes we used to send members of our support team to some respective parents if there is a serious issue about the child. In some cases, we do manage to get hold of them but not always. We also involved social workers as intermediary between the school and the parent as a strategy of involving some parents.

We do have parents who never gave us challenges as we are able to get hold of them whenever they are needed. Unfortunately, the number of those parents is very limited.

In his response to the question: “Are there any other stakeholders working collaboratively with you as a principal to control the problem by decreasing the factors influencing the dropout rate in your school? If yes, how do they help?”

the school principal stated that they are working with various stakeholders to address all forms of challenges that they face as the school. He mentioned the School Governing Body on the parents’ side, the Department of Social Development, the Department of Health, SAPS and volunteers from the community. He also commended the work done by these stakeholders insisting that the contribution they make is very fruitful:

“We are trying our level best and I can say we are succeeding to control or to decrease the number of dropouts with the help of other stakeholders such as the SGB, SAPS, social development, the health department and from other community members who have passion for education. The contribution of these people helped us a lot in the process of eliminating various challenges including this one of dropouts”.

HoDs (Face-to-face interview)

Responding to the question, “Do you think active involvement of family members in educational activities of the learner can help reduce learner dropout? Please explain your answer. both HoDs agreed that family involvement could help to reduce the high dropout rate. They said cooperation between the school and family members could eliminate a series of problems in children’s education.

“Yes, family involvement can help a lot to reduce this problem. Unfortunately, we are still experiencing such problems because families do not want to be part of their children’s education. If we could join hands with families, I’m certain that we can conquer this problem”

“I believe we could not be talking about this problem even now if parents or family members involve themselves in their children education. We really need families to combat such challenges. As the school, we cannot make it alone, but with the family’s involvement, we can succeed”

The HoDs were concerned about family members who were not taking part in the education of their children and they concurred that, if family members could participate, the problem could be eliminated. Their responses made it clear that educators are facing what to them appears as an insurmountable problem and that they felt they were on their own trying to address it. This is why they work with other stakeholders as parents or other family members are not willing to help address the problem of learner drop out.

On the question: "Which factors contribute to learner absenteeism?" HoD 1 mentioned child-headed families as one of the factors that lead to absenteeism whereby an older child acts on parents' behalf, looking after the younger ones while he/she also needs care.

HoD 2 said, "...Another challenge is caused by parents who are leaving children early in the morning for work. When they leave their children behind, some children simply continue sleeping for no reason and end up getting late, and they even decide not to go to school. When parents come home in the afternoon, they do not even check their children's school work. They do not communicate with the school to check either their progress or attendance" The issue of orphans and children living with grandparents was also mentioned as a factor contributing to absenteeism.

"In some families, parents are not living with their children. You find that parents are in Durban and they left the children with grandparents who are too old to look after the children. The grandparents cannot tell you anything about a child or school"

"Some parents are very negligent, what is important for them is to beautify themselves using child support grant and only to find that they are always on streets ignoring their children. What I am saying is that ignorant parents also promote this absenteeism".

"We have orphans in the school where family members simply distance themselves from those orphans and that is how children do whatever they want to do at any time. If they don't feel like going to school, they don't"

When asked: "How do they assist learners from child-headed families?" HoD 1 offered the following responses:

"We used to work together with social workers to reach out and visit those children with the help of the school management. We ascertain that these children do get social grants every month so that they can survive".

"We also appoint an elderly person either from the school or neighbourhood who will ascertain that they do receive their grants monthly and they spend it wisely"

"Sometimes we adopt a social worker to act on parents' behalf to look after those children". As a school we also monitor them closely".

Again, parents seem to be the main source of a series of challenges facing learners including being guilty of negligence. Sometimes the school and social workers get involved to assist children even though both parents are alive.

EDUCATORS (*Focus group*)

With regard to the question: “Are there any other stakeholders working collaboratively with educators, to address the problem and reduce the factors influencing the dropout rate in their school? If so, how do they help?”

Educators agreed that they do work with other stakeholders in order to reduce the rate of dropout.

“Yes, the Department of Social Development makes awareness to learners about different forms of abuse, telling them that they must come forward and report every single negative situation they are facing”

“Social workers use to come to school and warn them about dangers of entertaining strangers. Human trafficking is what they used to be warned of if they communicate with strangers.

“People from the Health Department such as physiotherapists, psychologist, optometrists, dieticians use to visit our school and screen our learners with learning barriers. These people the Health department use to identify learners with barriers but most parents are stubborn and reluctant to accept that the child has a problem. Others used to be bossy claiming that their children are very intelligent so how can we say they are having learning barriers”

Educators stated that the school does involve other stakeholders to eliminate some challenges, including learners who are at risk of dropping out. The Department of Health seems to play a vital role as they bring people with diverse expertise. Social Development and SAPS were also mentioned as stakeholders that the school works with to combat this problem. Based on the data provided by the participants, it was clear that the school is trying to do everything in its power to address the various factors that contribute to learners dropping out of school. Once more parents seem to be the main stumbling block, especially those who do not come to school and those who are not willing to accept the health conditions of their children.

PARENTS *(Focus group)*

On the question of “How is the communication from the school” some participants made mention of series of hurtful, discouraging and frustrating experiences, saying:

“I can say communication between us as parents and the school is not good at all. Teachers use to call us only because there is a problem with your child or your child has done something wrong. They do not call us for good things”

“We get intimidated when we receive calls from the school because you know that something is wrong with your child. It is very painful and disgraceful for a teacher to shout at you, saying everything she likes. So, it is better not to go there”

“The school use to notify us about meetings but it is not a good experience at all to attend parent meetings. The reason is that I never attended any fruitful meeting. Every time there is a quarrel among parents over a certain issue which ends without a clear conclusion. As a result, I decided not to attend these meetings”

“There are people there calling themselves ‘School Governing Body’ who are always in the lead and we have to accept whatever they say, so let them do what is good for them. There is no need for me to communicate with the school. These people seem to control everyone, including the teachers.”

On the question of “How often do you attend school meetings” participants provided different responses; While some said that they do attend some stated that they do not. All participants were able to justify their responses, saying:

“I’m a domestic worker, so it is not easy for me to attend school organised meetings because I use to work even during the weekends. So, I rely on information I get from those who use to attend.”

“Yes, I do attend meetings but not all of them because, as people, we are having different kinds of commitments every day. In some cases, the meeting used to be on a Sunday while we are also expected to go to church or sometimes to funerals.”

“I use to come home once a month, sometimes once in two months. This makes it impossible for me to attend parent meetings. I use to rely on my neighbour for updates.”

“I don’t attend all meetings because sometimes I find it difficult to walk such a long distance to the school.”

The findings revealed that, although some parents do attend meetings organised by the school a significant number of parents do not attend. Parents provided various reasons why they are failing to be part of parent meetings. Unfortunately, some offered commitments such as attending funerals and church services at the expense of their children’s education. It is clear that it is mainly the responsibility of the schools and the educators as parents appear to be passive observers on matters related to the education of their children. Without any doubt, this also contributes negatively to the high learners’

dropout rate. If parents could work hand in hand with educators and avail themselves when they are needed, this problem could be conquered.

On the question of, “Do you assist your children with schoolwork every day?” some participants stated that they do assist, while others made it clear that they do not. Some others were silent even asked to respond to the question directly, as indicated below:

“Yes, I do assist my child with her school work.”

“Though I cannot say I do it every day but I do assist him sometimes.”

“Sometimes I do but unfortunately, I spend much of my time away from him which makes it impossible to assist him daily. But when I am at home, I do check his work and assist him.”

“She never asks for any assistance from me but his elder brother use to assist her.”

Different responses indicated that there are different kinds of parents in the school. Some decided to remain silent and not to respond to this question which indicated that they do not assist their children. Some simply shifted their responsibilities to older siblings while other expected their children to ask for help instead of proactively checking the child’s work and trying to assist him/her. The responses and the behaviour demonstrated by parents when this question was asked indicated that a large number of parents do not assist their children with school work instead, they shifted their responsibilities to educators and to other people in their families.

The findings of this study revealed a plethora of factors that contribute to learner dropout in the foundation phase. Teachers, as participants, provided data which was uncommon to that provided by parent. Large class sizes which makes it difficult for educators to manage their classes, the lack parental support, the prevalence of many home-related social problems and, learners with diverse and complex needs were among the factors revealed by this study as the causes of learner dropout. Many in service teachers have not had the benefit of being trained to teach learners with diverse needs and often find it difficult to respond to these needs (Phasha, Mahlo & Maseko, 2013).

This study also found that some learners are coming from child headed families while others were orphans with no one looking after them to ensure that they receive everything they needed for their education. Young and irresponsible parents often still children themselves were also mentioned as perpetuating the problem.

These same parents were not involved in any way in their children's education. Bullying at school and outside the school premises also had negative impact on learners and was one of the factors leading to learner's dropout of education.

It was noted that some parents reside away from their children for various reasons which include employment and that this was not good for their children as they are then left with elderly grandparents or sometimes with no one to guide them. Some learners are victims of elderly people using them for their errands, including spending them to buy alcohol and cigarettes. This indicates that the community surrounding the school is not a positive influence as they sell alcohol to children. According to the participants, external intervention helps them to fight this problem which includes the Department of Social Development, a more positive intervention than what was offered by parents.

The findings revealed that learner dropout is rife and these learners end up being troublemakers, not only for their families but in society at large. They end up being involved in crime and substance abuse from an early age and they end up troubling the entire society. These findings indicated that this is a severe problem and it must be addressed in order to circumvent further dropouts. Unfortunately, parents' non-involvement is the leading cause and they are avoiding being held accountable for failing their children.

It was also explicit that parents need orientation on what their role in the education of their children is. Most parents shift the entire responsibility to educators, and they neither give support to educators nor their children. Parents need to be educated that collaboration between the school, them as parents and the community is required for nurturing child. It was also among the findings of this study that home visits are producing positive results in cases where parents are available. The school previously sent support team members or social workers to various families to discuss the source of the problem and provide assistance where possible.

4.6 SUMMARY

Chapter four analysed and interpreted the data based on the responses of the participants. The next chapter will synthesise the findings, recommendations informed by the study's findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Following the analysis and interpretation of the data in the previous chapter, this chapter presents the findings of the study in line with the identified themes and offer, recommendations based on these findings.

Data collected and analysed in chapter four indicated that the problem of foundation phase learner dropout is rife and parents' non-involvement is among the factors that perpetuate this problem as they do not take sufficient responsibility for the education of their children. Apart from parents, other factors such as bullying and the phenomena of child-headed families were mentioned as causes of learner dropout.

5.2 MAJOR FINDINGS

5.2.1 Parents' Non-involvement

Parents' non-involvement was found to be the main cause of learner dropout from school at an early age. Some parents work and they do not have time to visit school to establish how their children are progressing. Even those who do not work are sometimes afraid to communicate with educators. According to participants, parents form part of the stakeholders in their children's education and need to play an active role in the process. It was unfortunate to find that most parents did not play their role and instead of helping to address the problem of foundation phase learners dropping out of school, they perpetuated the problem.

5.2.2 Child-headed Families

The findings made it clear that some learners come from child-headed families because they are orphans. In some cases, however, parents were alive but, neglected their children living them unsupervised or in the care of older children or elderly grandparents. These children

are vulnerable to being victims of abuse which could lead to them resenting and fearing school and eventually dropping out.

5.2.3 Bullying

Bullying was a significant factor in primary schools that contributed to learners' dropout. Different forms of bullying that occurred and caused harm to learners were mentioned. Bullies or victims of bullying may be susceptible to mental and emotional stress and turmoil, impeding their ability to their full potential. Peer pressure within the school may cause learners to bully each other and due to fear and a lack of confidence, some learners end up hating school and refuse to return to the negative environment associated with school.

5.2.4 Environment

It was among the findings of this study that poverty impacts negatively on the academic performance of learners. Learners who drop out of school early also run the risk of being trapped in poverty, depending on state social support for their survival in adulthood. These learners are more likely to be involved in crime and also be a burden to the state and society at large when they are imprisoned. Some participants stated that the environment in the community where the school is situated is not positive as the school is surrounded by illiterate people who do not take proper care of the school facilities or their children. The school is located in an environment that is not conducive to children's growth and development because of crime, alcohol and drugs abuse being pervasive in the area.

5.2.5 School-Related Factors

It was also revealed that some learners feel neglected when they are in the school premises. This could result from large class sizes that make it difficult for educators to give all learners the required attention. It is also unfortunate that some educators are not well trained in how to identify learners with barriers to learning problems so that the challenges could be addressed as early as possible.

5.2.6 Illiteracy Among Parents

It was among the findings of this study that some parents in this district (Amajuba District) were illiterate, immature, did not complete their secondary schooling and, were as a consequence unable to assist their children with their school activities such as homework. They sometimes felt unsure of themselves and asked neighbours for help; avoiding going to school meetings even when they were directly requested to do so in the interest of their children.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.3.1 Parents' non-Involvement

Lee and Bowen (2006) and; Wong and Hughes (2006) state that a number of studies have found that in general, low income and/or ethnic/racial minority parents are less likely than other parents to participate in their children's schooling. I recommend that schools pursue a specific strategy to ensure parents' involvement in their children's education in order to combat the problem of learner dropout in the foundation phase. These children are still very young and vulnerable, and therefore cooperation among all stakeholders, including parents, is of cardinal importance.

5.3.2 Combatting Bullying

The problem of violence, including bullying, is being exacerbated throughout South Africa. Government and the Department of Basic Education (DBE) need to do more to address this problem as it was among the findings of this study that bullying is another contributing factor in learner dropout. It is recommended that the DBE and DoE in KZN improve security in schools. The presence of security officers in and around school premises could minimise violence in general and bullying in particular. If the school is a safe and nurturing space, learners would prefer to be there than anywhere else.

5.3.3 Home Visits

The school-based support team plays a significant role in identifying and addressing cases of learner dropout. Visiting affected learners' homes requires specialised training and

resources. Members of the support team often visit homes only to find that there is no one there. It however remains their duty to trace parents and revisit such households. The school should prioritise the involvement and engagement of parents and resource this initiative accordingly.

5.3.4 Reducing Class Sizes

Large learner numbers in overcrowded classrooms were also identified as a challenge that makes it difficult for educators to identify learners with problems. This issue of large class sizes is a national problem and it would appear that high birth rates as well as the influx of foreign nationals contributes in population growth and school cannot cope with the high number of learners that they need to accommodate. There is also a shortage of new schools being built (West, J. and Meier, C., 2020) and the closure of teacher colleges has impacted negatively on the adequate training of educators (Chisholm 2010). This study therefore recommends that the school principal must limit the enrolment rate and only enrol as per the capacity of the school in order to ensure smooth functioning of the school.

This problem is exacerbated as principals' salaries are linked to the number of learners, they enrol and they are therefore incentivized to exceed the school's capacity (Tran, 2016). The government needs to stop paying principals' salaries as per enrolment in schools and where it is not possible to reduce learner numbers, more educators and classrooms should be provided to address the large class size problem. If the government does not give serious attention to this, the problem of learner dropout will increase, and the illiteracy rate among young people will also increase which will in turn increase unemployment and crime rates in the country.

5.3.5 Continuing Professional Development for Educators

It is recommended that a psychological training be given more attention as a component in educator training and development. This is especially important for educators in the foundation phase as the children in their care are still very young and extremely vulnerable.

It is essential for educators to understand the psychological part of a child's development and for them to have the skills to address learners with different challenges such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Learners could dropout as a result of such

challenges not being timeously addressed as they often struggle with concentration and easily fall behind.

5.3.6 Recommendations for Further Research

Further studies on learner dropout need to be conducted with a focus on townships and rural schools where problems of poverty, drug and alcohol abuse and parental non-involvement are widespread. It is in these communities that a high number of children are neglected as their parents are themselves still young, immature and uneducated.

This study was conducted in one school in the Amajuba District, a rural area In KZN with numerous illiterate parents. It is recommended that further studies pertaining this challenge be expanded to other schools or districts. Further studies need to be conducted in various districts, township schools as well as urban schools for comparison purposes.

5.4 SUMMARY

Chapter 5 outlined the main findings namely; parents' non-involvement, child-headed families, bullying, the environment, school-related factors and illiteracy among parents. In addition, recommendations regarding; parents' involvement, combatting bullying, increasing home visits, reducing class sizes, further educators' training and development and areas for further research. The next chapter focuses on the limitations of the study, an overview of the study and the conclusion.

CHAPTER SIX

6 DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a discussion on the findings, indicates the limitations of the study, outlines the study overview, and provides concluding remarks.

6.2 DISCUSSION

It is apparent that learner dropout in the foundation phase is rife and there are many factors which are regarded as the cause, while parent non-involvement and negligence are mentioned as the leading causes. This indicated that parents do not play their role in the education of their children starting from their early ages of study, the foundation phase. Parent involvement improves the learners' emotional well-being and levels of school attendance, while also encouraging a better understanding of the roles and relationships involved in the parent–learner–school triad (Epstein, 2002). Some parents are afraid to participate in any education-related matters because of illiteracy among themselves. They believe they cannot make any contribution to help schools and their children because they are uneducated. This is just a notion of inferiority that is not good at all. Schools need to devise a strategy that will force parent involvement as one way of combating these factors leading to learners' dropout and to avert other related problems. The parent, as the primary educator of his or her child, has specific educational responsibilities that are implied by the fact of parenthood (Zengele, 2011:176).

It is also unfortunate to note that parents are also regarded as culprits when it comes to the question of neglecting children. Negligence is also associated with the parental side. Based on data collected from various participants, this study also revealed that numerous parents are used to leaving children alone, without elderly supervision. It is the very same children who end up not going to school and increase the percentage of absenteeism, leading to dropout.

Based on data collected in this study, it was also revealed that young parents who also lack guidance, is another factor perpetrating children negligence. These parents do not take enough care for their own children instead, they simply enjoy the child support grant to entertain themselves. Large class sizes in the school were also mentioned as a problem on its own. Sometimes educators fail to notice and to attend to each learner's problem because the class is overcrowded. The building of more classrooms and reducing learners per class can be a relief.

These young stars tend to be victims of bullying day in and out. Some get bullied from their own respective homes, some on their way to school and also in the school premises. When a learner is threatened or finds him/herself in an area with no freedom, he/she tends to hate the area, which is the school in this scenario. It is essential for parents to ascertain that their children are not exposed to bullying or any form of violence. This responsibility is shared between home and school as educators are also expected to do the same during school hours.

Home-related challenges that include domestic violence, parents' separation, alcohol abuse by parents, parents' illiteracy, child-headed families and negligence were all among factors that change learners' daily lives into misery. All education stakeholders are required to join hands in order to face and combat all factors that disturb learners that result in early dropping out of learners from school. It is a shame for our society to have children who dropout from the foundation phase of their schooling. This also contributes to high crime rates that our country is currently experiencing.

6.3 LIMITATIONS

- When conducting the study, the researcher could not find enough information on the foundation phase as opposed to high school.
- The study was limited to only one school in Amajuba District out of a number of schools with a foundation phase in this district or the province at large.
- Four parents responded in their mother tongue, and the interviews had to be translated into English.

6.4 STUDY OVERVIEW

Chapter one of this study gave an introduction accompanied by the study background. In this chapter all the study details, including the rationale for undertaking the study, were presented. The problem statement, aims and objectives of the study were detailed.

Chapter Two presented secondary data in the form of literature, based on factors that cause learner dropout in the foundation phase. Literature was also complemented with the theoretical framework.

Chapter Three presented the research methodology that includes the research design, sampling, data collection instruments, data presentation and analysis in this study.

Chapter Four was all about data analysis and presentation, where coding was used with three different themes.

Chapter Five provided the findings and recommendations in various sub-headings, parents' non-involvement, child-headed families, bullying, the environment, school-related factors and illiteracy among participants.

Chapter Six presented the whole study overview, recommendations, limitations and conclusion.

6.5 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to identify and explore the factors contributing to the dropout of foundation phase learners who experience barriers to learning in an

inclusive school in the Amajuba District, KwaZulu-Natal. To identify and explore these factors, the focus was first given to environmental factors such as poverty, impact of HIV/AIDS, peer pressure, drug abuse and gangsterism. Secondly, school-based factors such as bullying, absenteeism, overcrowding, underqualified teachers and quality education, and finally parental non-involvement, parental illiteracy, the lack of parental support and parent-school communication were discussed.

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APPENDIX A



Application for Permission to Conduct Research in
KwaZulu Natal Department of Education Institutions

1. Applicants Details

Title: Prof / Dr / Rev / Mr / Mrs / Miss / Ms Surname: NALENGETHWA

Name(s) Of Applicant(s): GOODNESS THULENI Email: goodnessna@icloud.com

Tel No: 0343668840 Fax: 0347518472 Cell: 0733116432

Postal Address: P O BOX 60465 INGBAJPINILE 2967

2. Proposed Research Title: THE DROPOUT OF FOUNDATION-PHASE LEARNERS WHO EXPERIENCE BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL IN THE AMAJUBA DISTRICT, KZN.

3. Have you applied for permission to conduct this research or any other research within the KZNDoE institutions? Yes No

If "yes", please state reference Number: _____

4. Is the proposed research part of a tertiary qualification? Yes No

If "yes"

Name of tertiary institution: UNISA

Faculty and or School: ESIDIMINI PRIMARY SCHOOL

Qualification: Masters's DEGREE IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Name of Supervisor: DR S. MOODLEY Supervisor's Signature: _____

If "no", state purpose of research: _____

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX E 1

College of Education

UNISA

RESEARCH

Request for permission to conduct research at Esididini Primary School

Title of the title of your research THE DROPOUT OF FOUNDATION PHASE LEARNERS WHO EXPERIENCE BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL IN THE AMAJUBA DISTRICT, KWAZULU – NATAL

20 July 2017

Mr C.P Ngobese
Department Of Education
Tel : 034 366 5340
E – mail: esididini@marvd@telkom.co.za

Dear Mr Ngobese:

I, Goodness Nhlengethwa am doing research under supervision of Dr S Moodley a lead researcher in the Department of Inclusive Education towards a MEd Degree at the University of South Africa. We have funding from CSO MASTERS BY LTD SCOPE BURSARY for completing my studies. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled THE DROPOUT OF FOUNDATION PHASE LEARNERS WHO EXPERIENCE BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL IN THE AMAJUBA DISTRICT, KWAZULU – NATAL.

The aim of the study is to identify and explore factors that contribute to the dropout of Foundation Phase learners who experience barriers to learning in an inclusive school in the Amajuba District, KwaZulu – Natal.

Your school has been selected because of the risk of previously dropped out Foundation Phase learners

The study will entail the school principal, the two Foundation Phase Heads of Department, six Foundation Phase teachers and six parents of learners who dropped out.

The benefits of this study are, to add knowledge to novice and experienced teachers on how to assist learners at risk of dropping out in their classes, to increase awareness of the factors contributing to the dropout of Foundation phase learners in an inclusive school, and how this could contribute to preventing or reducing dropout. As all the participants are adults there is no foreseen risk as sensitive questions will not be asked that may expose a parent or a learner. There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

Feedback procedure will entail, providing a copy to the school principal, arrange a verbal feedback with all the participants in their preferred language.

Yours sincerely

Goodness Nhlengethwa
Researcher

APPENDIX C



education

Department
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Empirele Phinda Duna

Tel 033 362 1004

Fax 033 362 7777

Mrs GT Nkengalwa
PO Box 06463
Empirele Duna
2997

Dear Mrs Nkengalwa

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DUNE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: "THE DROPOUT OF FOUNDATION-PHASE LEARNERS WHO EXPERIENCE BARRIERS TO LEARNING IN AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL IN THE AMAJUBA DISTRICT, KZN", in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 21 April 2016 to 30 June 2017.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Carrie Kahlonski at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag 10137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

Amajuba District

Nkabinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD
Head of Department: Education
Date: 22 April 2016

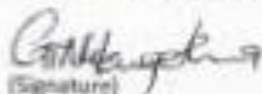
KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL: Private Bag 31317, Pietermaritzburg, 3201, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa
PHYSICAL: 217 Burger Street, Arden Landmark House, Pietermaritzburg, 3201, Tel: 033 362 1000
EMAIL ADDRESS: info@ed.gov.kz / Public.Dunes@ed.gov.kz
CALL CENTRE: 0800 666 362, Fax: 033 362 1010 WEBSITE: www.ed.gov.kz

APPENDIX D

STATEMENT AGREEING TO COMPLY WITH ETHICAL PRINCIPLES SET OUT IN UNISA POLICY ON RESEARCH ETHICS

I, **GODNESS THULEDU MHLENGETHWA** (full name of main researcher), declare that I have read the Policy on Research Ethics of UNISA and the contents of this document are a true and accurate reflection of the methodological and ethical implications of my proposed study. I shall carry out the study in strict accordance with the approved proposal and the Policy on Research Ethics of UNISA. I further undertake to inform the relevant research ethics review committee of the College of Education in writing of any adverse events that occur arising from the injury or harm experienced by the participants in the study. I shall also notify the research ethics review committee if any changes to the study are proposed. I shall maintain the confidentiality of all data collected from or about the research participants, and impose strict controls in the maintenance of privacy. I shall record all data captured during interviews in accordance with ethical guidelines outlined in my proposal. The Policy on Research Ethics places huge emphasis on the integrity of the research and I shall ensure that I conduct the research with the highest integrity taking into account UNISA's Policy for Copyright Infringement and Plagiarism. No data that was gathered retrospectively will be used. I acknowledge that as main researcher it is my responsibility to ensure that the co-researchers, if any, to this research project adhere to the ethical principles set out in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.


(Signature)

14-02-2017

(Date)

Approved by supervisor (if applicable)

I _____ (name of supervisor) declare that I have checked that this form is correctly and honestly completed. I subsequently approve the submission of the proposal for ethical clearance. If applicable, I will ensure that the student reports unanticipated problems or serious adverse events to the Research Ethics Committee of the College of Education.

(Signature)

(Date)

Approved by co-supervisor (if applicable)

I _____ (name of supervisor) declare that I have checked that this form is correctly and honestly completed. I subsequently approve the submission of the proposal for ethical clearance. If applicable, I will ensure that the student reports unanticipated problems or serious adverse events to the Research Ethics Committee of the College of Education.

(Signature)

(Date)

APPENDIX E



UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

1817/05/17

EBC Ref#: 2017/05/17/3641093/13/9C

Name: Pts. GT Molegetha

Student#: 16410934

Dear Pts. Molegetha

Decision: Ethics Approval from
2017/05/17 to 2020/05/17

Researcher: Name: Pts. GT Molegetha
Telephone#: 0733113432
E-mail address: awidini.ptsche@gmail.com

Supervisor: Name: Dr S. Moxley
Telephone#: 0120812777
E-mail address: moxley@unisa.ac.za

Working title of research:

The dropout of Foundation Phase learners who experience barriers to learning in an inclusive school in the Amajuba district, KwaZulu-Natal

Qualification: PhD in inclusive education

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 3 years.

The low-risk application was reviewed by the College of Education Ethics Review Committee on 2017/05/17 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment. The decision was approved on 2017/05/17.

The proposed research may also conform 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.



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APPENDIX F

LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY AT THE SCHOOL

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN A SCHOOL

Dear Sir

The purpose of this letter is to request permission to conduct a research study titled "The dropout of foundation phase learners who experience barriers to learning in an inclusive school in the Amajuba District, KwaZulu-Natal.

I am doing research under the supervision of Dr S. Moodley, a lead researcher in the Department of Inclusive Education towards a M.Ed Degree at the University of South Africa (UNISA). We have funding from the university's Bursary Department for the research. I am conducting this research in order to explore the factors contributing to the dropout of foundation phase learners who experience barriers to learning in an inclusive school in the Amajuba District, KwaZulu-Natal, and to identify means to get these learners back into school.

This study is due for 5 weeks time, and will take 2 weeks to complete. It will be conducted after school hours in order to minimise any disruptions to the teaching and learning programme. Should you have concerns the research study, you may contact Dr S. Moodley on Telephone Number (012) 481 2777 or E-mail: moodls@unisa.ac.za

This furthermore serves as assurance that the research will comply with requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and the Protection of Pupils' Rights Amendment Act, and that I will ensure that these requirements are followed in the conduct of this research.

Thank you

Goodness Nhlengethwa

APPENDIX G

LETTER ASKING THE PRINCIPAL TO BE A PARTICIPANT

Dear Sir

My name is G. T. Nhlengethwa and I am conducting a research study under the supervision of Dr S. Moodley, a Lead Researcher in the Department of Inclusive Education at the University of South Africa (UNISA). I am registered at UNISA for a M. Ed Degree. I am inviting you to participate in the research study titled: "The dropout of foundation phase learners who experience barriers to learning in an inclusive school in the Amajuba District, KwaZulu-Natal".

The purpose of conducting this research is to identify and explore factors contributing to the dropout of foundation phase learners who experience barriers to learning in an inclusive school in the Amajuba District, KwaZulu-Natal.

You are selected because you represent the target population of a foundation phase school principal where there is currently learners who drop out of school during their early years of education. I am requesting your participation in an in-depth, individual, semi-structured interview.

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you 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 and without giving a reason.

You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from me as the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research and 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 ensuring that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder and members of the Research Ethics Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to see the records.

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/ filing cabinet for future research or academic purposes and 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.

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the university. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you wish to review it.

Should you have any concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr S. Moodley at : Moodley@unisa.ac.za

Thank you for taking time to participate in this study

Sincerely,

Goodness Nhlengethwa

APPENDIX H

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY (Return slip)

I, (participant's name) hereby confirm that Goodness Thuledu Nhlengethwa, the researcher, 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 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. I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified. I agree to the recording of the focus group interview. I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant's Name & Surname

Participant's signature

Researcher's Name & Surname

Goodness Thuledu Nhlengethwa

APPENDIX I

LETTER ASKING THE TWO HEADS OF DEPARTMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Madam

My name is G. T. Nhlengethwa and I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr S. Moodley, a Lead Researcher in the Department of Inclusive Education at the University of South Africa (UNISA) where I am currently registered for a M. ED Degree in Inclusive Education. I am inviting you to participate in a research study titled: "The dropout of foundation phase learners who experience barriers to learning in an inclusive school in the Amajuba District, KwaZulu-Natal".

The purpose of conducting this research is to identify and explore factors contributing to the dropout of foundation phase learners who experience barriers to learning in an inclusive school in the Amajuba District, KwaZulu-Natal.

You have been selected because you represent the target population of Foundation Phase Heads of Department where learners are dropping out of school. There will be two Foundation Phase Heads of Department participating in an interview.

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you 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 and without giving a reason.

You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from me as the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research and 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, external coder and members of the Research Ethics Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to see the records.

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/ filing cabinet for future research or academic purposes and 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.

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the university. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you wish to review it.

Should you have any concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr S. Moodley at : Moodley@unisa.ac.za

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study

Sincerely,

Goodness Nhlengethwa

APPENDIX J

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY (Return slip)

I, hereby confirm that Goodness Thuledu Nhlengethwa, the researcher, has requested 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 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. I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified. I agree to the recording of the focus group interview. I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant's Name & Surname

Participant's signature

Researcher's Name & Surname

Goodness Thuledu Nhlengethwa

APPENDIX K

LETTER ASKING THE SIX FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Madam

My name is G. T. Nhlengethwa and I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr S. Moodley, a Lead Researcher in the Department of Inclusive Education at the University of South Africa (UNISA) where I am registered for a M. Ed Degree in Inclusive Education. I am hereby inviting you to participate in a research study titled: “The dropout of foundation phase learners who experience barriers to learning in an inclusive school in the Amajuba District, KwaZulu-Natal”.

The purpose in conducting this research is to identify and explore factors contributing to the dropout of foundation phase learners who experience barriers to learning in an inclusive school in the Amajuba District, KwaZulu-Natal.

You are selected because you represent the target population of foundation phase teachers who teach learners who are dropping out of school as this early stage of the education. There will be six Foundation Phase teachers in a focus group interview.

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you 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 and without giving a reason.

You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from me as the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research and 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, external coder and members of the Research Ethics Committee of the University of South Africa.

Please keep in mind that it is sometimes impossible to make any absolute guarantee of confidentiality or anonymity, e.g. when focus groups are used as a data collection method. While every effort will be made by me as the researcher to ensure that you will not be connected to the information that you share during the focus group, I cannot guarantee that the other participants in the focus group will treat the information confidentially. I shall however encourage all participants to do so. For this reason, I advise you not to disclose personally sensitive information in the focus group.

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/ filing cabinet for future research or academic purposes and 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.

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of UNISA. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you wish to review it.

Should you have any concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr S. Moodley at Moodley@unisa.ac.za

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Goodness Nhlengethwa

APPENDIX L

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY (Return slip)

IMs X, confirm that the researcher, has requested 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 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. I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications or conference proceedings and that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified. I agree to the recording of the focus group interview. I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant's Name & Surname

Participant's signature

Researcher's Name & Surname

Goodness Thuledu Nhlengethwa

APPENDIX M

LETTER ASKING THE SIX PARENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Parent

My name is G.T. Nhlengethwa and I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr S. Moodley, a Lead Researcher in the Department of Inclusive Education at the University of South Africa (UNISA) where I am currently registered for a M. Ed Degree in Inclusive Education. I am inviting you to participate in a research study titled:

“The dropout of foundation phase learners who experience barriers to learning in an inclusive school in the Amajuba District, KwaZulu-Natal”.

The purpose of conducting this research study is to identify and explore factors contributing to the dropout of foundation phase learners who experience barriers to learning in an inclusive school in the Amajuba District, KwaZulu-Natal.

You are selected because you represent the target population of parents of learners who have dropped out of school during the early years of their education. There will be six parents who will participate in a focus group interview.

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you 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 and without giving a reason.

You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from me as the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research and 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, external coder and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee of UNISA. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to see the records.

Please keep in mind that it is sometimes impossible to make any absolute guarantee of confidentiality or anonymity, e.g. when focus groups are used as a data collection method. While every effort will be made by me as the researcher to ensure that you will not be connected to the information that you share during the focus group, I cannot guarantee that the other participants in the focus group will treat the information confidentially. I shall however encourage all participants to do so. For this reason, I advise you not to disclose personally sensitive information in the focus group.

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/ filing cabinet for future research or academic purposes and 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.

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of UNISA. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you to review it.

Should you have any concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Dr S. Moodley at Moodley@unisa.ac.za

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Goodness Nhlengethwa

APPENDIX N

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY (Return slip)

I Ms X hereby confirm that Goodness Thuledu Nhlengethwa, the researcher and person asking my consent to take part in this research study has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation. I have read 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. I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified. I agree to the recording of the focus group interview. I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant's Name & Surname

Participant's signature

Researcher's Name & Surname

Goodness Thuledu Nhlengethwa

APPENDIX O

Principal interview questions

1. In your view, what are the contributing factors to learner dropout?
2. Looking at the year as a whole, in which term do you experience learner dropout the most?
3. What contribution can the school make towards encouraging the learners who have already dropped out of school to re-register?
4. How does the school help the non-involved parents in their children's learning?
5. As a principal, what procedures do you take to help disadvantaged learners?
6. Are there any other stakeholders working collaboratively with you as a principal to control the problem by decreasing the factors influencing the dropout rate in your school? If yes how do they help?
7. What preparations can you recommend to lessen this problem of dropping out of learners from school?

APPENDIX P

Interview questions for the Heads of Department

1. What do you think are the causes of learner dropout in your phase?
2. To what extent do parents get involved in school activities?
3. Do you think active involvement of family members in educational activities of the learner helps reduce learner dropout? Please explain your answer.
4. Which factors contribute to learner absenteeism?
5. What strategy does the School Management Team have to minimise the dropout of foundation phase learners?
6. How do you assist learners from child-headed families?
7. What can be done in the foundation phase to reduce learner dropout?

APPENDIX Q

Teachers focus group interview questions

1. What do you think are the causes of learner dropout in your grade?
2. How do you identify learners at risk of dropping out?
3. What strategies do you have to retain learners at risk of dropping out?
4. How do you support vulnerable (learning barriers) learners academically?
5. How do you prevent bullying in the classroom and the school as a whole?
6. Are there any other stakeholders working collaboratively with you, as an educator, to control the problem by reducing the factors influencing the dropout rate in your school? If yes, how do they help?
7. How is the attendance of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds in your grade?
8. How does the school environment promote quality teaching and learning?

APPENDIX R

Parents' focus group interview questions:

1. How is the communication between the school and the parents?
2. How often do you attend school meetings?
3. Do you assist your child with school work every day?
4. Explain the importance of education for the future of your child?
5. How are you involved in your child's school activities?