



**A STRATEGY TO ASSIST RURAL MULTIGRADE SCHOOLS TO REDUCE THE  
DROPOUT RATE EXPERIENCED IN HIGH SCHOOLS**

by

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## DECLARATION

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## ABSTRACT

Educationists and political leaders are concerned about the high dropout rates experienced in South African high schools. For the purposes of this research, “dropout” is defined as “one who has not graduated from high school”. Research indicates that the high school dropout rates, both in South Africa and globally, culminate in challenges for the school, the community and society. The multigrade primary school environment sees learners doing well academically, but when these learners move on to high school, the dropout rates increase for these learners. The purpose of this study is two-fold: to determine the reasons for dropout of learners who have ably and successfully completed their primary education within the multigrade system; and to propose a strategy to assist rural multigrade primary schools in reducing the foreseen dropout rates in high schools. A sequential explanatory mixed-method approach was designed in order to determine what strategy could assist rural multigrade schools in Circuit 2 of the West Coast Education District to prevent the dropout rate experienced in high schools. During the preliminary research a scrupulous literature study was done, to determine global trends and to determine which current intervention programmes exist. The quantitative phase of this study was conducted first and consisted of a content analysis of school documents to determine which learners did not complete high school. The qualitative phase followed and the data was collected through face-to-face interviews with principals of rural multigrade primary schools, and learners who had dropped out. This was done in order to determine the perceptions of the principals, and the former learners who had dropped out of the schooling system. This research elucidates the challenges – the inexorable odds – that these multigrade learners have had to overcome in order to complete Grade 12. In closing, it proposes pragmatic strategies which may decrease the high dropout rates that learners, from a multigrade primary setting, experience in future.

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## DEDICATION

For Bertie, Michiel, Chris-Fick, Hendri and Bernard

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## GLOSSARY

Terms/Acronyms/Abbreviations	Definition/Explanation
Dropout	A learner who stops going to school before the completion of the required grades
Multigrade	One educator gives instruction to more than one grade, in one classroom at the same time
No Fee school	A public school where learners do not have to pay school fees
Non CS- educator	Person working at a school or district office, but as a public servant, not a teacher
Rural	Remote areas with a low population density, where people mainly work on farms
Scaffolding	Providing support to assist learners in mastering a particular area of knowledge. By scaffolding learners can reach a higher level of understanding.
Sequential mixed–method research	A research method where both quantitative and qualitative data are collected in a specific order in one research study
Systemic results	Results of Mathematics and Home Language Tests written annually, at the beginning of the fourth term, by learners in grade 3, grade 6 and grade 9 in the Western Cape Education Department to determine the competency level of learners within the system
Transition	Progression from a primary school to another primary school offering higher grades or to a secondary school.
Validity	The degree to which the research study measures what it intends to measure
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
APEID	Asia-Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements



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CEMIS	Centralised Education Management and Information System
CMGE	Centre for Multigrade Education
CTM	Circuit Team Manager
EFA	Education for All
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IIEP	The International Institute for Educational Planning
HIV/Aids	Human immunodeficiency virus infection and acquired immune deficiency syndrome
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NCES	National Centre for Education Statistics
NCS	National Curriculum Statements
NPA	National Protocol for Assessment Grades R -12
NPPPPR	National policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statements Grades R-12
SES	Socioeconomic status
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WCED	Western Cape Education Department

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Introduction and statement of the research problem**

The dropout rate at high school has become a problem which frequently occurs in many countries. In South Africa educationists and political leaders are concerned about the high dropout rate, as dropping out of school culminates in problems for the school, the community and society.

According to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, Article 26, everyone has the right to education (United Nations, 1948:6). This means that every person should be able to achieve excellence. The sixth goal of Education for All (EFA), in the Dakar Framework for Action compiled by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), advocates the improvement in the quality of education, especially with regards to literacy, numeracy and life skills (UNESCO, 2000:19, 57). I believe that today the aim is still unchanged - give every human being the opportunity to learn and benefit from basic education.

#### **1.2 Background to the research problem**

As an educator working in a multigrade environment for more than twenty years, I became interested in why learners, who perform well academically in a multigrade primary school, drop out of high school later on. Several discussions took place between the learners and their educators over the years to encourage them to complete their school careers. Although they were enthused to stay in school to be able to have a better chance to alleviate poverty, only a few were able to obtain a grade 12 certificate.

Many of the learners who continue to primary schools and secondary schools, having attend rural primary multigrade schools, experience problems adjusting to their new academic environment. Both the school context and the learner enrolment are significantly different. The methodology changes from multigrade to monograde and the learner enrolment often increases by up to ten times higher than those numbers these learners are used to. Coupled with this, the learners have to adjust to the sudden change from special care to being one of many and their sense of belonging becomes something of the past. Vincent and Ley (1999:40) and Wilkins (2008:14) support this view by stating that the close student-teacher

relationships in small schools are more often characterised by care and concern. In a smaller school learners are much more involved in school activities, which give them a greater sense of belonging.

In order to achieve the targets of EFA, it is important to determine why learners drop out of school. Being committed to the aims of education, the next logical step was the imperative to conduct this study, which focuses on the dropout rate of learners from multigrade schools. If there was more clarity on why learners finally drop out of school, a strategy may be developed to address the issue. Though literature offers profuse reasons why learners drop out of high school, literature on dropout rates for multigrade schools in the West Coast is non-existent. In lieu of this vacuum this study is important. It offers an intellectual, personal and practical contribution to close the gaps and might benefit educators and learners to achieve those EFA targets.

### **1.3 Review of the literature**

The study cited (Hansen & Toso, 2007:31) indicates that previous research demonstrated there are mainly four variables which influence the decision of a learner to complete or drop out of high school. These variables are personal issues, the family, the school and the society. (§2.8)

#### **1.3.1 Personal issues**

Hickman and Heinrich (2011:39-40) agrees with Zvoch (2006:98) that students tend to drop out because they have missed too many days to catch up. Absenteeism affects academic success. High absenteeism often indicates a lack of intrinsic motivation to complete high school and to work hard. Patterson, Hale and Stessman (2007:6) argue that learners have a lack of persistence due to the fact that they are not committed to school and they do not value education. It is often a case of not having a personal vision.

Another important reason that emerged from the literature is the important role played by the learners' ability in deciding to complete their school careers. Zvoch (2006:98), from the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas, comments that learners who experience academic difficulty due to poor grades, low test scores and grade retention start to drop out at higher grades. Learners with the mentioned risk factors often repeated a grade in primary school.

Students often enter high school poorly prepared for the outcomes that they have to achieve. According to Wiener (2003:381) this lack of basic skills and the ability to do problem solving impacts on the decision to stay in school. Continuous failure results in low levels of confidence and self-esteem. If learners cannot keep up, experience trouble with managing the school work and experience constant underachievement, they rather drop out (Archambault, Janosz, Morizot & Pagani, 2009:409).

### **1.3.2 Family**

The role of parents is crucial to ensure academic success. Terry (2008:28) argues that many learners who drop out of school experience a lack of support from their families. Zvoch (2006:98) reiterates that lack of family interest in academic achievement of learners is a disadvantage which can influence the learners negatively. In many cases the family's need for financial support influences learners' decision to drop out. The parents of the Latino students in Prairie High do not expect their children to attain a high school diploma. These parents expect their children to leave school in order to contribute to the family income. Even the educators believe that the parents encourage their children to drop out of school (Patterson *et al.*, 2007:7).

Patterson *et al.* (2007:7) and Terry (2008:28) are in agreement that academic success links with the involvement of the parents. So often this researcher saw parent(s) of learners at risk show little or no interest in the activities of the school. These parents do not attend parent meetings and do not assist the learners with homework. This negative attitude of the parents spills over to the learners and enforces a negative mind-set.

The lack of positive, academically successful role models amongst family members also influences the learners negatively. Terry (2008:31) states that it is reasonable to assume that learners of parents, who have dropped out of school, will probably become dropouts too.

Zvoch (2006:98) highlights the risk of single and step-parents present in the learners' completion of their school careers. Zvoch's research found that expectations to drop out are significantly higher among learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Often learners have to leave school to get a job in order to care for a relative or they inherit the role as head of the household. Numerous learners drop out of school to look after younger brothers and sisters because their parent(s) died of HIV/Aids. There are, however, fewer job opportunities for learners who dropped out of school. If these learners are fortunate

to be employed, they will have a low-income job with almost no opportunity for promotion (Christle, Jolivette & Nelson, 2007:325). The “loss of income within households also has a tremendous impact on children’s school attendance” (Shisana, Peltzer, Kungu-Dirwayi and Louw, 2005:4). In poor communities, neighbourhood poverty may therefore be associated with increases in the dropout rate of students.

### **1.3.3 School**

Crane and Mayer (cited in Zvoch, 2006:98) emphasise that the macro context in which learners find themselves play a noteworthy role in preventing or instilling educational persistence. They accentuate that the social context of the school can either discourage or encourage learners to stay in school. The negative or positive attitudes of their peers have a significant influence on school completion (Zvoch, 2006:96). Learners spending too much time with people disinterested in schooling suffer accordingly. They lose their interest, their motivation flounders and eventually they drop out of school (Azzam, 2007:91). Peers have a powerful influence on the behaviour of learners, especially during adolescence. This is the time when transition between the multigrade primary school and the high school is a reality for at risk learners.

The school environment is of remarkable significance for the sociological and educational theorists (Zvoch, 2006:99). Croninger and Lee (as cited in Patterson *et al*, 2007:8) found that in high schools with highly supportive teachers the probability of dropping out can be decreased by up to fifty per cent. Zvoch (2006:112) underlines that the school has a responsibility in facilitating educational persistence. The school has to set the academic climate, give support and encourage achievement. Patterson *et al*. (2007:9) support this view of teachers fostering high expectations, motivating learners and instilling a positive school culture.

Azzam (2007:91) emphasises the importance of setting high expectations. Students argue that they gave up their school careers because they were not working hard enough as it was not expected of them. Teachers did not challenge them to do more and therefore they did not work with passion to accomplish their grades. The role of the school in setting the pace and motivating learners to reach their potential, matters greatly (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2010:95).

In their study, Diamond, Randolph and Spillane (2004:76) find that a teacher’s sense of responsibility for his/her students is directly linked to the teacher’s belief about the academic

competence of the students. These are related “through a set of organizationally embedded expectations regarding what is possible for students from a particular background”.

The literature supports the views of students who have dropped out of the school system due to the instructional inabilities of the teachers. Students complain about school being uninspiring, vapid, colourless classes and teachers who spend most of the day lecturing (Azzam, 2007:91; Patterson *et al.*, 2007:12).

Patterson *et al.* (2007:13) support the view of previous researchers like Mulford, Kendall and Kendall (as cited in Patterson *et al.*, 2007:13) about the parallel between a learner’s performance, the school’s structure and culture and the instructional practices of the teachers. The relationship between student and teacher is critical to the academic success of the student. Therefore, teachers have to ensure that they spend contact time wisely to be able to build rapport and engaging relations with their learners.

#### **1.3.4 Society**

Makwinja-Morara (2009:460) expresses her concern about the increasing number of female dropouts in Botswana. In her study she found that the most common reason for dropping out of school in Botswana is pregnancy. According to statistics from the Annie E. Casey Foundation (cited in Schargel, 2001:22) as high as 30 to 40 percent of female dropouts in the United States can also be linked to teenage pregnancy.

Many studies researched dropouts from monograde schools incorporating the above mentioned variables, yet no previous studies exist on rural multigrade learners dropping out of high schools. If we have better information we can plan better strategies. If a more informed strategy supporting all role players in helping learners at risk, can be designed and implemented, it will help learners from rural multigrade schools to complete high school successfully. Such a strategy ought to help local and global educational role players reach the EFA goals. These marginalised learners will then have equal opportunities to compete with children from monograde primary schools in urban areas.

#### **1.4 Research questions**

Based on the review of literature and the researcher’s personal experiences regarding dropout rates in the multigrade environment, the following research questions were posed:

What strategy can assist rural multigrade schools in Circuit Two of the West Coast Education District to reduce the dropout rate experienced in high schools?

In order to suggest a possible strategy to assist all role players with reducing the numbers of rural multigrade learners who drop out of high schools, the researcher also has to address the following sub-questions:

1. What is the rate of rural multigrade learners' dropout in high schools?
2. What are the perceptions of principals regarding the high dropout rates of learners from a multigrade background?
3. What are the perceptions of high school dropouts who come from a multigrade primary experience?

## **1.5 Research design**

During the preliminary research a literature review has been completed in order to engage critically with literature (Henning, 2009:27) and to determine global trends on the challenges that increase the dropout rate of learners attending high schools.

### **1.5.1 Empirical research**

The research approach for my study is a sequential explanatory mixed-method approach. Mixed-method research is a methodology that has been used by researchers over the last 50 years. Almost forty different mixed-method research designs have been reported in literature (Tashakkori & Teddlie, cited in Ivankova, Creswell & Stick, 2006:2). A brief definition of mixed-method research is offered by Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann & Hanson (2003:212) and Creswell (2015:18) which states that it involves the collecting and analysing of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study. The data can be collected concurrently or sequentially.

The rationale for using a mixed-method research methodology is grounded in the fact that the combination of quantitative and qualitative research ensures integrated and multiple knowledge (Briggs, Coleman & Morrison, 2012:126). By mixing the sets of data the researcher is able to provide a better understanding of the problem than by looking at one set of data alone. A mixed-method approach is suitable as the study aims to determine why high schools experience such a high dropout rate of learners coming from a multigrade primary school background, as the quantitative phase of this study will identify how many

participants have dropped out of high school, and the qualitative phase will determine why they have dropped out.

### **1.5.1.1 Quantitative research**

The quantitative phase of this research will comprise the collection of data regarding dropout rates.

#### **1.5.1.1.1 Content analysis**

In order to determine how many participants from a rural multigrade school in the Western Cape actually completed high school, content analyses were performed on the admission registers, class registers as well as the promotion and progression records at one multigrade school, one rural school with a grade five and six multigrade class, a rural primary school in a small town, two large monograde primary schools and two high schools in Circuit Two of the West Coast Education District in the Western Cape. Most of the multigrade schools have learners from grade one to grade six. Before attending the high schools in the area, the learners have to attend one of the four above-mentioned schools until they have completed grade seven.

First the researcher studied the admission register of the school as the date of first enrolment as well as the date when the learner has left the school, are recorded in this register. Due to the fact that the selected school only accommodated learners in grade one to grade six till the year 2002, the admission registers of four other schools in the area, which accommodate grade seven learners, were also scrutinised. This was done in order to determine whether these learners completed grade seven after they had left the multigrade primary school in question. These learners mainly attend one high school in the nearest town. Hence, it was crucial to inspect the records of the particular high school in town to see whether these learners, who had left the specific multigrade primary school, actually attended the high school and to determine their highest academic grade.

#### **1.5.1.1.2 Sampling and participants**

Purposive sampling was done by selecting one specific multigrade school and the learners who had graduated from this school, for an in depth study as this school is easily accessible for interviewees and the interviewer (Henning, 2009:71). To be able to collect the



information, it was necessary to determine how many learners had completed the highest grade at this specific multigrade school in Circuit Two of the West Coast.

### **1.5.1.2 Qualitative research**

The qualitative phase of this study aimed at determining the reasons for the high dropout rate at high school as experienced by the participants who had attended a multigrade primary school in the Western Cape.

#### **1.5.1.2.1 Participants**

The principals (n=6) of six multigrade schools in Circuit Two of the West Coast, were interviewed (Henning, 2009:50-80) to acquire their point of view on the challenges which rural multigrade learners experience, that may increase the likelihood of them dropping out of high school. All participating principals received one structured question asking them why high schools experience such a high dropout rate among learners from a multigrade primary school. The way interviewees communicated the data received special attention (Henning, 2009:52). These principals had the opportunity to express their views honestly and freely (Henning, 2009:103). By outlining a more complete picture, the gathered data assist in mapping the issue. This research distils that data into useful information and develops an adequate strategy.

The researcher also sampled students from a population of learners from the purposefully selected multigrade primary school, who were promoted between December 1995 to December 2005 and who had dropped out of high school during the period 1997 to 2012. For this purpose the enrolment figures were compared with the progression and promotion records of the two bigger rural schools, the two monograde primary schools and the two high schools. The sample consists of a total of ten per cent of the learners, randomly selected, who dropped out of school. The researcher interviewed these former learners. Interviewees indicated their willingness to participate in the research by completing a form granting their consent (see Appendix D).

#### **1.5.1.2.2 Instruments**

The face-to-face interviews (see Appendix A) were held with individual learners to ensure greater spontaneity and honesty from respondents. Both open and close ended questions formed part of the interview. Structured and unstructured questions were posed.

The interviews took place at the respondents' residences, as it was easier for the researcher to travel than for the interviewees. Interviews began with a brief review of the purpose of the research, an assurance of confidentiality (see Appendix D) and a description of the rights of the participants. A voice recorder was used to aid precision. The recorded data was transcribed (see attached CD), sent back for verification and then analysed manually. In addition, the researcher translated the data from Afrikaans to English because the mother tongue of the respondents is Afrikaans.

## **1.6 Ethical Considerations**

Permission was obtained from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED), as information in student records was needed from six different schools currently part of Circuit Two of the West Coast Education District (see Appendix C and Appendix D). Letters were sent to the Circuit Team Manager (CTM) as well as the six principals to gain permission for this research. Do note that during the period 1995 to 2005 the name of the specific Circuit was changed twice. For the period 1995 to 2000 it was called Circuit Three. After that, from 2001 till 2005, it was called Circuit Six. Since July 2008 it is called Circuit Two of West Coast Education District.

To get the support from the six principals from multigrade schools in Circuit Two, the Circuit Team Manager (CTM) and the schools were asked for their permission.

As none of the former learners were under age, the permission of their parents was not required to be granted interviews with them.

All respondents were assured that their identity would not be revealed and that their personal history would remain private during and after the process of scrutinising the phenomenon of dropout. Certain trends would be identified and discussed (Henning, 2009:73).

## **1.7 Chapter outlines**

The goal of this study was to determine the reasons why learners from a multigrade primary background experience high dropout rates from high school. In chapter one the research problem was stated and the implication for the individual, society and political leaders highlighted. A literature review was done in chapter two to determine the reasons for dropping out of high school as revealed in prior research. Attention was given to philosophies

that impact on education and by implication on dropout. In chapter three the mixed-method research methodology applied, was discussed. The analysis and interpretation of data followed in chapter four. In chapter five the explication of the research findings was documented. In the final chapter, chapter six, a strategy to assist schools in reducing the dropout rates for learners coming from a multigrade primary school was offered.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

Dropout is a reality and every year large numbers of learners in the West Coast Education District do not complete their school careers. Some of these learners do not even complete grade nine. This has implications for government as well as for the individuals themselves. In order to assist government in improving the number of children who complete their basic education as suggested in the second goal of EFA, in the Dakar Framework for Action compiled by UNESCO (2000:15-17) as well as advancing towards reaching the fourth and sixth goal that declare the improvement in the quality of education, especially with regards to literacy, numeracy and life skills of adults by 2015, it was necessary to complete this research.

In chapter two, the researcher discusses possible reasons for dropping out of the schooling system, as it reveals itself in the literature, as well as theories which may impact on the lives of these often marginalised learners.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

To reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), and specifically goal two in ensuring free universal primary education and goal four aiming to improve the adult literacy rate with fifty per cent in 2015 (UNESCO, 2000:15-16), is an immense challenge for the South African Education Department. To be able to improve the competency of learners in rural multigrade schools, who usually are in impoverished, low population density and remote areas, is even a far greater challenge.

In South Africa many learners from urban and rural areas drop out of school and this impact on the literacy levels of the adults to a large extent. To be able to reach the EFA goals, attention has to be given to the challenges rural learners have to face to stay in school, especially when entering a high school coming from a multigrade primary school background.

#### 2.2 Rural Education

To be able to have a clear understanding of the challenges learners in rural areas have to overcome, it is necessary to be able to explain the term rural.

In their study, Atchoarena and Sedel in Atchoarena and Gasperini (2003: 37-38) define rural areas as places where

- infrastructure and human settlement occupy a small share of the landscape;
- the natural environment is mostly dominated by pastures, forests, mountains and/or deserts;
- settlements are of low density (about 5 - 10 000 persons);
- most people work on farms;
- land is available at a relatively low cost; and
- activities are affected by a high transaction cost, associated with long distance from cities and poor infrastructures.

The communities in rural areas are diverse in culture, social structure and economic status. Labour in rural areas is mostly cheap and therefore the income of many of the people is relatively low. This explains why almost seventy per cent of the world's poor live in rural areas of developing countries (Gasperini & Acker, 2006:28). Many of these poor people are illiterate adults, out of school children and people struggling with food insecurity. Many people do not have access to adequate social services, health care, schools, roads and technology. These rural people often feel neglected because governments tend to overlook rural people and their needs. Urban bias policies seem to further disadvantage rural people.

The majority of the 852 million undernourished people of the world live in rural areas in the developing world. This explains why such a large amount of up to 71 per cent people live in poverty in rural areas of Sub-Saharan Africa (Atchoarena & Gasperini, 2006:12).

Prior to 1994, many places in South Africa have been classified as rural, whilst these places are actually urban without services. Due to a lack of appropriate infrastructure and resources these areas were classified as rural. Today rural areas still have the lowest level of services such as sanitation, water supply, schooling, health services, public transport and electricity. Usually these rural areas are far from the nearest service points and include farming activities (South Africa, 2005:3).

Education for rural people in South Africa poses many challenges. According to the *Emerging Voices - A report on Education in South African rural Communities* (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005:41) the poverty and deprivation of rural communities in South Africa can be linked to the long history of authoritarian and patriarchal rule during Apartheid. People in rural areas, especially in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo live in areas with the highest level of poverty and unemployment. To be able to survive, these people have to depend on social grants, pensions and migrant labour. Land and livestock are critical for survival.

In many families mothers provide the main source of income. They have to ensure food security and if there is no income, families depend on the children to help make ends meet. Many children do not attend school due to the economic and social implication for their families. In many cases boys and girls have to attend to household and agricultural chores every day. Often these routine jobs result in learners arriving late for school and homework not being done. In these cases the household responsibilities of the learners create a tension between school and home. Although parents and the community support the idea that

children must be in school, the reality of poverty and unemployment recurrently undermine the schooling of the upcoming youth (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005:46).

Long distances to walk to the nearest school, the lack of high schools close to their homes, a scarcity of money for paying their school fees, the inability to buy school uniforms, daily hunger pains, humiliation, harassment, sexual and verbal abuse, violence, teenage pregnancy, ill-health and bullying are some of the challenges that rural learners have to face almost each school day. Their urban counterparts do not always have to overcome these same barriers. The educational opportunities for rural children are not always the same as for those in urban areas. In many cases the Right to Education of rural children is often infringed upon by these grim realities and inexorable odds (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005:47-65).

## **2.3 Multigrade education: a background**

### **2.3.1 What is multigrade teaching?**

Multigrade teaching is a situation where one educator gives instruction to learners of more than one grade, depending on the needs of the school, in one classroom at the same time. Different terminology is being used in different countries such as multigrade, mixed-year, composite class, vertically-grouped class, split class, combination class, mixed-grade class and double class (Little, 2007:3-4).

Little (2007:19) describes eleven conditions in which multigrade teaching occurs. The reasons for multigrade teaching in South African schools, which corresponds with the reasons identified by Little, are the following:

- (i) Schools are in areas with low population density and learner enrolment is low. Only one or two teachers are responsible for all the different grades.
- (ii) Schools are transforming previously monograde classes into multigrade classes due to a decline in the population of both learners and/or educators.
- (iii) Schools are in areas with population growth and expansion in the higher grades. The small increase in learner numbers do not lead to a larger number of educators.
- (iv) Schools are usually teaching monograde classes, but because of fluctuating annual admission numbers, some learners have to be combined.

According to Brunswic and Valérien (2004:19) multigrade schools in French-speaking Africa are often found in areas that are not easily accessible due to their geographical terrain.

Imbalances between learner enrolment and teacher allocation often lead to multigrade instruction. Because there are fewer educators than grades, classes are combined to form multigrade classes (Little, 2007:20).

### **2.3.2 Where do you find multigrade classes?**

It is difficult to determine how widespread multigrade classes are around the world due to the absence of comparable educational statistics (Little, 2007:4).

Statistics captured by Little (2007:5, 6) reflect the current extent of multigrade classes in different countries. Multigrade classes exist in Australia, Burkina Faso, England, France, India, Ireland, People's Democratic Republic of Laos, Mauritania, Nepal, New Brunswick, Canada, Norway, Peru and Sri Lanka.

Birch and Lally (1995:1) indicated in their study for the Asia-Pacific Programme for Educational Innovation for Development (APEID) that Malaysia, Pakistan, China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Maldives and Vietnam has also introduced multigrade classes. They further stated that all member countries of APEID are familiar with multigrade teaching except for Afghanistan, where multigrade teaching was not utilised (Birch & Lally, 1995:2). In their study on multigrade schools in French-speaking Africa Brunswic and Valérien (2004:42) highlighted the existence of multigrade classes in Guinea and Senegal. They confirm the practice in Zambia and Lesotho too.

From the above it is clear that learning and teaching in multigrade classes is an intercontinental phenomenon. A wide variety of countries, developing and developed countries, use multigrade methodology.

### **2.3.3 Multigrade classes in Africa**

The EFA goals which were adopted at Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 and then readopted in Dakar in 2000 calls for solutions to ensure education for all children of school-going age in sparsely populated rural areas and to children who cannot attend school under traditional conditions due to their nomadic lifestyle. One teacher schools and multigrade classes offer an answer to this challenge (Brunswic & Valérien, 2004:9).

At the Southern African Multigrade Education Conference in Paarl, in South Africa's Western Cape Province, on 22 March 2010, Virgilio Juvane, coordinator of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) working group on the teaching profession, told representatives that multigrade education is not a new idea in Africa ... but an economic choice based on social circumstances. According to him without multigrade schools in remote areas in Zambia, Uganda, Lesotho and Namibia, basic education would be impossible. Ms Gisela Siririka, Education officer at the National Institute for Educational development in Namibia, stated at the same conference that "up to forty per cent of schools in Namibia do multigrade teaching" (Palitza, 2010).

Even in the most remote and rural areas these multigrade classes made it possible to provide a universal primary education. In contrast with their counterparts in Western Europe some of these multigrade classes are not well perceived in Africa. Often these schools are in ill repute because inexperienced educators have to give instruction to a large class with different grade levels (Brunswic & Valérien, 2004:10).

Data for English - and Portuguese speaking areas are not available. Data collected in French speaking Africa by the IIEP during 2002 indicated that seven countries namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea, Mali, Senegal and Togo participated in the research (Brunswic & Valérien, 2004:39). The outcome of the research was as follows:

In the countries Benin and Togo, legislation allows twinned classes where two consecutive grades are taught in one class. These classes are widespread in rural areas. Since 1992 multigrade classes were introduced in Burkina Faso and these numbers have grown to a total of almost 4000 multigrade classes (covering two grades) in 2000/2001. Multiple grade classes were found in Senegal since 1980. Two grades combined were not to have more than 45 learners. Unfortunately these classes often disappear when the educator departs from the area. The Spanish speaking Equatorial Guinea has had multigrade instruction since the 1940's. Unfortunately the quality of teaching is not good due to repetitions and dropout. Classes are overstocked with up to 120 learners and in many cases there is no proper furniture or resources. Educators have a daunting task and try to cope by letting each grade face a different wall of the classroom (Brunswic & Valérien, 2004:39-42).

In Benin, Mali and Togo multigrade classes were non-existent, but in Zambia and Lesotho multigrade classes were functional and primary education was given to children where there were previously no schools at all (Brunswic & Valérien, 2004:42). According to information



gained at a workshop on *Policy, Planning and Management of Rural Primary School Teachers* in Lesotho during May 2005, representatives from Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda confirmed that multigrade teaching is also practised in their countries (Mulkeen & Chen, 2008:1).

Brunswic and Valérien (2004:43) agree with Mulkeen and Chen (2008: 26, 28) that educators in one teacher schools, twinned classes and multigrade classes all over Africa struggle with the same problems namely lack of classroom facilities, inappropriate resource material and almost no support for the young, inexperienced teachers. Long distances and transport difficulties often result in less frequent visits from inspectors and other supervisors. Coupled with this, Towse, Kent, Osaki and Kirua (2002:645) highlighted the fact that teachers in rural areas experience a lack of access to leisure activities, whilst Akyeampong and Stephens (2002:269-270) mentioned the concerns with regards to proper quality accommodation and access to appropriate health care. These factors, to a great extent, further complicate the lives of these educators in the rural areas in Africa. It is therefore not surprising that the results of the learners in these schools are not satisfactory.

#### **2.3.4 Multigrade classes in a South African context**

Until 2009 little research was done on multigrade teaching in South Africa (Joubert, 2010:12). This in itself indicates that rural multigrade schools were not high priority for a long time. In the *Baseline Report on Multigrade Education in South Africa* (Boonzaaier, 2009:9) it is emphasised that multigrade classes were mainly introduced in the education system due to necessity and not through pedagogic choice. The South African Government is committed to provide Education for All, but in the case of multigrade schools, these learners and educators are claimed to be forgotten.

In South Africa more than two million learners attend multigrade classes (Boonzaaier, 2009:9). Many of these schools are in remote and rural areas. In numerous cases these learners and educators are deprived due to a lack of resources and little support by government. Although multigrade schools and multigrade classes are a reality, there are still no specific educational policies for multigrade education (Boonzaaier, 2009:49). Even the National Curriculum Statements (NCS) were developed with a monograde background in mind (Joubert, 2010:1). Since 2012 the *National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12* is the policy statement for teaching and learning in all South African schools. This policy comprises the following 3 documents:

- (a) Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) for all approved subjects.
- (b) National policy pertaining to the programme and promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statements Grades R – 12 (NPPPPR) ; and
- (c) National Protocol for Assessment Grades R – 12 (NPA)

Even in these policy documents no specific mention of multigrade teaching, which is a reality, was made.

Being an educator in a multigrade environment for more than 20 years I absolutely agree with the following:

Multigrade teaching deserves to be treated as a special form of education requiring more resources, particularly in teacher training, separate curriculum provision and particular government and community support. If multigrade schools are treated equally with other schools, they cannot be expected to achieve their educational goals (Birch & Lally 1995:6).

In South Africa the perception that multigrade teaching is equal to a situation where the educator has to give instruction at a small rural school for mixed classes, by using the monograde CAPS, is widespread. Many curriculum advisors, nowadays also called subject advisors, as well as administrators are not able to recognise the difference between monograde and multigrade methodology (CPUT, 2011:14).

Many of the multigrade schools in South Africa have either one, two or three educators who have to deliver the whole curriculum to the learners attending their classes. In many cases these educators are not trained for all the subjects that they have to teach and therefore the quality of the work that is being done is not always up to standard.

To work in a multigrade teaching environment is not that easy.

Multigrade teaching may require more work than single-grade instruction. Demands on teacher resources, both cognitive and emotional, are greater. Curriculum design and organization requires attentive preparation and greater coordination. This is particularly the case if teachers do not have access to specialized materials, such as self-instructional textbooks, to support their preparation. Motivating students and maintaining their concentration is harder. Teachers are responsible for more subjects and cannot repeat lessons from year to year (Benveniste & McEwan, 2000:42).

Sometimes the rural multigrade schools struggle to get teachers with high work ethics and who are well qualified. Fortunately, the opposite is also true. Many dedicated, well-trained

educators who work with passion and commitment are found in rural schools in Circuit Two of the West Coast Education District. This is probably why the systemic results of grade 3 and grade 6 learners in the multigrade schools in this area are as follows:

**Table 2.1: Systemic Results: Average Grade 3 Mathematics**

School	2006	2008	2010	2011	2012	2013
School A	32.8	27.9	36.6	34.9	66.1	30.0
School B	28.9	27.9	19.8	38.9	0.00	35.2
School C	45.8	46.5	54.8	51.5	39.9	27.8
School D	29.6	53.5	47.7	25.6	37.6	31.0
School E	27.3	9.6	49.4	49.4	46.8	47.4
School F	30.0	0.0	55.9	53.4	41.3	42.0
Circuit 2		44.8	50.8	47.5	48.6	49.4
District		40.8	50.4	46.7	46.8	49.3
Province		39.5	48.0	46.3	48.9	51.1

**Table 2.2: Systemic Results: Average Grade 3 Language**

School	2006	2008	2010	2011	2012	2013
School A	62.1	51.7	62.5	42.1	49.0	27.9
School B	48.1	48.3	51.4	39.3		31.3
School C	35.8	60.8	64.2	53.3	44.6	40.5
School D	38.3	56.7	44.3	27.4	36.1	37.3
School E	25.0	16.7	40.0	43.3	33.0	35.7
School F	28.7	0.0	46.4	43.5	35.7	25.3
Circuit 2		49.8	49.1	40.9	42.0	39.9
District		47.3	51.6	39.6	41.9	40.9
Province		50.4	50.8	38.7	43.7	42.7

**Table 2.3: Systemic Results: Average Grade 6 Mathematics**

School	2010	2011	2012	2013
School A	38	24.7		
School B	43.3	33.8	33.2	
School C	41.7	46.2	59.8	40.1
School D	45.1	29.7	36.7	36.1
School E	29.5	22.2	27.1	
Circuit 2	39.9	38.5	39.1	35.6
District	38.7	37.0	39.1	37.5
Province	39.2	37.5	39.5	39.3

**Table 2.4: Systemic Results: Average Grade 6 Language**

School	2010	2011	2012	2013
School A	58.6	36.2		
School B	67.6	48.1	42.2	
School C	54.3	45.1	46.8	32.3
School D	72.0	39.8	45.2	33.3
School E	48.9	30.6		
Circuit 2	55.8	46.2	45.0	32.3
District	53.0	43.1	44.7	
Province	50.8	40.9	45.1	

Gained from CEMIS on 2 November 2014

When a school has small learner numbers in grade three or in grade six the learners do not write the systemic tests during that particular year (see shaded blocks). Note that when a small group is tested, one learner often represents more than ten per cent. So, if a class has two learners with barriers to learning, it can change the scores dramatically and to a certain degree skew the overall picture.

When studying the pass rates of these grade three and grade six multigrade learners over the years, it is evident that there is a slight improvement in the results. In some cases the multigrade learners got higher scores than the average of the province. This further emphasises that it is possible to give quality education in a rural multigrade primary school.

**Table 2.5: Systemic Results: Pass Percentage Grade 3 Mathematics**

School	2008	2010	2011	2012	2013
School A	0.00	33.3	28.6	100.0	20.0
School B	20.0	0.0	14.3	0.00	28.6
School C	50.0	63.6	40.0	37.5	14.3
School D	60.0	54.5	7.7	30.8	16.7
School E	40.0	40.0	60.0	57.1	28.6
School F		71.4	55.6	42.9	37.5
Circuit 2	43.9	52.8	49.7	50.8	51.3
District	37.4	52.1	46.8	47.7	51.3
Province	34.9	48.3	47.2	51.5	55.0

**Table 2.6: Systemic Results: Pass Percentage Grade 3 Languages**

School	2008	2010	2011	2012	2013
School A	80.0	83.3	28.6	20.0	0.0
School B	40.0	55.6	28.6	0.00	0.0
School C	70.0	81.8	80.0	37.5	28.6
School D	80.0	50.0	7.7	15.4	8.3
School E			40.0	0.00	14.3
School F			22.2	28.6	12.5
Circuit 2	43.9	52.6	33.8	35.2	31.8
District	50.1	57.7	31.3	35.8	33.3
Province	53.5	54.9	30.4	38.9	37.0

**Table 2.7: Systemic Results: Pass Percentage Grade 6 Mathematics**

School	2010	2011	2012	2013
School A	14.3	0.00		
School B	28.6	40.0	0.0	
School C	29.4	50.0	100.00	23.1
School D	40.0	8.3	0.00	0.00
School E	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Circuit 2	22.6	23.2	23.0	20.9
District	21.5	20.9	23.7	23.5
Province	24.4	23.3	26.4	28.3

**Table 2.8: Systemic Results: Pass Percentage Grade 6 Languages**

School	2010	2011	2012	2013
School A	57.1	28.6		
School B		40.0	28.6	
School C		41.7	33.3	7.7
School D		25.0	37.5	0.0
School E	0.0	0.0		
Circuit 2	66.7	42.8	37.2	21.6
District	58.4	35.7	36.4	22.3
Province	52.3	31.4	36.9	29.5

Gained from CEMIS on 2 November 2014

## **2.4 Dropout**

### **2.4.1 Definition**

There is a difference in the understanding of the term dropout. "A dropout is a pupil who leaves school before graduation and before completing a program of study" (McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter & McWhirter, 2007:127). According to Schargel and Smink (2001:15-16) the National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES) in the District of Columbia adopted the following definition:

A dropout is an individual who

- was enrolled in a school during the previous school year but did not enrol when the school started for the current school year;
- was not enrolled when the school started the previous school year although the learner was expected. The learner was not reported as a dropout the year before;
- did not graduate from high school;
- transferred to another public school district, private school or state- or district-approved educational program;
- temporary leaves school due to suspension or illness or
- has died.

Schargel and Smink (2001:26) go further and distinguish between three types of dropouts, namely drop outs, tune outs and force outs. They define these types as follow:

- drop out - a student who are leaving or have left school;
- tune out - a student who stay in school but disengage from learning; and
- force out - a student who is suspended or expelled.

The first category is the group of students that are easy to identify and in most cases they are highly visible. These are also the students who are targeted for programmes in an attempt to reduce the dropout rate.

Kelly (1994:5225) agrees with Schargel and Smink (2001:26) but also adds that dropping out is primarily an act of the individual. Mike, Nakajjo and Isoke (2008:2) highlight that this

individual act has individual consequences, but also impacts nationally. In some cases dropping out of school can be family or cultural related.

According to Schargel and Smink (2001:26) the second group is not that noticeable. These learners may attend school regularly or stay away frequently. Some of them pass their grades. Some students even get good grades. They often find school easy but it does not meet their needs at all. Often these learners find school boring. These students are frequently ignored and tolerated unless they started to cause disciplinary problems which manifest in disruptive behaviour. Sometimes they also drop out of school.

The third group is the troublesome learners who refuse to follow school rules and are often involved in crimes. These crimes can be committed inside or outside the school. These students are often rebellious, don't fit into the system and therefore they are encouraged and often told to leave the school system. Kelly (1994:5225) refers to this third group of non-completers as the "push outs". According to Kelly this early school leaving of learners can be linked to unequal economic, political and social structures. School practises like suspension and expulsion can lead to stigmatisation that may discourage and exclude learners.

The new attendance policy of the WCED (2010) as stipulated in Circular 29/2010 may, to a certain degree, also lead to learners dropping out of school. This policy claims that learners ought to be deregistered from the CEMIS system after the absence of ten consecutive school days. In some instances learners with a high absenteeism rate just stay at home after being deregistered by the school. In the case of illness the policy will be overruled when a learner submit a doctor's certificate stating the reason for the long period of non-attendance.

Educators sometimes use the term, at risk, to refer to learners who have the possibility of dropping out of the educational system. Sometimes this term is also used for learners who do not have the learning skills to succeed after graduation (McWhirter *et al.*, 2007:6).

#### **2.4.2 Dropout – an international problem**

Every year hundreds of learners from all over the world leave school without completing their school careers. Each year these numbers increase, so that this number has accumulated to millions.

Not only educationists are concerned about the increasing numbers of school dropouts. Mike *et al.* (2008:2) agree with Schargel and Smink (2001:3) that dropping out of school is

alarming to political leaders as this has implications that are perilous to national development by undermining efforts of national human capital development and therefore is pricey to the individual, to business and society.

Every dropout becomes a burden to the state as tax revenue is lost. Individuals without proper basic schooling are often single parents, are relying on welfare for social grants, often commit crimes and end up in prison. In America more than 50 per cent of the 1.8 million prisoners are high school dropouts (Barr & Parrett, 2007:25). Statistics published in *Die Burger* (Nel, 2014:7), again highlighted the issue of dropouts. According to her Dr Frans Cronjé of the South African Institute of Racial Relations stated that of the cohort of 1 277 499 grade one learners who started their school careers in 2003 only 551 588 started their matric exam on 28 October 2014. A total number of 725 911 learners did not join their counterparts. These numbers are really alarming as these learners do not get jobs and they will in future depend on the state and probably on crime for their survival.

In South Africa, before 1980, when teenagers dropped out of high school it was possible to find a relatively well paying job in the South African Post Office, the South African Police Force, the South African Railways or any State funded organisation. Through hard work it was almost guaranteed that an employee can be promoted and eventually will be successful. It was even expected that these individuals who had dropped out of high school would eventually start to climb the economic ladder.

Nowadays the world has changed. Currently the minimum requirement for many jobs in South Africa is grade 12. Therefore the opportunities for high school dropouts are getting less each year. This can also be linked to the increase in the number of dropouts each year. The President of South Africa, his Excellency, Jacob G. Zuma, is also concerned about the dropout problem. He stated in his State of the Nation Address on 9 February 2012, "Grade 10 dropouts appear to be a problem, particularly in the rural and farm areas of the Western Cape" (Zuma, 2012). The high school dropouts are almost guaranteed a lifetime of financial struggle. They are often not employed and to survive they have to commit crimes or start begging.

Little (2007:7) is of the opinion that multigrade teaching is a phenomenon which occurs in developed and developing countries. Harber (2003:47) describes the term "developed" by referring to the richer countries in the northern hemisphere where industrialisation plays a primary role. According to him "developing" refers to poorer countries where agriculture is one of the primary ways of generating an income. "Developing" countries will therefore



include almost the whole of Africa, most of Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America. South Africa can thus be claimed as a developing country.

## **2.5 Situation analysis**

Rural schools in developed and in developing countries differ from each other. Khattri, Riley and Kane (1997:89-91) listed size, location, budgets, course offerings, availability of special programmes and technological resources, staff qualifications and preparedness as characteristics of rural schools in developed countries.

In rural areas factors such as high poverty rates and higher percentages of poor school districts are a reality (Smith & Martin, 1997:15). In rural school environments in developing countries, the lack of infrastructure and resources are the realities. Students in poor rural areas face a distinctive combination of obstacles to gaining a sound education. This will be addressed in the following sections.

## **2.6 Challenges for learners from multigrade schools**

It is not easy to draw a profile of a typical student who drops out, but it is possible to list challenges that can be linked to high dropout rates of learners. Four reasons can be identified which impact on the decision of a learner to drop out of high school. These variables are personal issues, the family, the school and the society (see §1.3).

Until now, no study has been done in South Africa to determine why learners in rural multigrade schools and learners coming from rural multigrade primary schools attending high schools in town, drop out from school. Although many learners complete basic primary education, a vast majority of learners do not reach grade 12 and they do not complete high school. Many learners drop out along the academic road. In an attempt to address this problem that greatly impact on the literacy levels of adults as well as on overcoming the cycle of poverty, the reasons for dropping out of rural schools are being investigated in this study. Only if these reasons can be successfully addressed in future, the South African Education Department will be able to reach the Millennium Development Goals and the EFA goals. Currently the country is not near the targets set for 2015 (UNESCO, 2013:8-10).

## **2.7 Philosophies that impact on education and by implication on dropout**

### **2.7.1 Lev Vygotsky (1896 – 1934)**

This Russian educational theorist focused on the language development of children. Vygotsky believed that peers and adults enable children to refine their cultural and language knowledge. He further believed that play is vital for any cognitive development. The zone of proximal development describes how children use language models. Children's learning should thus be scaffolded by adults and educators. Scaffolding is related to the social and cultural environment (Clasquin-Johnson, 2007:23). Scaffolding can be used to address learning gaps in content knowledge as teachers supply levels of support and strategies whilst assisting learners to progress to a level of better understanding and greater independence (Donald et al., 2010:87-89).

### **2.7.2 Jean Piaget (1896 – 1980)**

Piaget (cited in Woolfolk, 2008:36), a Swiss psychologist, believed that cognitive development is much more than only adding new facts and information to the existing information in the human brain. He further believed that the thinking processes change significantly, though slowly, from birth to maturity, because human beings continuously strive to make sense of this world. He identified four factors that influence the changes in thinking. They are biological maturation, activity, social experiences and equilibration (Woolfolk, 2010:60).

Maturation can be described as the unfolding of the biological changes that are genetically programmed. It is one of the most important influences on the way human beings make sense of the world. Unfortunately educators and parents have little impact on this aspect of cognitive development (Woolfolk, 2010:32). Adults cannot force the training and teaching of children to accelerate through these developmental stages.

Activity also influences the change of thinking. As physical maturation comes, the ability to act and learn from the environment alters the thinking processes. Clasquin-Johnson (2007:23) agrees with Woolfolk, Hughes and Walkup (2008:38) by stating that Piaget believes that the interaction of children with their environment, clarify their knowledge. Ormrod (2001:28) supports this view by stating that one's physical and social environment play a vital role in cognitive development. The cognitive development is influenced by social experiences. The interaction with other people helps to gain knowledge. The stage of

cognitive development will determine the amount people can learn from one another. Piaget (Woolfolk *et al.*, 2008:38) holds the view that maturation, activity and social transmission work together to influence the cognitive development of an individual.

Piaget (Woolfolk, 2008:37) underlines that the human brain has the tendency to organise, adapt, assimilate and accommodate. Woolfolk *et al.* (2008:39) claim that individuals are “born with the tendency to organise their thinking processes into psychological structures”. Our system of understanding and interpreting the world around us are built by these psychological structures. Piaget (Woolfolk, 2010:32) called these structures: schemes. According to his theory the basic building blocks of thinking is schemes. As new schemes develop an individual’s thinking becomes more organised and the behaviour more refined and suited to the environment.

Individuals have the tendency to adapt to their environment. To be able to adapt the processes of assimilation and accommodation are important. When individuals use their existing schemes to make sense of new information by fitting the new information into what they already know, it is called assimilation. When existing schemes have to be changed to respond to new information, it is called accommodation. Sometimes, when an individual comes across unfamiliar information, it is simply ignored as neither of the above processes is used (Woolfolk *et al.*, 2008:39).

Piaget (Woolfolk, 2010:33) stated that organising, assimilating and accommodation can be regarded as a balancing act. According to him “the actual changes in thinking take place through a process of equilibration – the act of searching for a balance. He assumed that people continually test the adequacy of their thinking processes in order to achieve that balance” (Woolfolk, 2010:33). To be able to sustain a comfortable balance between the schemes through which an individual understands the world and the data the world provides, individuals have to constantly assimilate new information and accommodate their thinking. Unsuccessful attempts to change the existing schemes will result in disequilibrium (Woolfolk *et al.*, 2008:40).

According to the beliefs of Piaget (Clasquin-Johnson, 2007:23), the conceptual development and thinking of children precedes language production. He highlights the following phases in the development of children: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational stage and the formal operations. The stages are associated with specific ages (see Table 2.9).

**Table 2.9: Piaget's stages of cognitive development**

NR	STAGE	APPROXIMATE AGE	CHARACTERISTICS
1	Sensorimotor	0 – 2 years	Begins to make use of imitation, memory and thought. Begins to recognise that objects do not cease to exist when they are hidden. Moves from reflex actions to goal-directed activity.
2	Preoperational	2 – 7 years	Gradually develops use of language and ability to think in symbolic form. Able to think operations through logically in one direction. Has difficulties seeing another person's point of view.
3	Concrete operational	7 – 11 years	Able to solve concrete (hands-on) problems in logical fashion. Understands laws of conservation and is able to classify and seriate. Understands reversibility.
4	Formal operational	11 – adult	Able to solve abstract problems in logical fashion. Becomes more scientific in thinking. Develops concerns about social issues, identity.

(Wadsworth, cited in Woolfolk, 2010:34)

### 2.7.2.1 Themes emerging from the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky

When looking at the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky, as well as to the general developmental principles, brain development and language development there are themes that constantly emerge in one form or another. The themes are:

#### 2.7.2.1.1 Heredity and environment guide the development of learners

To a certain extent the physical, cognitive and social abilities of learners depend on maturation. The genetically unfolding of physiological advancements is as important as environmental factors. Social support and appropriate experiences is significant in the acquiring of skills and knowledge (Ormrod, 2011:57).

#### 2.7.2.1.2 Learners construct knowledge by being actively involved in the learning process

Through manipulating objects, doing experiments, discussing topics, measuring lengths and volumes of objects learners can construct knowledge far better than by the passively absorption of knowledge (Ormrod, 2011:57). Learners often have to sit passively for a great

length of a school day, especially in a multigrade classroom. This leads to boredom and seldom any learning takes place. Much instructional time is lost due to dead time and idle time during a school day.

Piaget (Ormrod, 2011:57) believed that cognitive development is a process of constructing one's unique understanding of the world. On the other hand Vygotsky and his supporters believe that adults and children work together to make sense of events. Even in language development constructive processes are very important.

#### **2.7.2.1.3 Children become more capable of complex thought when they grow older**

According to Piaget and Vygotsky (Ormrod, 2011:57) the cognitive abilities of children expand when they grow older. Educators have to take this into consideration when working with the learners. In a multigrade environment the levels of the tasks ought to be different for the different groups of learners. This is why educators regularly have to challenge learners by setting tasks which are more complex.

#### **2.7.2.1.4 Language lays the foundation for cognitive progression**

Many words and phrases provide the basis for symbolic thought. In many academic disciplines words and phrases become cognitive tools which help learners to build on. Language helps learners to exchange ideas with their peers and with adults (Ormrod, 2011:57). Therefore it is of utmost importance to assist learners in acquiring sufficient vocabulary and language skills in order to give them an opportunity to express themselves and to develop their cognitive ability.

#### **2.7.2.1.5 Development can be stimulated by challenging tasks and situations**

Vygotsky's (Ormrod, 2011:58) concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) is based on the importance of challenges. Sometimes learners are on the edge of grasping a concept or solving a problem. The learners just need some structure or clues to be able to come to the right conclusion. Other problems may be out of their reach even if it is explained clearly (Woolfolk *et al.*, 2008:57).

Berger (cited in Woolfolk *et al.*, 2008:55; Woolfolk, 2010:47) calls this ZPD the "magic middle". It is somewhere between what the learners already know and what the learners are

not ready to learn. This corresponds with Piaget's theory of cognitive development where learners acquire more knowledge when they encounter concepts they cannot fully understand by using their existing schemes. The creation of disequilibrium ensures the development of more sophisticated knowledge. Educators must take great care not to overwhelm learners with a lot of new information every day because this is unlikely to take care of their cognitive development. If learners frequently have to tackle one difficult challenge after the other without experiencing success, the school day will be unsettling and will lead to frustration and in the end to continuous failure. This will have a negative influence on the self-esteem of the learner (Ormrod, 2011:58).

In many multigrade schools educators still implement the traditional way of teaching. Most of the time the school has a multigrade setting due to the learner enrolment and the staff allocated to the school, but in the classroom the practice is still done in a monograde fashion (CPUT, 2011:14). Because educators are faced with many learning areas, subjects since 2012, and more than one grade in the class, the educators do not always make provision for the principles in which Piaget and Vygotsky so strongly believed. Many teachers do not have the resources and knowledge to give effective teaching in a multigrade context and this also leads to lower performing learners who often drop out of school when they reach secondary school level.

### **2.7.3 Howard Gardiner**

Clasquin-Johnson (2007:23) highlights how the multiple intelligences theory of Gardiner impact on what happens in a classroom. According to this theory children have different areas of strengths and weaknesses. To be able to give children equal opportunities to learn and to reach their potential, the teaching practice must be adapted to incorporate the nine multiple intelligences defined by Gardiner. They are:

- (i) verbal/linguistic;
- (ii) logical/mathematical;
- (iii) visual/spatial;
- (iv) bodily/kinaesthetic;
- (v) musical;
- (vi) interpersonal;
- (vii) intrapersonal;
- (viii) naturalistic and
- (ix) existentialist

Many educators in multigrade schools do not even know their own intelligence. During training sessions for the *Improvement of multigrade teaching in schools in rural areas* done by CMGE during 2010 to 2012 in eight of the provinces of South Africa, educators attending the sessions were surprised when they determined their specific intelligences after completing questionnaires. As a trainer during some of those sessions the researcher often saw the surprise on the faces of educators when they grasp the concept of multiple intelligences and when they discovered their own strengths and preferences. This theory of multiple intelligences has great implications for the teacher's lesson planning as well as for the presentation of lessons. Educators have to take into account that learners have different intelligences too and to address these differences the activities done in the classroom have to be developed in such a way that all the different intelligences will be equally incorporated in his/her lessons to address the individual strengths and backlogs of learners during the lessons in the classroom practice (CMGE, 2010). If an educator fails to plan, learners will be bored, lose interest in school, probably have disciplinary problems and eventually drop out of school. This also is true for the secondary school/ high school.

#### **2.7.4 Bronfenbrenner**

The individual human development occurs within multiple embedded ecological systems. Bronfenbrenner (Ormrod, 2011:22) articulated this model of multiple layers of environmental influences. He pointed out that these layers affect the development of learners. Theorists such as Plas as well as Burden and Hornby (cited in Donald *et al.*, 2010:37) supported Bronfenbrenner that different levels and groups of people form interactive systems where the functioning of the system is dependent on the interaction between all the different parts. According to this systems theory the school can be seen as a system where the educators, the learners, the administrative personnel and the curriculum represents the different parts. To enable one to understand the whole system it is important to understand the relationships between the different parts (Donald *et al.*, 2010:37).

##### **2.7.4.1 Elements of human systems**

Human systems are characterised by a number of fundamental processes. The following needs to be understood.

### 2.7.4.1.1 Interaction between the systems and subsystems

Whole systems can interact with their surrounding systems e.g. a family can interact with other families, a school or a church (Donald *et al.*, 2010:37). The interaction between the school and the family is very important. When transition of learners from the primary school to the high school takes place, it is often a case that the school and the family do not interact very well. Often there is almost no interaction between the school and the home. This has a negative influence on the learners and often leads to early dropout.

### 2.7.4.1.2 Patterns of functioning

The systems are affected by the functioning of the individual parts. All the parts are interconnected and what happens to one part affects the other parts. It is almost like a spider web. Anything that happens anywhere in the web is felt in all the other parts of the web. Due to this phenomenon people in human systems interact in specific ways. Individual members of a family shape and are shaped due to these continuous processes. The whole family is affected if tension arises in one part of the family (see Figure 2.1).

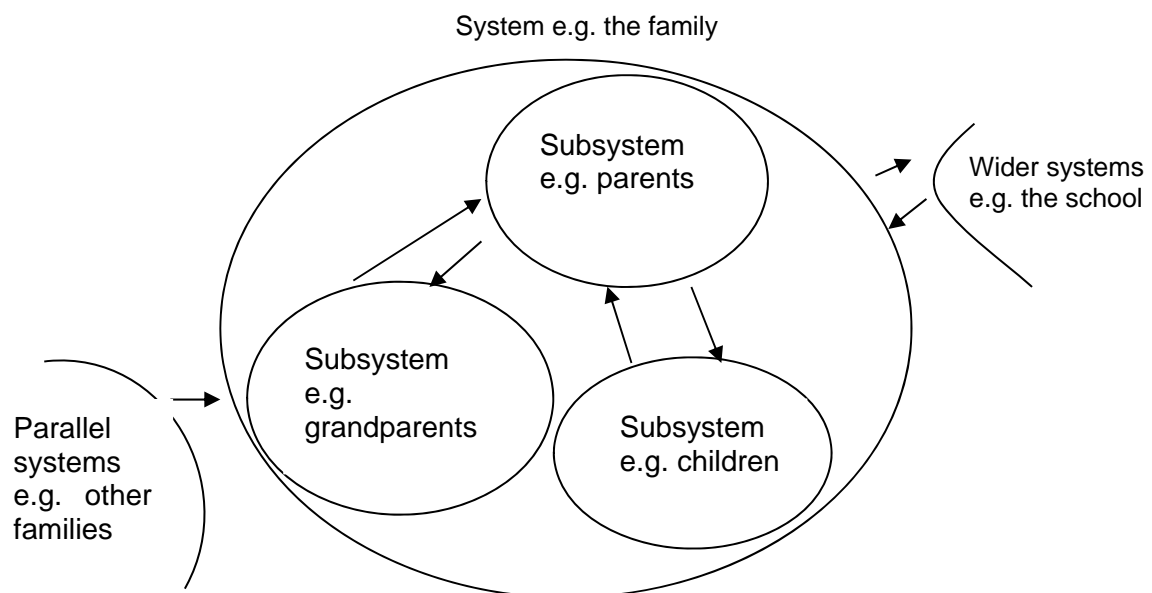


Figure 2.1: Systems, subsystems and their interaction in relation to a family  
(Donald *et al.*, 2010:38)



#### **2.7.4.1.3 Cycles of cause and effect**

Due to the interrelationships between the different parts the action in one part of the system is not causing a one-directional action in another part. It is more as if the cause and effect occur in cycles (Donald *et al.*, 2010:37).

#### **2.7.4.1.4 Goals and values**

The goals and values of the system may be written or hidden. These goals and values influence the different parts of the system (Donald *et al.*, 2010:39). When families and schools have different values and different goals it leads to tension and often influence the child negatively due to conflict of interests. This inner tension between values may, in worst case scenarios, lead to drop out.

It is therefore important that parents give their input in the development of the school policies and especially the Code of Conduct of a school. By doing this their opinion about what must be included in these policies can ensure that matters of common interest are included and the tension between the school and the home can be reduced.

#### **2.7.4.1.5 Communication patterns**

Communication takes place between different subsystems and different systems. If the communication patterns are not clear and direct it may lead to misunderstanding. This will hinder effective functioning and interaction. If there is a lack of communication between the family and the school, or if the communication in the family between the parents and the child is not clear, it will result in tension which will affect how children are dealt with in both systems (Donald *et al.*, 2010:39).

#### **2.7.4.1.6 Roles within the system**

Defining someone's role in the system is important as this impact on the functioning of the system as a whole. Often learners have different roles to play at home and in school. If these roles are contradictory and conflicting they lead to problems for those involved (Donald *et al.*, 2010:39).

#### **2.7.4.1.7 Boundaries**

The family is, for many learners, the first and basic level of influence. The family can support learners in many different ways. Families can provide good nutrition, assist with homework, secure safety of the environment and work collaboratively with educators to address problems with regards to behaviour and learning problems (Ormrod, 2011:22).

The layer that is surrounding the family is the neighbourhood and community. This offers additional support to the family. Activities such as nursery care, grade R classes, after-school care, libraries, museums, art centres and even zoos can assist the family in raising the child.

#### **2.7.4.1.8 Time and development**

No human system is rigid. It develops over time. The changes in sub-systems or systems, impact greatly on the system as a whole (Donald *et al.*, 2010:39). When children in a family develop from infants to teenagers it influences the whole family because the family will function differently due to the development that has taken place. Educators have to take cognisance of this too as school systems and communities constantly change. The family, the school and the community “influence one another continuously so that the whole is more as the sum of the parts” (Donald *et al.*, 2010:39).

### **2.8 Reasons for dropping out of school**

The interaction between the system and the sub-system can influence a child negatively or positively. If the external input is more negative than positive, it may lead to disengagement and finally result in dropout. The four reasons that influence the decision of a learner to drop out of school were summarised (§ 1.3). These reasons will now be expanded.

#### **2.8.1 Personal Issues**

##### **2.8.1.1 Limited proficiency in language of instruction**

We use language to communicate and at a young age we communicate best in our mother tongue. In South Africa many learners only receive instruction in their mother tongue up to the third year in school. From grade four, learners do not receive instruction in an ethnic language. The Language of Teaching and Learning (LOLT) is English and the mother tongue is retained as a school subject. If learners have to receive instruction in a language which

differs from their mother tongue, they are often set up for failure. Difficulties in understanding the language of teaching and learning in the classroom often result in placing learners at risk. This position of risk arises from the challenges they must confront in the classroom. A lack of vocabulary confounds the learner with a harrowing communicative problem – “How do I express myself?” A limited vocabulary results in an inability to understand concepts. The gaps in understanding perpetuate a struggle to learn, lead to retention in a grade and builds up finally to dropout.

Having an inadequate vocabulary is also true of many mother tongue speakers in rural areas. Many of these learners have to stay with an illiterate grandparent or relative during the day because the mother/father/or both went to work early in the morning. These learners have to keep themselves company through the day. Due to a low SES there are probably no story books at home and this result in a learner who knows only a few words when entering the school. This lack of sufficient vocabulary often impacts on the learners’ abilities to communicate and to express them. Often this results in low academic achievement, ensuring a low self-esteem that finally leads to early disengagement from school.

#### **2.8.1.2 Learner behaviour**

Ensminger and Slusarcick (cited in Dunn, Chambers and Rabren, 2004:315) highlighted that aggressive behaviour of learners often lead to school dropout.

According to McWhirter *et al.* (2007: 133,152,165) there are a few behaviours of learners which put them at risk for dropping out. These include:

- Substance abuse: Teenagers in rural areas nowadays display high rates of drug abuse and alcohol abuse.
- Absenteeism: Inconsistent attendance of classes is often linked to low educational achievement and dropping out of school.
- Teenage pregnancy: In the United States as high as 40% of female learners drop out of school due to pregnancy. In the West Coast Education District, of which Circuit 2 forms a part, there is also an increase in the cases of teenage pregnancy reported over the last 3 years (see Table 2.10).

**Table 2.10: Data on teenage pregnancy in the West Coast Education District**

<b>TERM</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2104</b>
January – March		50	57
April – June	67	40	60
July – September	56	44	88
October – December	51	33	
<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>205</b>

(Schade, 2014)

- Gang membership: An increasing number of youths join gangs. The reason can be due to economic needs or identity needs. Pinnock (cited in Donald *et al.*, 2010:225) accentuates the fact that survival needs often lead to adolescents taking part in gang activities. These activities give learners an opportunity to prove themselves and to find their identities as well as gaining the acceptance of posse members.

### 2.8.1.3 Feelings of inferiority

Learners have to adapt to two different scenarios within a very short time. In their final year in grade seven in a multigrade rural school, these learners are the oldest and most respected learners in the school. In this context they are popular and able. They demonstrate their knack for academics and also show physical confidence in sports and games. Within a period of six weeks these learners become the youngest learners in the secondary school. They become the least known member in the high school community. Meece as well as Murdock, Hale and Weber (cited in Woolfolk, 2008:78) argue convincingly that these learners experience a role loss during their transition which can be linked to the larger learner numbers and the anonymous setting in the high school (Repici, 2004:13).

In South Africa transition between primary school and secondary school take place from the age of 13. Children are vulnerable during this age as they are also experiencing physical changes as they approach puberty (Woolfolk, 2008:78). They also start to construct a new identity during the same period. For some children, transfer is seen as a positive incentive. They think it's exciting and a change for the better. For other kids, this period is rife with struggle, adjustments, feelings of inadequacy, disorientation, anxiety and a lack of motivation (Ormrod, 2001:403 - 405).

Many of the learners attending multigrade schools in the rural area in West Coast Circuit Two live on farms in and around Piketberg, Porterville and Moorreesburg. When these learners academically progress from grade seven to grade eight, they have to attend a high school/secondary school in town. The learners can either stay in the hostel, travel to school by bus or board at family members in town. These three options, to their respective merit, also help engender self-perceptions of inferiority.

## **2.8.2 The Family**

### **2.8.2.1 Socioeconomic status**

Children living in families with a low family income, or where parents are struggling to get work, are more likely to drop out. Where there is poverty, children are often ashamed of their clothes. School fees, books, uniforms and transportation become a burden to the family. Note the possibility that children might rather opt to drop out than to endure the taunts and shaming remarks of their peers (Kelly, 1994:5226).

### **2.8.2.2 Single-parent households**

Learners coming from a traditional two-parent household have a better chance to complete their school careers than their counterparts coming from single-parent households. Learners living in single-parent households have a propensity to have lower achievement rates and higher school dropout rates. In most cases the single-parents are mothers. With only a single source of income they have to struggle to make ends meet. Understandably this leads to a household which is less desirable. Coupled with this, the lack of leisure and care time to spend with their children, impacts negatively on the academic performance of the learners (Khattri *et al.*, 1997: 87-88).

### **2.8.2.3 Sick household member**

HIV/Aids devastate households. It affects the individual as well as the family as both infected and affected family members often stop working. According to Gachuhi (1999:iii) at least 40 million people are affected with HIV in sub-Saharan countries. Women and children are greatly affected by HIV/Aids. Children of infected family members have to live in these depressing circumstances. The illness may finally result in the death of one or both parent(s) leaving these children emotionally and physically vulnerable. Often long before their parents die these children face problems as a result of HIV/AIDS. In many cases the family cannot

afford the school fees for children so the children drop out of school. Girls may drop out of school to take care of sick relatives whilst boys often disengage from school to help with the family income.

#### **2.8.2.4 Gender**

There is no gender equity in schooling around the world. In rural environments labour within the family determine and influence the persistence in school. In some cases boys drop out early to look after cattle and to do household tasks. In families with a low income, girls often have to stay out of school to look after the younger siblings and to do housework. Many countries exclude pregnant girls from schooling.

According to Le Vine, Le Vine, Richman, Uribe, Correa, and Miller (cited in UNESCO, 2007:23) cross cultural studies done in Mexico, Nepal, Venezuela and Zambia demonstrate how education impacts on women, especially their aspirations, skills and thinking about learning. These have positive implications for their children. Schooling and language acquisition effect their decisions on child rearing and health behaviours.

#### **2.8.2.5 Educational attainment of parents**

The low educational achievement of parents, especially mothers, has a negative impact on the achievement of their children (Van der Berg, 2008:10). Christian, Morrison and Bryant (1998: 505-506) corroborate Van der Berg's claim. Their research uncovered that low maternal education is a demographic factor that place learners at risk for failure. Learners whose mothers have low levels of education are less likely to be exposed to the frequent use of rich language as well as regular literacy stimulation. These learners have less exposure to pre-academic experiences at home. Pianta and McCoy (cited in Nugent, 2007:22) conclude that these learners may come to school with fewer academic skills. Language abilities comprising of poor vocabulary and weak reading skills can be predictors of a need for special education. Alexander, Entwistle & Kabbani (cited in Zvoch, 2006:98) opine that these early gaps are often maintained throughout the school career. To be able to compete with their peers coming from homes where they were stimulated by text rich environments, high levels of instructional support within the classroom will be of utmost importance. Parents who have participated in secondary or tertiary education usually have children who are more likely to complete primary schooling. If parents gained their own educational achievements, they tend to set expectations for their children.

### **2.8.2.6 Involvement and expectations**

A family's involvement in the education of its children is vital for success. The expectations of parents with regards to the scholastic achievement of their children have widely been reported as a significant indicator of the children's success in school. Bielecka, Bordieu, Chen and Kaplan, Marjoribanks and Martinez-González and Corral-Blanco (cited in Martínez-González, Symeou, Álvarez-Blanco, Roussounidou, Iglesias-Muñiz and Cao-Fernández, 2008:510) all agreed that the parents of at risk learners often have very low academic expectations for their children.

Learners coming from a multigrade school entering the high school or secondary school in town often struggle with the same problem. Many of their parents failed to complete high school. They want their children to matriculate, but they are disengaged from the studies of their children. Due to their own low academic qualifications they often cannot assist their children with homework. They do not attend parent meetings at school owing to a lack of own transport. Accordingly, they remain uninformed about the important role that they as parents play in their children's academic achievements.

### **2.8.3 The school**

The educational experiences of students play a significant role in creating, exacerbating or decreasing the dropout problem. Christle *et al.* (2007:327) claim that schools are active and dynamic settings that may unintentionally hinder or help learners to be successful. They reiterate that for many learners the school they attend may be the strongest defining factor in their dropping out versus completion of school.

Respondents in a research project done in America by Jordan, Lara & McPartland (1999:1-4) indicated that they did not like school. In another survey done by MetLife in 2002 some respondents indicated that school was boring and that they did not learn enough.

Location proves to be important. The availability of a school near the learner's home plays a major role in school attendance. In some areas schools are far away and it is difficult for learners to attend the school due to the distances that they have to travel daily. Learners attending multigrade schools in the rural areas of the West Coast often have to walk great distances every morning to take a bus to the nearest primary or high school in town.

HIV/Aids negatively affect the supply-side of education too (Gachuhi, 1999:4). Teacher absenteeism as well as deaths of infected educators increase the teacher-to-learner ratios in many schools. The implication is clear - the quality and quantity of education plunges.

Situations where learners struggle to achieve the required scores to be promoted increase the risk for potential dropout because they fall behind academically, needs to repeat a year and so become over-aged.

Some educators believe that grade repetition may be used as a remedy for slow learners. Repetition does not automatically translate into better results. Many countries seek to reduce the repetition of grades because repetition wastes money and human resources. By repeating a grade, the number of new entrants to the grade is reduced. High levels of repetition can be an indication of low quality education. Due to repetitions some learners may opt to drop out of school rather than to repeat their grade. Grade repetition is highest in Sub-Saharan Africa. These kids need more and better teachers (UNESCO, 2007:66-89).

### **2.8.3.1 Support from teachers**

Pianta, La Paro, Payne, Cox and Bradley (cited in Pianta & Barnett (ed.), 2012:164) agree that the relationship between a teacher and a student is critical for effective learning. The experiences in classrooms with high-quality academic and social interactions help to close the gap between at risk learners and their low risk peers. These experiences are particularly important in the early grades when small achievements play a crucial role in final outcomes.

According to Sanders and Rivers (cited in Barr & Parrett, 2007:9) student achievement is determined, and to a large extent influenced, by teacher quality. Some teachers have the ability to significantly raise student achievement whilst others have little or no effect on the academic success of the learner. A learner who has to receive instruction from an ineffective teacher takes almost two years to regain the loss in achievement. When learners suffer an ineffective teacher for two consecutive years, these learners are unlikely to ever catch up.

Two aspects reappear in literature, namely instructional support and emotional support. According to Woolfolk, (2010:75) students distinguish between academic caring and personal caring. Teachers have to set reachable expectations and assist students to reach their goals. Students relate better to patient, respectful, friendly and humorous educators who demonstrate an interest in their personal issues and endeavours. The emotional support in the classroom includes warmth, positiveness, child-centeredness as well as the teachers'



sensitivity towards specific learners. When learners experience sensitive, responsive and positive interactions with teachers they observe them as more supportive and these learners are therefore more motivated to perform well academically. They are often more on-task and engaged in learning. According to Hamre and Pianta (2005:949) the risk of school failure may be mitigated by strong support from educators especially during the first year of schooling.

The “nature and quality of instruction is of paramount importance for the value of classroom experience that intended to produce gains in learning” (Hamre & Pianta (2005:951). The instructional interaction between teachers and learners has the greatest value when these interactions are focused, intentional, directed and include regular feedback.

When learners are in a multigrade teaching environment, many of the teachers foster this emotional and instructional support. In most cases learners adapt well to the school environment. Since the learners receive instruction from the same teacher for more than one year (§2.3.1), there is a possibility to reduce their risk of academic and relational problems. During the transition between grade seven and grade eight when the learners must advance to the high school, the reality is one of wavering teacher support. For various reasons learners do not experience the same level of emotional and instructional support in the high school. In their struggle to adapt to the new school environment, the different personalities and values of their peers, and unfamiliar and seemingly aloof teachers, it's hard to not see how learners from multigrade primary schools might find dropping out an attractive, even comforting, alternative.

### **2.8.3.2 School management**

Good school management and leadership are critical to ensure that a school is successful and the learners are successful. Dornbusch, Ritter and Steinberg (1991:545) mention that students identified the mismanagement of the school as a reason for dropping out of the school system.

### **2.8.3.3 School culture**

Research reveals, tellingly, that successful students attend schools with a vibrant and engaging culture of teaching and learning. It helps learners focus on their academic work. As part of the school culture, there has to be set rules in the school's “contract” with its pupils –

the code of conduct. The school environment has to be one of safety, where learners can express themselves and where they have the feeling of “belonging to”.

Clarke (2007:64) singles out that a school should be a happy place where learners feel welcome and secure. Learners need to feel that there are people at school who take an interest in them as individuals, who are concerned about their emotional, physical and academical wellbeing. If the school lacks a culture of teaching and learning, the discipline is not on par and learners will probably drop out once they stagger from the first stumbling block.

#### **2.8.4 Society**

As previously explained, the school, the family and the society are interrelated. These systems impact on each other. Reasons for dropping out of school can therefore also be linked to the society.

##### **2.8.4.1 Remoteness**

If the society where the child lives is remote, it will have an impact on the decision to stay in school or to drop out (Jain, 2005:111). Being far from the nearest town may result in difficulties with transport and accommodation. This exerts extra financial pressure on the family which they probably cannot afford.

##### **2.8.4.2 Neighbourhood poverty**

Blue and Cook (2004:4) hold the opinion that learners living in low socio-economic neighbourhoods are more likely to drop out of school than those learners coming from a more affluent neighbourhood. In some areas the society doesn't value high school qualifications and therefore parents, who hold that view, would encourage their children to rather leave school so they might contribute to the family income.

##### **2.8.4.3 Substance abuse**

In many neighbourhoods young children become enslaved by the shackles of substance abuse. Poverty, racism, community and interpersonal violence, lack of good personal relationships and family problems correlate with substance abuse (McWhirter *et al.*, 2007:147). In an attempt to either get away from their devastating circumstances or to be

accepted by their peers, youths start to use drugs. Adverse school conditions, traumatic events and the influence of the media, like printed media and television, can also contribute to drug abuse, (McWhirter *et al.*, 2007:147). In some societies there are many messages playing down the negativity of, or flat-out condoning, drug abuse. Youths receive these messages from programmes and advertisements on national television. According to Kosterman, Hawkins, Guo, Catalano, Abbott, Russel and Joyner (cited in McWhirter *et al.*, 2007:148) modelling by community leaders, parents, older siblings and their peers further entice young children, who struggle to cope (Clark & Sayette, cited in McWhirter *et al.*, 2007:149), to a lifestyle of substance abuse. To afford these substances, the youngsters need money. This need gives impetus to quitting school. Thereafter, the young addicts gain the time to live the life that affords them their craved substances – a delinquent life of criminal offences.

#### **2.8.4.4 Violence**

Parker, Dawes and Farr (cited in Donald *et al.*, 2010:222), are in agreement with Lazarus, Seedat and Naidoo (cited in Donald *et al.*, 2010:222) that in South Africa, violence amongst young teenagers, coupled with the way violence affect them, raise a deep concern, especially for educators, community and pastoral leaders. Due to “social factors, boys and men are particularly exposed to becoming both victims and perpetrators of violence, with ages 15 to 29 being an especially high risk group” (Donald *et al.*, 2010:222). It’s also important to understand that “patterns of abusive behaviour between men and woman are usually systemic in nature and therefore cyclical and dynamic (see §2.7.4.1.2), with the one ‘feeding’ the other” (Donald *et al.*, 2010:228).

The literature tells us there are different forms of violence. The reasons usually link with specific risk factors from a number of levels in the system like the individual, the family, the school, the local community as well as the community at large (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi & Lozano, cited in Donald *et al.*, 2010:223). The low socio-economic status of the family, which often include unemployment, poverty, lack of recreational and creative spaces, exposure to substance abuse and access to weapons are reasons for the manifestation of violence in the community (Donald *et al.*, 2010:223, 224). Adolescent aggression tends to co-occur with other problem behaviours, such as alcohol and drug abuse and school disengagement. Where learners are exposed to constant political violence, community violence, gender violence and interpersonal violence, such as sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse

and neglect (Donald *et al.* 2010:230), they may decide to drop out of school. Often elder siblings drop out of school to take care of younger family members.

#### **2.8.4.5 Values**

“The beliefs and values held by people in different social contexts also affect school dropout, especially beliefs and values around the issue of the female child” (Donald *et al.* 2010:175). In communities in Africa expectations around the economic and social role of girls have often resulted in early dropout from school (Davidson, cited in Donald *et al.*, 2010:175).

Communities that do not value education as a powerful tool to ensure economic freedom, will not become involved when they notice children who, instead of being enrolled for and attend school, idly saunter about the neighbourhood.

### **2.9 Conclusion**

Dropping out of school is a major issue in many countries around the world. “Students at greatest risk for dropping out of school are identifiable, although many disengage from school and drop out for a variety of reasons” (McWhirter *et al.*, 2007:134). In this chapter the problems encountered in rural and multigrade educational settings, especially those situated in the South African context were addressed. The research elaborated on the importance of the philosophies of Vygotsky, Piaget, Gardiner and Bronfenbrenner in keeping the youth in school. Numerous reasons why youths might disengage and finally drop out of school were investigated and highlighted.

In Chapter three the researcher will describe the explanatory sequential mixed-method approach to investigate the reasons why learners from a multigrade primary school background drop out of high school before completing their school careers.

## CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to describe the research methods used to explore the following research question and sub-questions:

What strategy can assist rural multigrade schools in Circuit Two of the West Coast Education District to reduce the dropout rate experienced in high schools?

1. What is the degree of rural multigrade learners' dropout rate in high schools?
2. What are the perceptions of principals regarding the high dropout rates of learners from a multigrade background?
3. What are the perceptions of high school dropouts who come from a multigrade primary experience?
4. What strategies can be proposed for reducing the high dropout rate in future?

This chapter describes the structure of the research process according to the following foci: mixed-method research, quantitative research, qualitative research, interviews, ethical aspects and administrative procedures.

### 3.2 Pragmatism

A sequential mixed-method research design embedded in Pragmatism was designed in order to answer the posed research. Pragmatism can be traced to the period from 1860 to 1930, whilst the period from 1960 to the present, is called the Neopragmatic Era (Maxcy, cited in Cameron, 2009:140). A pragmatic "worldview arises out of actions, situations and consequences rather than antecedent conditions" (Creswell, 2009: 10, 11). By adopting pragmatism, the mixed-method researcher opens a door to several methods and a freedom of choice with regards to methods, techniques and procedures in an attempt to provide the best understanding of the research problem. The pragmatist researcher poses that research always occurs in a social, historical, political, or other context. Therefore mixed-method studies may include "a theoretical lens that is reflective of political aims and social justice" (Creswell, 2013:11). Morse (2003:190) further refined Creswell's (2003:212) view by incorporating a theoretical perspective in his view of a mixed-method research design by

stating: “This is the incorporation of various qualitative or quantitative strategies within a single project that may have either a qualitative or quantitative theoretical drive” (Morse, 2003:190).

### **3.3 Mixed-method research design**

The Business Dictionary.com (2004) defines a research design as “a detailed outline or plan of how an investigation will take place.” Therefore, a research design will include elements about the collecting of the data, the instruments that will be used and how the instruments will be used, as well as the intended means for analysing the collected data. Creswell and Tashakkori (2007:58) delineate this definition further by stating that the plan has to be systematic and purposive. They also emphasise the fact that the interpretation of the data has to take place in a scientific manner. The research design also helps the researcher to develop a framework for the methodology and the analytical interpretations of the collected data (Livingston, 2010:5.3). The research design implemented in this study is a sequential explanatory mixed-method research design.

#### **3.3.1 Definition of mixed-method research**

A concise definition of mixed-method research is offered by Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann & Hanson (2003:212) and Creswell (2015:18) which states that it involves the collecting and analysing of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study. The data can be collected concurrently or sequentially. Mixed-method research is a methodology that has been used by researchers over the last 50 years. Almost forty different mixed-method research designs have been reported in literature (Tashakkori & Teddlie, cited in Ivankova, Creswell & Stick, 2006:2). The six most often used designs were identified by Creswell (cited in Ivankova *et al.*, 2006:2). These strategies are the sequential explanatory strategy, the sequential exploratory strategy, sequential transformative strategy, the concurrent triangulation strategy, the concurrent embedded strategy and the concurrent transformative strategy. Researchers (cited in Creswell, 2006:6) have given the term different labels, such as “multitrait/multimethod research” (Campbell & Fiske, 1959), “quantitative and qualitative methods” (Fielding & Fielding, 1986), “methodological triangulation” (Morse, 1991), “integrated” or “combined” (Steckler, McLeroy, Goodman, Bird & McCormick, 1992), “combined research” (Creswell, 1994), “mixed methodology” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) and “hybrids” (Ragin, Nagel & White, 2004). Writers such as Caraceli and Graham (1989), Creswell *et al.*, (2003) and Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie (2003) are all in agreement that the techniques or methods of collecting and analysing data are important in mixed-method

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research. An increasing number of social, behavioural and human science scholars use this approach as a methodology.

The rationale for using a mixed-method research methodology is grounded in the fact that the combination of quantitative and qualitative research ensures integrated and multiple knowledge (Briggs, Coleman & Morrison, 2012:126). By mixing the sets of data the researcher is able to provide a better understanding of the problem than by looking at one set of data alone.

Many definitions of mixed-method research are available in the literature. These definitions are quite similar as they all underline the fact that different types of data are being collected and different research methods are being used in the same study. Another commonality is the inclusion of the terminologies qualitative and quantitative. Even the most comprehensive definition by leaders in the field of mixed-method research refers to the “importance of traditional quantitative and qualitative research” (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007:129).

According to Newman and Benz (cited in Creswell, 2009:3) quantitative and qualitative approaches must not be seen as opposites, but rather as the two different ends of a continuum. A study can therefore either be more quantitative or more qualitative. Mixed-methods research integrates elements of both these approaches and can thus be seen as the middle of the continuum. The researcher decides on the priority or weight given to the quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, the sequence of the data collection and analysis as well as the stage/stages in the research process where the results are connected and integrated in the study (Ivankova *et al.*, 2006:3).

For the purposes of this study the following definition will be used:

Mixed-method research is research that combines both quantitative methods that provide numerical results and qualitative methods which analyse narrative data in the same study.

### **3.3.2 The sequential explanatory research paradigm**

According to Creswell (2009:211) and Creswell (2015:39) the mixed-method sequential explanatory design is very popular amongst researchers. Despite its popularity, this design can be difficult and time-consuming to conduct.

In the sequential explanatory research design the quantitative section of the study comes first followed by the qualitative section (Creswell, 2009:211). Although the data can be collected at the same time, the quantitative data is analysed first. It is necessary to have valid reasons for using both methods to justify the use of a mixed-method research approach. Usually the research question cannot be answered by looking at only one set of data and by using both approaches the two sets of data complement and build on each other (Hesse-Biber, cited in Simpson, 2011:28) is of the opinion that when the two methods inform each other, it ensures a more layered approach to the research. Qualitative data is then analysed to assist in the interpretation of the quantitative data. Rossman and Wilson (1985); Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) and Creswell (2003) (cited in Ivankova *et al.*, 2006:4) are all in agreement that the quantitative data and data analysis offer a general understanding of the research problem whilst the quantitative data and the in depth analysis of the participants' views enhance understanding. The sequential explanatory design used in this study is illustrated in Figure 3.1.

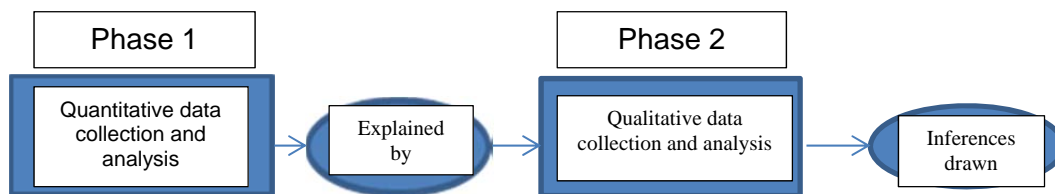


Figure 3.1: Sequential explanatory design (Creswell, 2015:39)

### 3.4 Quantitative Phase

In order to answer the first research sub-question, what is the rate of rural multigrade learners' dropout in high schools? a quantitative research study was conducted by doing a thorough content analysis of the admission register of the specific selected multigrade primary school. The progression and promotion records of 1996 to 2005 were also analysed. The promotion and progression record of 1995 was not available. Schools only have to keep hard copies of information for a period of five to ten years, depending on the kind of information. Luckily copies of the records of schools are kept at the circuit office. The records from 1996 to 2005 were still at the circuit office. The researcher was very lucky to find these records at the circuit office because the non-CS educators were in the process of shredding them due to the fact that it was not required to be safeguarded any more.

The purpose of this section is to determine the number of learners who had completed their school careers at the specific multigrade primary school in West Coast Circuit Two between



the years 1995 and 2005. Documents, such as the admission registers and promotion and progression records of one other rural primary school with a multigrade class, another rural primary school in a small town and two large primary schools in two different towns and one high school in the area also had to be scrutinised to determine whether the learner had completed his/her school career or if the learner had dropped out of school at an earlier time. The multigrade primary school in question is a feeder school for the four other-mentioned primary schools. For the years 1995 to 2002 the multigrade school in question only offered instruction up to standard four, currently grade six. Since 2003 permission was granted by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) to extend the curriculum of the school in question to host grade seven learners as well.

### **3.4.1 Content analysis of school documentation and sample**

In order to determine the number of learners who had left the school each year between the years 1995 to 2005, the admission register, class registers as well as the progression and promotion records of the specific school in question were analysed. The admission registers from four other primary schools and two high schools in the area were also studied. This was done in order to determine whether learners who had left the specific multigrade school in West Coast Circuit Two continued their school careers at another school in the circuit. It was also used to determine if the learners had dropped out of school at any time. Most of the learners in the area attend one specific high school.

In the year 2005 the WCED started to implement a Centralised Education Management Information System (CEMIS). This electronic database helps to a large extent to determine if learners who have completed their final school year, which is grade seven, at the primary multigrade school under discussion also completed their high school careers. On the Centralised Education Management Information System it is possible to print out lists of learners who have been de-registered on the system. Learners are only de-registered when they have completed their grade 12 examination successfully or when they drop out of the schooling system. The learner attendance policy of the WCED makes provision for de-registration of learners after uninterrupted absenteeism of ten consecutive school days. In case of illness of a period longer than ten days a doctor's certificate can be submitted to avoid deregistration.

Content analysis was used as a quantitative research method in this study for the following reasons:

- Quantitative content analysis is used extensively in mass communication as a way to count manifest textual elements, an aspect of this method that is often critiqued for missing syntactical and semantic information embedded in the text (Weber, cited in Zhang & Wildemuth, no date:2).
- It is a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material for the purposes of identifying patterns, themes or biases (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:144).

Some of the applications of content analysis which are relevant to this study are: understanding organisational patterns (exit dates of school leavers) and describing trends in schooling over time (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008:473).

As this study aimed to identify specific information regarding the exit dates of the participants from high school, syntactical or semantic information was not collected and thus, the criticism mentioned above, was negated. The particular body of material that was analysed was the admission register records and the progression and promotion records at the high schools where the participants were placed from the feeder multigrade school.

Thus, for the sake of this study, the following definition of content analysis will be used:

Content analysis is a succinct, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method, including attention to impartiality / inter-subjectivity, a priori design, reliability, validity, generalizability and replicability. It is not limited as to the type of messages that may be analyzed, nor as to the types of constructs that might be measured (Neuendorf, 2002:10).

### **3.4.2 Validity and reliability in content analysis**

The validity and reliability of the content analysis was ensured by the following approaches:

#### **3.4.2.1 Test-retest method**

Test-retest reliability is a measure of reliability obtained by administering the same test twice over a period of time to a group of individuals. The scores from Time 1 and Time 2 can then be correlated in order to evaluate the test for stability over time (Phelan & Wren, 2005:1).

The researcher ensured that the number of learners who had left the rural multigrade primary school in question after completing the highest grade at this school, as identified in the admission register of the school, is exactly the same as the number of learners who were

recorded in the progression and promotion records during the years 1995 to 2005. These numbers were counted a few times to ensure that they were correct (see attached CD).

#### **3.4.2.2 Categories agreed upon by other researchers**

The categories used in the analysis of the data greatly correlate with categories used by other researchers as demonstrated in the literature.

#### **3.4.2.3 Discussions with experts in the field**

The principals teaching at multigrade schools in the area can be described as experts in the field of multigrade teaching as the experience of some of these principals runs over a period of more than 20 years. The six principals of the multigrade schools who were interviewed are all in agreement that the best way to determine the dropout rate is to compare the learner enrolment, which is done in the admission register of a school, with the number of learners who actually pass a grade, which can be identified in the progression and promotion records of a school. After the year 2006 it is much easier to identify whether a learner has completed his/her school career as the WCED implemented CEMIS which helps with the tracking of learner records.

#### **3.4.2.4 Independent checking by an external source**

In an attempt to certify that the information stated in the study is correct and therefore valid, checking was done by two colleagues at the circuit office. These two ladies are non CS-educators and they screened the same documents and confirmed the number of learners who completed their school career at the multigrade school in question. They also screened the matric records of the one high school in the area, as well as CEMIS electronic databases of the WCED to be able to verify the number of learners who actually passed matric. By subtracting these two numbers the same number of learners who have dropped out of the schooling system before the completion of their school career, was identified.

#### **3.4.3 Method of content analysis**

According to Leedy & Ormrod (2010:144), content analysis is very systematic and measures are taken to ensure that the process is as objective as possible. The following steps are seen as typical in content analysis, and were followed in this study:

- The researcher identifies a specific body of material to be studied. According to Fraenkel & Wallen (2008:475) once the researcher has decided on the objectives of the study and the units of analysis, the relevant data needs to be located. Definitions of the terms were then identified. These terms were:
  - Names of learners
  - Dates of deregistration from the schooling system
  - Attendance rates
- The researcher defines the characteristics to be examined. This phase can also be referred to as “coding categories” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008: 476).
- The researcher scrutinises the material for instances of each characteristic. A distinction must be made between manifest and latent content. This study made use of manifest content (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008:477) as it refers to the obvious, surface content (registers and dates) and not latent content, which refers to the meaning underlying what is said or shown.

#### **3.4.4 Data analysis of the content analysis**

The analysis of content can be either quantitative or qualitative, but for the sake of this study, a quantitative analysis occurred. As counting is an important aspect of content analysis (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008: 479), all data was presented in table form, while frequencies and percentages were reported on (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:145).

#### **3.5 Qualitative Phase**

The qualitative phase of this study followed the quantitative phase in order to address the issues that had been identified in the quantitative phase and to answer the following research questions: What are the perceptions of high school dropouts who come from a multigrade primary experience? and What are the perceptions of principals regarding the high dropout rates of learners from a multigrade background?

Qualitative research gathers information that is narrative and not numerical. A qualitative study is more concerned about understanding a phenomenon from the view of the interviewee than in discovering facts about a social phenomenon (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1990:5). In an attempt to understand better and more in depth the qualitative researcher may adopt a more flexible and changeable approach (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:30).

Creswell (2009:16) is of the opinion that in a qualitative study “the inquirer seeks to examine an issue related to oppression of individuals”. Therefore individuals are interviewed face-to-face. The qualitative researcher usually collects the data and information herself/himself by studying documents and interviewing the participants either individually or in a group. All the data gathered is studied and re-organised into themes or categories that emerged from the narrative responses. It is very important that the researcher does not bring her/his interpretation of the problem to the research or drag the opinions of writers, as identified in the literature, to the study. The voice of the participants has to assist the researcher to make an interpretation of what she/he sees, hears and understands of the stated issue as per the research question (Creswell, 2009:175-176).

For the purpose of this study in-depth individual interviews were conducted and the same questions were put to the different participants. The qualitative data analysis strategy that was followed comprised a thematic analysis in order to categorise responses from participants.

### **3.5.1 Participants**

Two groups of participants were used in this research study. The one group was a group of principals whilst the other group was a group of former learners of one specific multigrade primary school in Circuit Two of the West Coast Education District during the years 1995 to 2005. The researcher intended to interview ten per cent of the learners who had dropped out of high school. Non-probability sampling such as convenience sampling and purposive sampling were used to select the population. When the specific circuit and school were selected the researcher made use of convenience sampling as the researcher was working in Circuit Two of the West Coast and the school was easily accessible. The researcher was familiar with the school and the learners as she was working at the school for quite a long time. Since 1998 the researcher was the principal of the school until March 2010. By using purposive sampling all the learners who had dropped out of school according to the school records were identified and then contacted. Thirteen learners who had dropped out of high school indicated that they would be willing to take part in the study. This is twelve per cent of the learners who had completed their school careers at the specific multigrade primary school in Circuit Two in the West Coast and formed the sample in this study.

When the researcher started to contact these former learners, some of the cell phone numbers that had been provided were not active anymore. So the researcher had to select the available former learners. Whilst the researcher was busy with the interviews other

former learners who had dropped out of high school also indicated that they would assist by granting an interview. This enabled the researcher to interview nine former learners of the multigrade primary school in question and this number was equal to ten per cent of the population of high school dropouts.

Purposive sampling was used to identify the principals who were taking part in the study. The six principals are teaching at multigrade schools in Circuit Two of the West Coast Education District. Their experience in this specific teaching environment makes them experts in the field.

### **3.5.2 Instrumentation**

The data was collected by means of questions put to the interviewees. Only one question was put to all the principals, whilst 25 questions (see Addendum A) were used by the researcher during the face-to-face interviews with former learner participants. These questions were designed by looking at existing questionnaires on the Internet and adapting some of the questions to fit the purpose of this study. Time was saved by using this method as pilot testing was not done. A list of the information needed from the respondents, to be able to answer the research questions, was drawn up and guided the researcher in compiling the final questions.

The following guidelines listed by McMillan and Schumacher (1997:253-254) were followed when the questions were designed:

- Set clear questions.
- Avoid double barrelled questions.
- Use relevant questions.
- Set easy questions.

Most of the questions were open ended questions. Respondents could answer these questions in their own words and more opportunity for creativity and the personal view of the respondent was allowed (White, 2003:68).

All the interviews were audio recorded (see attached CD) and afterwards transcripts were made manually. Firstly, the interviews of the principals were completed and then those of the former learners. Thereafter the researcher read through all the transcripts to obtain a general

sense of the information given by the respondents. Similar responses of the different principals and former learner participants were clustered together by using a coding process (Creswell, 2009:185-186).

All the interviews took place in Afrikaans. This is the mother tongue of all the participants. Afterwards all the information was typed in Afrikaans (see attached CD) but translated when clustered for the purpose of the study.

### **3.5.3 Validity and reliability**

Henning (2004:147) explains validity in the terminology of Kvale, stating that if the researcher is measuring what s/he is supposed to be measuring, or qualitatively spoken, the researcher is investigating what s/he is saying s/he is investigating, only then validity can be claimed. Henning agrees with Kvale that good research can be measured by “good craftsmanship, honest communication and action”. “Validity depends on good craftsmanship in an investigation, which includes continually checking, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the findings” (Kvale, 2002:309 cited in Henning, 2004:148). Craftsmanship refers to accuracy and the correctness throughout the research process. The researcher has to ensure that the quality of the work is monitored throughout the process. Secondly, the researcher has to ensure that no bias, neglect or inaccurate information comes into play. Furthermore the researcher also has to critically question all the procedures. Validity can also be determined by asking other people, also the participants, if the findings make sense. Henning (2004:149) argues further that “validity comes from being able to get your ideas accepted in the discourse community - to open them to possible falsification - thus also publish them for even broader communication.”

A threat to validity may be the behaviour and responses of the individual participants. Sometimes, when people become involved in a study, they often change their behaviour when they have some idea of the purpose of the study. To ensure validity the researcher frequently made sure that the researcher and the participant had the same understanding of concepts and terminology. Key (cited in class notes from CPUT, 2010:1) stated that the purpose of validation is not to confirm whether people’s perceptions are accurate or true reflections of a specific situation, but rather to ensure that the research findings accurately reflect people’s perceptions, whatever they may be.

For the purpose of this research validity means that the findings and the conclusion of the researcher is true and it corresponds with the actual state in reality.

### **3.6 Interviews**

To be able to collect the qualitative data, in-depth, face-to-face interviews were conducted to capture, first-hand, the responses of the interviewees. Using this method of data collection had advantages and disadvantages.

Some of the advantages of the interviews were its flexibility, the non-verbal information gained during the interviews and spontaneity and openness of the interviewees. The interviewer could make sure that all the questions were answered by each respondent during their interview. The interviewer could also ensure that the interviews were standardised by conducting the interview in privacy and in an environment where there was a low level of noise.

Some of the disadvantages of this method were that it was costly as the researcher/interviewer had to travel over long distances and dirt roads to get hold of all the participants. It took a lot of time to execute, because the interviews with the former learner participants were lengthy and the interviewer had to visit the interviewees when it was a convenient time for the interviewees. Due to the frequent changes of cell phone numbers, it was particularly difficult to reach some of the interviewees. Many cell phone calls had to be made to get hold of the 13 willing participants. Some interviewees had to be contacted more than three times to make an appointment whilst some of the interviewees could never be reached. The ability of a person to reason is affected by factors like fatigue, stress, temperature, illness and concentration (White, 2003:77). If the time of the interview was not appropriate due to factors influencing the interviewee, the respondent would not be able to render his/her best effort. The fact that the interviewer knew the respondents' names, addresses and telephone numbers led to less anonymity and the researcher had to be extremely careful when writing down the findings to ensure that the privacy of the interviewees were respected at all times.

#### **3.6.1 Interview schedule**

The interviews with the different principals of the multigrade schools were conducted either at the school or at the circuit office. These interviews were done after a regular school visit or after a visit at the circuit office delivering post or forms requested by the district.

To be able to conduct the interviews with the former learners of the multigrade primary school in Circuit Two of the West Coast Education District during the period of four weeks, a



programme was drawn up to accommodate all the respondents who were willing to take part in the study.

Participants were called and an appointment was made to ensure that they will be at home and had time set aside for the interviews. As it was so difficult to reach some of the willing participants, other former learners came to the fore and indicated that they were also willing to assist in the study. Due to the fact that not all the learners who enrolled at the two high schools in the two nearest towns dropped out of school, it was only necessary to interview nine former learners in order to have interviewed ten per cent of the population. The final interview schedule is listed below.

**Table 3.1: Interview schedule of all participants**

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>
Principal 1	11 February 2014	14:19
Principal 2	12 February 2014	16:18
Principal 3	12 February 2014	17:06
Principal 4	13 February 2014	16:47 and 17:31
Principal 5	14 February 2014	14:57
Principal 6	17 February 2014	07:55
Former learner 1	17 June 2014	19:13 and 20:24
Former learner 2	27 June 2014	18:24
Former learner 3	27 June 2014	18:34 and 18:41
Former learner 4	27 June 2014	20:05
Former learner 5	7 July 2014	17:20
Former learner 6	7 July 2014	18:12
Former learner 7	7 July 2014	18:21
Former learner 8	7 July 2014	18:45
Former learner 9	7 July 2014	19:10

### **3.6.2 Interview procedure**

The interview with all the respondents started with the assurance that all the information would be handled strictly confidential and that the privacy of the respondent would not be compromised. All respondents signed a letter of consent that the information shared during the interview could be used in the study (see Addendum D).

### **3.6.3 Procedure to analyse interview data**

The procedure to analyse the interview data was used in accordance with the following: “qualitative analysis is a systematic process of selecting, categorising, comparing, synthesising and interpreting to provide explanations of the single phenomenon of interest” (White, 2003:82).

When all the interviews with the principals of the multigrade schools were completed, the audio data were transcribed (see attached CD) and the texts were compared with the audio versions. Then the researcher read through all the texts and the data was organised into categories and patterns were highlighted and identified.

When the interviews with the principals were completed the same procedures were followed for the interviews of the former learners. All the audiotaped interviews were transcribed (see attached CD) and the texts were compared to make sure that all the detail was captured in writing, after which the texts were re-read, re-organised electronically and categories were identified.

The responses of the principals were compared with the responses of the former students of the specific multigrade primary school who had dropped out of school. Once again the data was categorised and then the findings were listed and compared with the findings gained from the literature review. Triangulation of the data ensured that the conclusions that were made were sound and credible.

Afterwards, in an attempt to answer the question: what strategies can be proposed for reducing the high dropout rate in future?, literature was consulted and suggestions were derived from the information gained from the literature as well as through the merging of the perceptions of both the principals and the former learners who dropped out of high school.

### **3.7 Ethical aspects**

Ethics is about what you believe is right or wrong, proper or improper or good or bad. As the researcher is working with human beings in the study it is necessary to remember that people’s perception about what is right and wrong may differ, but the responsibility of the ethics still lies in the hands of the researcher. Therefore the researcher has to ensure that the respondents are not deceived by intentionally twisting the facts to fit the purpose of the

study. The researcher also has to protect the privacy of the respondents and for that reason respondents have to give permission to be audiotaped.

Ethics is a set of moral principles which is suggested by an individual or group, is subsequently widely accepted, and which offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, and other researchers, assistants, students (Strydom, 2000:24).

Durrheim and Wassenaar (1999:66) states that any research should be guided by the following three principles, namely autonomy, nonmaleficence and beneficence. The principle of autonomy implies that the researcher always has to respect the participants and that the participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any point in the study. The principle of nonmaleficence requires that no harm should be done to the research participants. The researcher has to take good care of not violating the rights of the participants and in no way harm the respondents emotionally (White, 2003:87-88). The third principle requires that the research has to be of value and even if the participants do not benefit from the research, it must be of assistance for other researchers and for the society at large.

The following ethical aspects were addressed in this study:

- The Western Cape Education Department sent a formal letter to the researcher, granting permission to conduct this research (see Addendum B and Addendum C).
- Permission was granted by the Director of the West Coast Education District.
- All the participants had the choice whether they wanted to participate in the study or not. Signed consent forms (see Addendum D) of all the participants indicated their willingness.
- The confidentiality of each and every participant was guaranteed and respected (see Addendum D). Each participant was given a research number to ensure confidentiality.

### **3.8 Administration procedures**

Permission to conduct the research at schools in Circuit Two of the West Coast Education District was obtained from the Western Cape Education Department. A research number was provided to each participant to assist the researcher with the categorisation of the data and to ensure anonymity. The participants were informed about the consent of the WCED and all interviewees signed letters of consent. An organised administration system was developed for the filing of copies of the admission registers of schools, the printed CEMIS information,

copies of the progression and promotion schedules and the audio and transcribed interview data.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has defined the processes and purposes of the mixed-method research design which is engrained in the paradigm of Pragmatism. This chapter has also described the research process according to the following topics: introduction, research paradigm of pragmatism, a mixed-method research design, quantitative research, qualitative research, interviews, ethical aspects and administrative procedures. This research was designed in order to accumulate valid data regarding the challenges that rural multigrade learners had to face when attending a high school in town that could lead to early dropout from high school. The following chapter discusses the interpretation of the data gathered from the methodologies described in this chapter.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In order to determine the reasons why learners from multigrade schools in Circuit Two of the West Coast Education District drop out of school when entering a high school in town, data were collected and analysed. The data were collected from two different populations. The data were also analysed in two phases. Firstly data were quantitatively collected by collecting information from school records from six schools in Circuit Two of the West Coast Education District. During the second phase qualitative data were collected from interviews with six principals from multigrade schools in Circuit Two of the West Coast District as well as interviews with nine former learners of one specific multigrade primary school.

#### **4.2 Quantitative phase: Content analysis**

The quantitative data refers to the data collected from school records with reference to the progression and promotion records from learners who had passed the highest grade at the specific multigrade primary school between the years 1995 and 2005. Data were also collected from the enrolment data gained through studying the admission registers of four primary schools in Circuit Two which the learners attended after the completion of their grades at the specific multigrade primary school in Circuit Two of the West Coast Education District. It was difficult to find all the admission registers of the high school as the school usually wrote the information in books. These books were not all available for examining as some were lost over the years. Luckily the school had all their matric results except for the year 2003. Another very valuable data source was CEMIS of the WCED.

##### **4.2.1 Information of participants**

To be able to provide a frame of reference this section of the analyses is aimed at obtaining information of the participants. The participants can be categorised into two different groups, namely the population of learners who dropped out of high school as well as the population of principals (see Table 4.1) teaching at six different multigrade schools in Circuit 2 during 1995-2005. All the principals are currently still teaching at these multigrade schools. A discussion of the participants follows, with a discussion of the principals first, followed by a discussion of the participants who had dropped out of high school.

#### 4.2.1.1 Information of the principals

The participants in the qualitative phase of this study included six of the seven principals who are teaching at rural multigrade schools in Circuit Two in the West Coast Education District. The discussion of the variables follows (see Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1: Information of principals**

<b>Information</b>	<b><i>f</i></b>	<b>%</b>
<b>1. Gender</b>		
Male	4	66.6
Female	2	33.3
<b>2. Language</b>		
Afrikaans	6	100
English	0	0
<b>3. Age</b>		
41 – 45	2	33.3
46 – 50	1	16.6
51 – 55	0	0
56 – 60	2	33.3
61- 65	1	16.6
<b>4. Teaching experience (in years) in a multigrade environment</b>		
0 – 5	0	0
6 – 10	1	16.6
11 – 15	1	16.6
16 – 20	1	16.6
21 – 25	2	33.3
26 – 30	1	16.6
<b>5. Race</b>		
African	0	0
Coloured	3	50.0
White	3	50.0

- **Gender**

The majority of the principal respondents in this study are male respondents (66.6 %). Females are in the minority (33.3 %).

- **Language**

The Home Language of all six principal respondents is Afrikaans. Afrikaans is also the language of instruction at the different multigrade schools.

- **Age**

The age of the principals vary. The age of the respondents ranged between 43 and 61 years.

- **Teaching experience in a multigrade environment**

Five out of the six respondents have more than ten years of experience in a multigrade school environment. In 2005 the years of experience of the respondents ranged between one and twenty years. Currently the experience of these principals teaching in the multigrade schools varies between 10 and 29 years.

- **Race**

The principal respondents belonged to two different groups, namely Coloured and White. An equal number of each group were interviewed.

#### **4.2.1.2 Information of the learners**

The total number of learners, who completed their school career at the primary multigrade school in question, was derived from the enrolment figures in the admission register as well as the number of learners on the promotion and progression schedules (see attached CD) over the ten years. A total number of 108 learners (see Table 4.2) completed their last year of tuition offered at this specific multigrade primary school between 1995 and 2005. The population of learners who had dropped out of school were gained from the records of five different schools (see Table 4.3). Most of the information was gained from one particular high school. The promotion and progression recording sheets as well as the admission registers of the schools were studied to triangulate and verify the correctness of the data. Data drawn from CEMIS were also very helpful seeing that the admission registers of the high school was not very accurate.

**Table 4.2: Population of learners who had completed their grades at the specific multigrade primary school**

Grade	Year	Male	Female	Total Passed
Grade 6	1995	4	2	6
Grade 6	1996	5	0	5
Grade 6	1997	2	5	7
Grade 6	1998	10	10	20
Grade 6	1999	7	10	17
Grade 6	2000	3	10	13
Grade 6	2001	6	3	9
Grade 6	2002	0	5	5*
Grade 7	2003	2	9	11
Grade 7	2004	9	1	10
Grade 7	2005	2	8	10

5\* The same learners were in grade 7 in 2003.

According to Zvoch (2006:98) dropping out of school can be linked to the fact that learners are over-aged due to grade retention (§1.3). In Table 4.3, the age of learners who have completed their final school year at the multigrade school in question, is listed.

**Table 4.3: The age of learners who had completed their final primary school year at the specific multigrade school**

Year	Age 11	Age 12	Age 13	Age 14	Age 15	Age 16
1995		3	1		1	1
1996			3		1	1
1997		3	4			
1998	2	7	5	5	1	
1999	1	6	5	2	3	1
2000	2	7	3	1		
2001	2	2	4	1		
2003		4	4	2	1	
2004		2	5	2	1	



Year	Age 11	Age 12	Age 13	Age 14	Age 15	Age 16
2005		1	4	2	2	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>

In the years 1995 to 2001 the final year of instruction at this particular multigrade school in question was grade six. The age of learners in grade six is usually 12 years. Note that over the period of seven years, seven of the possible seventy eight learners were actually younger than the rest of the cohort, whilst twenty five of the learners were one year older than the rest of the group. In other words, thirty two per cent of the group had to repeat a grade. It is alarming that 18 of the learners had to repeat more than once. A total of fifty five per cent of these learners were over-aged by that time.

During the years 2003 to 2005 the exit grade of the particular multigrade primary school was grade seven. When entering the school at the age of six in grade one the age of learners after completing the primary school, is thirteen years. From the data it is obvious that there were still seven out of a possible thirty learners enrolled at the school who were under-aged. A total of ten learners, that is thirty three per cent, were older than the rest of the group due to retention in a grade.

In Table 4.4 the data with regards to the current position of the population of learners who had completed their final school year at the school in question, is listed.

**Table 4.4: Information about the current position of these former learners**

Position	Number of former learners
Passed Grade 12	12
Pregnant and therefore dropped out of school	2
Dropped out of school	89
Passed away	3
Did not even enrol at the high school	2

From the information above it is clear that during the years 1995 to 2005 a total number of 108 learners completed the final school year at the school in question. Being nine years later, information about the current position of these former learners, were tabled. Only twelve learners succeeded in passing grade 12 whilst 89 learners dropped out of high school for various reasons. Two male learners were killed in pedestrian accidents and one female learner committed suicide. Two female learners did not even apply for admission at the high

school. One learner was physically disabled and the other learner's mother could not afford two children attending high school at the same time. One male learner disengaged from school because his girlfriend was pregnant and one girl dropped out of school as she was pregnant.

#### 4.2.1.3 Information of the learners in the sample

This researcher collected the information of the learners who dropped out of school from the admission registers and the progression and promotion records. Information was then verified in the school documentation of the different schools the learners attended after the final year at the multigrade primary school in question. Information was also verified on the Central Education Management Information System (CEMIS) of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED).

**Table 4.5: Information of learners who dropped out of high school**

Section A	Biographical information	f	%
<b>1. Gender</b>			
	Male	1	11.11
	Female	8	88.88
<b>2. Language</b>			
	Afrikaans	9	100.00
	English	0	0.00
<b>3. Age when dropping out of school</b>			
	13 – 14	1	
	15 – 16	6	
	17 – 18	0	
	19 – 20	1	
	21 – 22	1	
<b>4. Age at the time of the interview</b>			
	20 – 23	3	
	24 – 27	3	
	28 – 31	3	
<b>5. Race</b>			
	African	0	0.0
	Coloured	9	100.0
	White	0	0.0

The former learner participants in this research included 9 out of a possible 108 learners who completed their primary school career at the specific rural multigrade school in Circuit Two in the West Coast Education District. It needs to be mentioned that from 1995 to 2001 the final grade at this specific school was grade six (standard four). From 2003 learners could complete grade seven (standard five) at this school and go to town to attend a high school. No transition to another primary school was necessary. Prior to 2002 learners had to make two transitions before entering a high school. This was also a reason for dropping out of school according to literature.

The discussion of the variables of the learner respondents is as follows.

- **Gender**

The majority of the former learner respondents in this study are female respondents (88.8%). Males are in the minority (11.1%). During the interviews the female respondents told me that their brothers or male cousins do not want to take part in the study.

- **Language**

The Home Language of all 9 respondents is Afrikaans. Afrikaans is also the language of instruction at the multigrade primary school as well as the high school these learners attended.

- **Age**

The age when the former learners dropped out of school vary. The age when the respondents decided to leave school ranged between 14 and 21 years.

- **Current age of respondents**

All the respondents who dropped out of school are currently older than 22 years. Their ages vary from 22 to 31 years.

- **Race**

The respondents who dropped out of school before completing high school belonged to one population group, namely Coloured.

### **4.3 Qualitative analysis – perceptions of principals**

Feedback from the principals was invaluable. To be able to determine the challenges and reasons why so many learners from multigrade schools in Circuit Two of the West Coast Education District drop out of school shortly after transitioning to another primary school and after completing grade seven (standard five) entering a high school in town, it was vital to interview principals currently teaching at multigrade schools in the Circuit. I asked all the principals the same question:

“In your opinion what are the reasons why learners who were successful in grade six in your school did not succeed and pass grade 12 in high school?”

Responses were recorded as follows: (1:5) means principal 1: line 5 on the transcript of the recorded interview (see attached CD).

All the respondents are in an agreement that there is more than one challenge the multigrade learner has to overcome when going to a high school in the nearest town.

When comparing the responses of the interviews, the principals highlighted the following:

#### **4.3.1 Distance from school**

All the learners attending rural multigrade primary schools have to travel a cumbersome distance to the nearest town and therefore, to the nearest high school.

##### **4.3.1.1 Environment**

Two out of the six principals mentioned that the environment in which the rural primary multigrade school is situated plays an important role whether the learner will stay in school, or drop out of school. The learners in each environment have to face unique challenges when going to high school.

- “It depends on the environment in which the farm school is situated.” (1:5)
- “Children become entangled in the culture of the farming community.” (4:12-13)
- “The distance the learners have to walk to the pickup point ... ” (5:10-11)
- “The weather learners have to face when walking to the pickup point.” (5:12-13)

#### **4.3.1.2 Transport**

Three out of the six principals raised their concern about the distance that the learners live from the nearest high school.

- “The distance the primary school is from town.” (1:9)
- “Problem with transport.” (4:58)
- “I think the transport fees are also a concern for parents.” (6:44)

#### **4.3.1.3 Boarding/Hostels**

For five out of the six principals said the fact that the learners attending the high school in town have to board with family/friends or they have to stay in the hostel, is one of the major challenges learners have to overcome.

- “In the first place learners must make use of private lodging.” (1:10)
- “They must board in town.” (2:11)
- “...then they have to come and board in town.” (3:8)
- “Many of our learners have to make use of private lodging in town.” (5:18)
- “The learners have to stay in the hostel.” (5:21)
- “...the children have to board in town...they have to board at family members.” (6:29-30)
- “...sometimes the circumstances learners are confronted with when they go to the high school in town ...” (6:85-86)

#### **4.3.2 Security**

Every person has the basic need for security. The feeling of being insecure is another challenge learners have to face when entering the high school in town. At the small rural multigrade school these learners were feeling safe, but when they entered the high school with the large number of learners they felt insecure and unsafe.

#### **4.3.2.1 Home is their safe place**

Three out of the six principals mentioned that the home is the safe haven of the learners. It is the place where they feel loved and safe. When they attend a high school in town, the feelings of security is taken away from them and leaves them with feelings of insecurity.

- “Their home is their stability.” (4:17)
- “The safety of their home... is taken away.” (1:18-19)
- “... suddenly they leave their home as well.” (6:32)

#### **4.3.2.2 Learners miss their parents**

Two out of the six principals pointed out that the learners miss their parents and that being in town make them unhappy.

- “The children are not happy; they miss their parents and their home.”(1:11)
- “Children are close to their parents and their homes.” (4:16)

#### **4.3.2.3 Learners feel socially insecure within the school**

Two out of six principals agreed that learners struggle with being socially insecure.

- “... socially unsafe.” (1:28-29)
- “They are afraid.” (2:19)

#### **4.3.3 Economic Reasons**

Five of the six principals are convinced that economic reasons such as parents struggling with financial issues, definitely impact on the decision of rural learners to drop out of school.

##### **4.3.3.1 Parents cannot afford the extra financial burden**

- Four out of six principals have the opinion that to stay in a hostel or to board at family whilst trying to acquire grade 12 is an extra financial burden that families cannot afford in the long run.
- “Economic reasons ... struggle to sustain the boarding fees.” (1:14-15)

- “Financially ... Many parents cannot afford it to support their children to complete their school careers.” (2: 14-15)
- “After a few months parents find it difficult to continue with the payment of fees.” (3: 9-10)
- “After a while parents cannot manage to pay for the boarding resulting in learners dropping out of school and returning to the farm.” (6:33-35)

One principal raised the issue that educators in the high school expect learners to hand in typed assignments. This is another financial constraint as parents do not have computer facilities at home and learners have to pay large amounts of money to have these assignments printed at computer shops in town.

- “It is expected of learners to hand in typed assignments ... no technology at home.” (5:21)

#### **4.3.3.2 Low income of seasonal workers**

Many of the parents of the learners receiving their education at a rural multigrade primary school are seasonal workers. These parents only have a regular income while they work during the harvesting season. Due to the low rates that these workers are paid and the high living cost, the parents of many of these learners cannot meet the expense of keeping their children in a hostel or pay family for boarding costs.

One of the six principals was particularly concerned about this issue.

- “Many parents are seasonal workers. They cannot afford to pay their children’s boarding fees.” (5:19-20)

#### **4.3.3.3 Mismanagement of social grants**

One of the six principals noted that parent(s) do not take responsibility for their children. Although the parent(s) receive a social grant from the Government, the money is often mismanaged and not used for the upbringing of the children.

- “Our parents have to change their mind-set with regards to the education of their children ... grants ... often the money is not spent correctly. When you look ... in

some households ... it is the only income.”(6:53-60)

#### **4.3.3.4 The school in town is too expensive**

In the previous regime not all the small towns had different high schools for all the different races. Most of the towns had high schools for white learners, but there was no school for any one of the other races. After 1994, when South Africa became a democracy, the children of all races can go to the same school in town. The problem with these schools is that the school fees are determined by the School Governing Body (SGB) and the parents at a budget meeting. As former Model C schools are mostly classified as quintile four or five schools, these schools receive a far lower subsidy from the Government which lead to a larger payment from the parents. These school fees can be subsidised, but the amount parents have to pay is still out of reach of many parents of learners coming from a rural multigrade school environment.

- “The high school in town is too expensive.” (1: 25-26)

#### **4.3.4 Adaptions required from learners**

When learners attend small multigrade schools, they all know each other and the learner numbers are usually very small. Learners in these multigrade schools are often taught by only two or three teachers over the period of six or seven years. The ethos of the school, the way in which the school operates, the procedures that are followed in the school and the Code of Conduct of the school is well known to every learner. After transitioning to a new school, many adjustments are necessary as the school has a new ethos, a new Code of Conduct and many new teachers with their own new way of doing things. The school is bigger and the learner numbers in one class is often more than the learner numbers in the multigrade school which the learner attended the previous year.

Three of the six principals raised the point that learners tend to drop out of high school because they struggle to adapt to their new environment.

- “If the children do not adapt quickly to the new conditions, they will not attend school on a regular basis.” (1:19-20)
- “Another problem is the ability to adjust to the new environment.” (5:18)
- “Problems with adaptions...” (6:11)



- “The children are confronted with different ways of doing things and they cannot cope with them.” (6:46-47)

#### **4.3.5 Motivation of learners**

To be successful in life it is important to be motivated. This motivation has to be intrinsic and extrinsic. Two of the six principals made statements during the interviews that this is not always true in the life of these rural learners attending a high school in town.

##### **4.3.5.1 Intrinsic motivation**

Responses of two out of six principal include statements like the following:

- “Learners lose their motivation.” (4:9)
- “Learners lose their interest in school.” (5:27-28)
- “Learners lose their vision.” (4:15)
- “... no real dreams for their future... ” (4:37)
- “They see no advantage in having a proper education.” (4:39)

##### **4.3.5.2 Extrinsic motivation**

- Three out of the six principals mentioned the value of external support.
- “If the farmer is not involved in the high school career of the learners of the workers on his farm, they often are not interested to complete their school career.” (2:13-14)
- “The child coming from our multigrade school that reach matric and pass it ... the farmer and especially his wife plays a very important role of support.” (3:22-24)
- “It greatly depends on the attitude of the parents and how they support their children.” (6:53-54)

#### **4.3.6 Challenges at the high school**

Six out of six principals are in agreement that when entering the high school for the first time the learners are confronted with many challenges that are often overwhelming and push the learners out of school.

#### **4.3.6.1 Big classes**

Multigrade students suddenly face huge classes in high school.

- “Classes at the high school are huge.” (4:44)
- “The classes are very big.” (2:9)
- “...as the attention given to them in the large classes.” (3:20-21)
- “The classes are bigger.” (6:17)

#### **4.3.6.2 The lack of individual support**

In a small rural multigrade school the classes are often manageable owing to smaller learner numbers and educators being familiar with every child. It is possible to determine the shortfalls of learners and to support them individually to address their backlogs. This does not always happen in the larger classes at the high school in town. Five out of six principals raised this as a possible reason for dropping out of school.

- “Children get lost in the bigger classes.” (6:28-29)
- “... probably learners do not receive individual support.” (6:18)
- “They are just a number.” (2:17)
- “In the multigrade school the teacher has more time to give individual attention and support.” (3:19-20)
- “It seems that educators do not give the necessary support.”(5:23-24)

#### **4.3.6.3 Loss of skills**

One principal was particularly concerned about the fact that when learners leave his school at the end of grade seven they are very good in Mathematics and Afrikaans Home Language, but after a year or more in the high school, these same learners cannot do the work of grade seven any more.

- “Children lose their skills and knowledge. Actually they are academically neglected.” (5:49 – 53)

#### **4.3.6.4 Bond with the educators**

One of the six principals stated that in a small rural multigrade school the emotional bond between educator and learners is strong. This is not always the case in the high school.

- “Teachers do not have the same bond with the learners as in the smaller school.” (3:16-17)

#### **4.3.6.5 Shortage of information**

One principal felt that the information given to learners in respect of subject choices, job opportunities and the required academic performances to be able to go to a tertiary institution is lacking in the high school. Learners take any subject without being informed about the relevance for the occupation they have in mind.

- “They are not fully informed about subject choices and the possible career possibilities.” (4:23-24”
- “Learners are forced to take certain subjects.” (4:27-30)

#### **4.3.6.6 Culture of the school**

One out of the six principals is worried about the lack of a culture of learning and teaching at the high school in town.

- “No culture of academic performance.” (4:31)

#### **4.3.6.7 Academic challenges**

Two of the six principals indicated that academic capabilities of learners and their parents can influence their decision to drop out or to stay in school.

- “The children are not academically strong.” (3: 18)
- “Parents cannot give the necessary academic support ... in most cases the educational level of parents are low or they are illiterate.” (6:20-25)

#### **4.3.7 Summary of results of interviews with principals**

The analysis of the qualitative information gained from the interviews with the principals currently still teaching at multigrade primary schools in Circuit Two revealed that the distance these rural learners live from the nearest high school in town negatively impacts on their attendance and their decision to drop out of school (§4.3.1). The lack of reliable and affordable public transport (§4.3.1.2), the economic consequences for families (§4.3.3) and the insecurity these learners face in the hostel by being away from their homes (§4.3.2) contribute greatly to their decision to drop out of school. The academic challenges at the far larger high school (§4.3.6) coupled with the lack of motivation (§4.3.5) and the inability to adapt quickly to the new environment (§4.3.4) almost leave these learners with no other option than to drop out of school (compare §2.4.1). This analysis corresponds with the literary review in §2.8.

#### **4.4 Qualitative analysis – perceptions of former learners**

To be able to understand the challenges and reasons why so many learners from multigrade schools in Circuit Two of the West Coast Education District drop out of school shortly after transition to a school in town, it was of great value to interview former learners of a specific multigrade primary school in Circuit Two of the West Coast Education District. The same questions were put to all the respondents. Respondents were interviewed after voluntarily indicating their willingness to take part in the study.

All the respondents are in agreement that there is more than one challenge that they have to overcome when going to a high school in the nearest town. Note that most of the learners attended the same high school in town.

A comparison of the responses during the interviews of former learners of the specific multigrade primary school identifies the following salient reasons for dropping out:

##### **4.4.1 Distance from school**

All the respondents do not live near bus routes to the schools in town. Being the children of farm workers that do not have their own transport, coupled with the lack of public transport in the area, the major challenge these children have to overcome on a daily basis is distance. By the time of their transition to a school in town, many of them were only 12 or 13 years old.

#### 4.4.1.1 Problems with transport

Six out of nine respondents indicated that transport was a huge problem. These small children had to walk far to get a lift from an educator at their previous school, they needed to hike on the dangerous and busy N7 national road, their parents had to take them to the hostel on Sundays, family members had to transport them or they unlawfully got transport on a school bus. The policy of the WCED is that you either get transport or stay in a hostel, but you cannot be subsidised twice.

- “We also had transport problems, because many times we were absent because we did not have transport. Sometimes we had to hitchhike.” (1:11-13)
- “Uhm ... We hitchhiked. Sometimes, when you were still at the school, you have given us a lift. When you have left the school we struggled ... hitchhiked and sometimes we took the school bus.” (1:20-23)
- “Uhm. You took us to town.” (8:18)
- “I did not have transport to the farm on Fridays and back to the hostel on Mondays.” (3:7-8)
- “My father took me to the hostel on Sundays.” (4:27)
- “Transport was one of the biggest problems.” (5:26)
- “When we ... went to the secondary school there was a microbus transporting learners to the primary school in town. My name was not on the list of the learners that may be transported ... that was one of the toughest things and that ... forced me to go and stay in the hostel.” (5:28-30)
- “For a while I took a lift with the microbus. This was illegal and wrong. The driver allowed me, but in the end I had to go to the hostel.” (5:46- 49)
- “My aunt had a car and on a Sunday they came to visit us on the farm and then they transported me to town.”(9:30 -32)

#### 4.4.1.2 Board in the hostel

Seven out of the nine respondents were housed in the hostel during the week. One respondent could not attend high school as she is physically handicapped and needs special attention and care. This cannot be given in the hostel in town. Therefore she dropped out of school due to the lack of facilities. The nearest special school is in Cape Town. Only one respondent stayed with family members in town.

- “In the hostel.” (1:25)

- “I stayed uhm ... in the hostel.” (2:21)
- “Uhm. I stayed in the hostel.” (3:26)
- “In the hostel ... it was difficult. That is why I have decided that I don’t want to go to school anymore.” (4:7-8)
- “I had to stay in the hostel.” (5:44-46)
- “...to the hostel. I stayed there.” (6:29)
- “...not pleasant at the ... hostel; where I stayed.” (8:14-15)

#### **4.4.2 Security**

For these learners coming from a farm environment, their home was their only security. Having no other choice than to go to the hostel at the age of 13 or 14 was in itself a great challenge for these young children. During the years 1995 to 2005, there were learners in the hostel that were 21 years old, big and strong men. The young boys were scared to go to the hostel and even the girls were afraid. They were bullied too. Four out of a possible 8 respondents mentioned about being afraid when they went to the high school for the first time. One respondent highlighted that the hostel was not your home whilst another respondent underlined the fact that the biggest difficulty to overcome was missing her parents and her home.

- “I was afraid because the children were far bigger than me. I was more scared of the big children than the difficulty of the school work.” (5:20-23)
- “I was afraid and shy.” (8:7)
- “At the hostel children constantly made derogatory and degrading remarks about my physical appearance.” (4:17)
- “I was homesick during the week.” (6:23)
- “I did not enjoy staying in the hostel.” (8:14-15)
- “The hostel was not run well, and it was not a place where I felt safe.” (5:91-95)
- “I did not want to stay in the hostel. It is not your home.” (8:40-41)
- “In the hostel a few things happened and it made you sensitive ...” (5:31)
- “The hostel learners treated me disrespectfully.” (4:61)

### **4.4.3 Economic Reasons**

#### **4.4.3.1 Low income of parents**

In many households the income was mainly the wage of a farm worker as well as a social grant for one or more of the siblings. Sometimes the mother did seasonal work to assist with the expenses of the family. In a case where grandparents raised a respondent, it was almost a similar situation. That the financial means in the household was not abundant is clear from the responses of the respondents during the interviews. Except for the physically disabled respondent, seven of the eight remaining interviewees indicated that financial problems lead to their early withdrawal from school.

- "... finances were a problem. I felt inferior to my class mates because I did not always have pocket money." (1:41-42)
- "There was no money to continue ...." (2:35-36)
- "There wasn't enough money so that I could complete my school career." (4:57)
- "Finances played a big role in our household at that stage. It was a challenge to get to the hostel and back." (5:76-82)
- "My mother could not afford to keep both my brother and I in the high school." (6:14)
- "It was only the finances." (6:51)
- "...money was scares at that time." (6:59)
- "It was easier at the primary school. There we received all our stuff, books and writing material. At the high school we had to buy everything and it was expensive." (8:29-35)
- "My grandmother's finances were not good after my grandfather had passed away, so I decided to leave school by the end of standard nine/grade eleven." (9:7-9 and 9:50-60)

#### **4.4.3.2 The school in town is expensive**

It is clear that parents could not afford the extra financial burden of having children in high school where they have to buy books and pay school fees. The high school in town was more expensive than the No Fee primary school that the learners attended. The transport of the children to and from the hostel was another expense that also impacted on the net income available in the household. To supply the children with bedding, toiletries and enough clothes for a week in the hostel also burdened the family.

One of the respondents clearly indicated that her parents could not afford buying all the stuff she needed (8:29-35) and one respondent referred to the fact that having pocket money was a luxury (1:41-42). One respondent highlighted that they needed to make an arrangement with the farmer for transport to and from town (5:51-53).

#### **4.4.4 Motivation of the learners**

During the interviews with the nine interviewees it was evident that all of them, except for the learner who was physically disabled and could not go to high school, were excited to go to the high school.

##### **4.4.4.1 Intrinsic motivation**

To go to high school was a challenge, but also an experience that learners were looking forward to. The researcher believes that the intrinsic motivation of learners existed when they entered the high school, but as the challenges grew more intense, they started to lose motivation and focus. Most of these learners gave up and dropped out of school due to too many issues that they could not solve by themselves.

Of the nine interviewees four indicated that they were looking forward to the high school, whilst the disabled learner indicated that she was very sad that she could not go to the high school.

- “I was very excited to go to high school.” (1:4)
- “I was looking forward to attending the high school in town.” (1:7)
- “I was excited to go to the high school and I wanted to complete my school career.” (2:13)
- “I was excited to go to high school.” (6:18)
- “I was excited and looking forward to all the new things that I will learn, and to all the new friends I will meet and the new challenges that I will have to face.” (9:12-15)
- “I was very sad, but what could I do?” (7:9)



#### **4.4.4.2 Extrinsic motivation**

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1981:343) defines extrinsic as “originating or operating from without.” Thus extrinsic motivation is motivation derived from external rewards, such as praise, money and trophies.

##### **4.4.4.2.1 Extrinsic motivation from educators**

During the interviews one interviewee specifically indicated that she missed the acknowledgement and praise from some of the teachers in high school. Rewards can inform learners about their progress and likewise keep them motivated and may raise their self-efficacy (Schunk, Pintrich & Meece, 2010:311).

When you do not have much self-confidence, it is always good to have some kind of extrinsic motivation to keep you going and believing in your own ability. For these learners who came from an environment where they were praised when they did well, it was difficult to adapt to an environment where they were only one of many learners and maybe not such an academic star as in the rural multigrade primary school where there were far less learners and smaller classes.

- “I felt very unhappy because I did not receive any prizes at the prize giving.” (1:32-34)

The same respondent also indicated how good she felt when the teacher praised her in the class for doing well in a test. She reckoned that incidence as one of the highlights of her school career when she responded to the question of what was one of the happiest moments in school.

- “When my Economics educator in grade 10 told me that I was one of the three best students in the class, I felt very good.” (1:99-100)

##### **4.4.4.2.2 Parental models and motivation**

Many learners in high school have the privilege that their parents can support and motivate them every day. When learners from the multigrade environment go to town to attend a high school in town, they do not have the luxury to go to school from their parents' house. This results in a lack of support from their family. Because many parents did not have the faintest

idea of the academic challenges that their children had to face because they had never attended high school, these young learners often had to struggle on their own. This in itself can demotivate a young child.

Eccles (cited in Damon & Eisenberg, 2006:972) documented that parental beliefs can influence children's motivational belief, namely

- attributions for the child's school performance;
- perceptions of the task difficulty of schoolwork;
- expectations and confidence in their children's abilities;
- values for schoolwork;
- actual achievement standards and
- beliefs about barriers to success and strategies for overcoming these barriers.

Of the nine respondents five indicated that their parents did not complete their school careers. Responses to the question about the academic qualifications of their parents were the following:

- "Ugh ... they did not complete their school." (1:95)
- "My parents did not achieve anything." (2:72)
- "My mother left school in grade three (standard one) and my father left school in grade eight (standard six)." (3:98)
- "My father completed grade seven (standard five) and my mother completed grade six (standard four). My father wanted to study further, but circumstances prevented him to carry on with his school career." (5:142-145)
- "My parents went to school for a short while. I don't know which grades they have completed." (8:95-96)

When asked what kind of people her parents are, one respondent emphatically stated that they did not act in a proper way because they didn't encourage her to go back to school when she had decided to drop out (4:108,110).

When the respondents had to indicate their parents' reaction when they decided to drop out, they reported the following:

- "My parents were okay because I was ill and the money was scarce." (2:61)

- “They accepted it.” (4:100)
- “My mother was disappointed, but she could not afford to keep more than one child in high school.” (6:74-75)
- “At first my parents tried to make arrangements for transport to school, but the farmer did not want to assist in that regard. So then my parents did not worry anymore.” (8:82-84)
- “My grandmother was very sad and unhappy about the fact that I had to leave school to come and work for a household income after my grandfather’s death, but there was nothing that she could do about it.” (9:111-115)
- “My parents could not afford to pay for the upbringing of my child. So we made a collective decision that I had to leave school to go and work for my child. In the beginning my father was upset, but we talked it through.” (5:116-124)
- “My parents were sad and dissatisfied.” (3:81)
- “My mother was upset, but later she became discouraged and stopped nagging me to go back to school.” (1:86-87)

From these responses it is evident that the parents of five of the eight respondents were in the beginning against the fact that they want to leave school. In all these cases there were valid reasons for dropping out of school.

#### **4.4.4.2.3 Record of academic success in the family**

All the respondents who have brothers and sisters confirmed that the other siblings in their families also dropped out of school. In most of the families the expectation to be academically successful is not high. Often the need for an income overruled the need for academic success. Only two respondents confirmed that their younger brothers completed grade 12 at the end of 2012.

- “Julio (pseudonym) was in 2012 in matric and he completed it.” (9:135-136)
- “The brother younger than I completed matric ... and is studying Business in 2014.” (5:137-138)

#### **4.4.4.2.4 Lack of involvement of farmers/land owners**

Seeing that many of the learners who attend multigrade primary schools are the children of farm workers who live on farms which are often far from the nearest town and therefore far

from the nearest high school, it is disconcerting that these land owners seldom get involved in assisting the children of their workers to acquire a good qualification. Two of the respondents mentioned that they did not complete their school career due to the fact that the farm owners did not want to assist with free housing after the grandfather had passed away (9:57-58) and the other farmer did not want to assist with transport to and from the school on a daily basis (8:83).

The male respondent was well on his way to complete his school career and in his case the farmer assisted with transport to and from the hostel. His father made an arrangement with the farmer (5:79-81). The teenage pregnancy of his girl and financial implications of the pregnancy prevented him from completing his high school career.

#### **4.4.5 Challenges at the high school**

When transition to a high school in town took place, the learners faced several challenges that could have an impact on their decision to stay in school or to drop out of school.

##### **4.4.5.1 Learners**

The learner numbers of the multigrade primary school under discussion varies from 80 to 91 learners. The learner numbers of the high school in town exceed more than 1000 learners. In 2005 there were 1105 learners in the school. Two of the nine respondents indicated that the large number of learners in the school was something that they had to adapt to.

- “There was a big difference between the primary school and the high school. One of them was the large number of learners.” (3:36 -37)
- “You see more learners and the manners that they have ... and you have to get used to it.” (9:85-86)

One of the respondents mentioned that the learners tried to be funny and this upset her. She did not like the way in which the fellow learners reacted, especially at the hostel (8:46).

Another female respondent highlighted the fact that the wrong and incorrect manner in which the learners treated one another as well as the immoral things they did, was difficult for her to accept (9:167-172).

Three of the respondents mentioned that they had good relationships with the other learners in the class whilst two said the relationship was okay. Note the responses to the question how their relationships were with the fellow learners in the high school:

- “My class mates were OK.” (1:27)
- “I did not experience any problem with my class mates. We got along well.” (2:24-25)
- “My class mates were friendly.” (3:28)
- “The relationship with my class mates was okay.” (4:32)
- “I had a very good and solid relationship with my class mates. There was a difficult guy here and there, but I am not the quarrelling type of guy.” (5:55-58)

The lack of a few good friends made the road harder to travel for one of the respondents. She stayed with family and when she entered the community in town, she did not know the children in the area. She could not visit her former class mates at the hostel. This was a lonely period in her life. She mentioned that it was one of the worst experiences in high school.

- “I had a good relationship, but I did not have many friends.” (9:36)
- “The worst thing in high school was the lack of friends.” (9:88-89)

#### **4.4.5.2 Lack of individual academic support**

Learners entering the high school in town struggled with the fact that they experienced a lack of support when they had to stay with family or even if they stayed in the hostel. Children sometimes needed extra support to overcome barriers to learning or to understand difficult concepts. When learners were in the small rural multigrade primary school individual support was granted on a regular basis due to smaller classes. Due to bus routes at the rural primary multigrade school in question the educators stayed at the school until the last bus had left. That was a time when learners were supported and backlogs addressed.

Of the nine respondents, three complained about this feeling of not being supported enough by the educators in the high school.

- “I felt that they could have given more attention to us who did not understand all the work. Maybe they could have given us extra support classes after school.” (1:77-79)
- “Teachers could assist us in the afternoons.” (4:73-76)

- “One of the hardest things in high school was that you did not have someone who could help you with tasks and information for assignments and you had to struggle all on you own.” (9:88-96)

#### **4.4.5.3 Lack of financial support**

One of the respondents mentioned the fact that he was awarded a bursary helped him to overcome the financial burden of going to high school (5:44-46). Another female respondent felt that the school could assist her by granting her a bursary. She would have gone back to school after recovering from tuberculosis (TB), had she known that she would be supported in that way (2:43-44).

#### **4.4.5.4 Shortage of information**

When the learners entered the high school, they were only 13 or 14 years old. For these learners it was difficult to make subject choices regarding the occupations they wanted to qualify themselves for.

This is the same for all learners at that age. However, the socioeconomic status (SES) of the families plays a role in children’s motivation and learning. The difference between learners coming from a background with a high SES and learners coming from a background with a low SES is that the learners of parents with a high SES are more informed and there are more resources to assist the child when it comes to the selection of subjects as well as with any academic assistance needed (Schunk *et al.*, 2010:281).

It has to be taken into account that although the school may offer a meeting where parents are informed about the existing subject choices of the school, parents could often not attend these meetings or they have no experience about the different subjects. Due to their own low academic achievement, parents with a low SES could often not help their child with these vital choices. The school has to assist learners by giving them more information.

One of the nine respondents was greatly concerned about the fact that she was not well informed by the staff of the high school. She made the following statements during the interview:

- “When we started to choose subjects, I took any subject. I was not sure which

subjects to choose.” (1:15-16)

- “I think I had to find out more about the career that I wanted to follow. I should have asked people with more knowledge which subjects I had to choose.” (1:50-52)

#### **4.4.5.5 Academic challenges**

During the final school exam, learners often receive academically more challenging questions. Even on its own, however, the final exam is a challenge for most learners. If a learner had to complete this academic journey without help from parents or educators, it is even harder. When you are 18 you are often well aware of your own abilities as well as your own weaknesses. This self-knowledge may manifest in confidence to face and triumph over the academic challenge of the material. But, the self-consciousness may also result from an acute awareness that you don't grasp the material well enough. In turn, this leads to poor confidence and may cause the student to buckle under the pressure of the exam and fail. Sometimes the exam scores of learners are condoned and then a learner passes the grade and moves on to the next grade. In other words, poorly equipped, self-doubting learners get pity passes and are set-up for failure in the next grade. (see attached CD; learner interview 1)

One of the respondents was horrified about this practice. She stated that she dropped out during the final matric exam because the work was too difficult and she could not keep up with the pace. She felt that the school could have assisted her by keeping her back one year, just to get older and to give her the opportunity to master the work more.

- “I feel that they could have kept me back one year. Each year they let me pass and that did not feel right to me, because I was not ready for the next standard.” (1:69-71)

#### **4.4.5.6 Attitude of teachers**

Although eight of the nine respondents indicated that they got along well with their teachers, there were respondents who also mentioned that they had to get used to the male educators as well as to the manner in which the educators addressed the learners and handled their classes. Some of the responses were:

- “I had to adapt to the male educators.” (2:46-48)
- “The male educators used improper and bad language in classes.” (2:92)

- “I did not like the cursing.” (2:92)
- “Educators sent learners out of the class during lessons.” (4:43-45)
- “Educators scolded learners.” (4:41)

#### **4.4.5.7 Peer-to-peer welcoming practises at school**

When the respondents were at the multigrade primary school, they heard stories about the high school that made them afraid of going to high school. Three of the respondents mentioned that they were afraid of going to the high school on the first day.

- “On the first day in high school I felt as if it was my first day at school.” (3:11-12)
- “I was a little scared of going to high school. There was a practise of initiation and I was scared, because the children were far bigger than me.” (5:20-22)
- “I was shy and scared.”(8:7)

#### **4.4.6 Summary of interviews with participants who have dropped out of high school**

The interviews have given the learners, who are to a great extent politically voiceless, a platform to express their thoughts on the challenges they had to face when going to a high school in town. After comparing the results, former learners agreed that they struggled to get to the high school in town due to the great distances, the lack of trustworthy public transport (§4.4.1 and §4.4.1.1) and the financial challenges (§4.4.3). The absence of intrinsic (§4.4.4.1) and extrinsic motivation (§4.4.4.2), the individual academic challenges (§4.4.5.5) and the lack of focussed individual teacher support (§4.4.5.2) made the transition even worse. The culture and ethos of the school, the lack of information about subjects (§4.4.5.4) and the attitude of learners (§4.4.5.1) and teachers (§4.4.5.6) demotivated many of these learners. This analysis corresponds largely with the literary review in §2.8. Issues not covered in the literary review were added because they were specific to learners from multigrade schools in Circuit Two of the West Coast Education District.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

This researcher presented an analysis and interpretation of the data as derived from the quantitative and qualitative stages of this sequential explanatory mixed-method design in this chapter. The quantitative data were analysed and presented mainly in the form of tables with



supportive description of the findings (§4.2). An analysis and interpretation of the qualitative data followed (§4.3 and §4.4). Similar responses were clustered together. This consideration was made in an attempt to give an overview of the perceptions of principals of multigrade schools and former learners of a multigrade primary school when it comes to the high dropout rate of learners coming from a multigrade primary school background.

In chapter five the findings of the research will be explicated.

## CHAPTER 5

### EXPLICATION OF THE FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

#### 5.1 Introduction and statement of the problem

According to the social rights in The Bill of Rights, chapter two, in the Constitution of SA (South Africa, 1996:8) each child has the right to education. Educators in rural areas of the West Coast Education District often spend much time and money assisting rural learners to support them to reach their full potential. Numerous examples are available to the researcher, such as paying of school uniforms, school fees, hostel fees, the matric farewell ball and assisting with transport over weekends. Despite all the efforts of educators worldwide and in South Africa, many learners do not remain enrolled in school until their final year and successfully complete their school careers.

After becoming a democracy in 1994, the responsibility of the government to supply quality education for all is in the spotlight. It is the duty of the state to ensure that every child has the opportunity to go to school and at least receive a satisfactory basic education. Goal six of the EFA report (UNESCO:2007:34) urged countries to ensure that by 2015 every human being has the opportunity to benefit from quality basic education and that this will result in more literate adults with sufficient numeracy and literacy skills (see §1.2).

The South African reality is grim. There are still many learners coming from a multigrade primary experience who do not complete their high school careers. It follows that South Africa will not be able to reach the second MDG, the improvement in the quality of education, or the fourth MDG that aspires to have increased the reading and writing skills of adults by fifty per cent in 2015 (see §2.1).

In Circuit Two of the West Coast Education District, learners from a rural multigrade primary school background tend to drop out from high school. This is true of the learners coming from the multigrade primary school in question (see Table 4.4). This researcher launched the present research from the desire to enable and assist these learners who are already disadvantaged due to the remoteness of their homes (§2.8.4.1 and §4.3.1) and the social status of many of their parents (§2.8.2.1, §4.3.3.1 and §4.3.3.2). The interviews give these marginalised learners a voice. The opportunity to be heard ensures that educators receive a better understanding of the challenges that multigrade students confront daily. It may lead to enabling conditions so the circumstances for future learners may be better. The data

collected from the content analysis (§3.4.1), the perceptions of multigrade principals (§4.3) and former learners (§4.4) as well as the insights gained through the literature review (see chapter 2), assisted in the proposed strategies. These strategies may well impact on keeping rural multigrade primary school learners in high school and thus yield more literate adults nationally.

## **5.2 Review of the literature**

Literature cited confirmed that a body of knowledge was available to assist the researcher to understand the following concepts.

### **5.2.1 Rural education**

Learners that receive their education in remote and rural areas often have other challenges than their counterparts in urban areas.

Rural education refers to education in areas where the population density is low, the natural environment is mainly forests, mountains and pastures, many people work on farms and the area is far from the nearest town which result in high travelling costs (§2.2).

People living in rural areas are often poor due to low wages and people often have to depend on social grants, pension and migrant labour to survive. Many people do not have access to adequate social services, health care, roads and schools. Many children live in single-parent households and the mother provides the main source of income. Often children have to help make ends meet or do household chores (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005:46).

Learners attending rural schools often have to walk long distances to a primary school, where they receive instruction in a multigrade classroom. They lack a secondary school close to their homes (§2.2).

### **5.2.2 Multigrade education**

In different countries multigrade classes are given different names (§2.3.1), but all the researchers agree that multigrade teaching occurs when one educator has to give instruction to more than one class, at the same time, in one classroom. This kind of teaching usually occurs in situations where the learner enrolment is low and the staff allocation to the school is less than the grades that have to be taught (Little, 2007:20).

There are multigrade classes in the developing as well as in the developed countries around the world (§2.3.1). In a wide variety of states in Africa this form of education brings hope to learners living in sparsely populated areas. In these remote areas multigrade teaching is based on economic choice and provides a basic education (§2.3.3).

Educators teaching in multigrade schools have their own challenges such as transport difficulties, lack of health services, inappropriate housing, inadequate resources and infrequent support from school inspectors and supervisors. Some schools do not have electricity, water or telecommunication facilities (§2.3.3).

In South Africa multigrade classes is a reality, for more than eight million learners receive education in rural schools (Joubert, 2010:4). Education Policies in South Africa do not make provision for multigrade education as all the policies are developed with a mono-grade setting in mind. A multigrade environment requires more resources, special teacher training and meticulous daily preparation from the educator as well as extra support from government (§2.3.4).

### **5.2.3 Dropout**

The common understanding for the term dropout is a learner who stops going to school before completing his/her grades (§2.4.1). Schargel and Smink (2001:15, 16, 21) elaborated on the definition of a dropout and distinguish between three types of dropouts, namely a “drop out”, a “tune out” and a “force out” (§2.4.1). Around the globe educationists and political leaders are concerned about the increasing numbers of school dropouts as this has implications for expenditure on social grants, development of human capital and crime statistics (§2.4.2).

In South Africa even the President, Mr Jacob Zuma, is concerned about the dropout problem, especially in the rural and farm areas of the Western Cape (§2.4.2). In rural schools in South Africa learners have to face a combination of obstacles (§2.5). Although access to primary schools has increased according to the EFA monitoring report (UNESCO, 2007:2) there are still a large number of illiterate adults (§2.6). In South Africa there was not much research done on multigrade education. To be able to determine why rural multigrade primary school learners with adequate school achievement records do not persist and complete their high school careers, is a question that needs to be addressed.

The philosophies of Vygotsky (§2.7.1), Piaget (§2.7.2.), Gardiner (§2.7.3) and Bronfenbrenner (§2.6.4) is important for the understanding of the developmental growth of children. Educators always have to keep this in mind, but especially educators in multigrade schools where the parents of learners do not play such a mammoth role in stimulating their children as many mothers of single-parent families have to work and children are left in the care of other illiterate adults. The interrelated impact of human systems on the development and choices of a child must never be underestimated (§2.7.4).

#### **5.2.4 Reasons for dropping out of school**

Reasons for dropping out of school are complex. The different reasons cited in literature can be related to the individual self (§2.8.1), his/her family (§2.8.2), the school (§2.8.3) or the community (§2.8.4). These reasons are interconnected and if there is a problem in one of these systems it will definitely influence the others (§2.7.4).

The language of instruction is usually a factor that has to be taken into account. Learners with an African Language as a mother tongue will only receive instruction in this ethnic language till grade three. Then the language of instruction changes to English (or Afrikaans). This is a major problem for many kinds due to a lack of vocabulary. Limited language proficiency often results in lower academic performance that can result in a learner being at risk (§2.8.1.1).

The behaviour of learners and their attitude towards life is important. This will determine the learner's attitude in school. Substance abuse, absenteeism, teenage pregnancy, gang membership (§2.8.1.2) and a lack of self-confidence (§ 2.8.1.3) often give rise to the idea of dropping out.

The family plays an important role in keeping learners at school (§2.8.2, §4.4.4.2.2, §4.4.4.2.3 and §4.4.3.1). Parents have to model behaviour and motivate their children to go to school every day. Children from single-parent households often have lower achievement rates and higher dropout rates than their counterparts from families where both parents play an active role in the upbringing of their children (§2.8.2.2). Expectations of parents for their children (§2.8.2.6) as well as their own educational achievements (§2.8.2.5) are equally important in keeping the youth at school. Where mothers have a low level of scholastic achievement their children are most likely not exposed to stories and other educational stimulation before entering the primary school (§2.8.2.1). Often dropout of learners can be

linked with the low socio-economic status of the household and the role that these children have to play in making ends meet (§2.8.2.1). There are often an equal number of dropouts of boys and girls (§2.8.2.4).

Experiences in the school itself play a major role in the decision of a child to drop out (§2.8.3, §4.4.5.7, §4.3.6 and §4.4.5). Teachers (§4.4.3.6.2 and §4.4.5.6) who are caring, present interesting lessons, build a good relationship with the learners in the class and motivates them regularly will succeed in building the self-esteem of the learners in the class (§2.8.3.1). Coupled with a culture of teaching and learning (§4.3.6.6 and §2.8.3.3) and good management and leadership practises (§2.8.3.2) by the school management team (SMT) will ensure that learners will feel happy in the school (§2.8.3.3) and therefore stay in school.

The role of the community (§2.8.4) in keeping children at risk in school must not be underestimated. When learners are staying in remote areas and struggle to get to and from school, it will often lead to dropping out of school (§2.8.4.1). Where there is neighbourhood poverty learners will rather drop out of school to support their families as the survival of the family is more important than schooling. In affluent communities learners do not drop out so frequently as the academic achievement of learners are more valued (§2.8.4.2 and §2.8.4.5).

On a daily basis learners are exposed to substance abuse (§2.8.4.3) through modelling of adults in the community as well as advertisements and programmes on television. It has become part of their lives and in many communities it has become the norm. Experimentation by adolescents often leads to addiction and dependency. This social habit creates a need for money and it can lead to theft, involvement in violence and crime (§2.8.4.4). Many learners drop out of school because of the deterioration of their scholastic performance and their interpersonal relationships related to their dependence (Donald *et al.*, 2010:215-216).

### **5.3 Method of research**

The following section will discuss the research design and how the quantitative and qualitative phases of this mixed method study was merged.

### **5.3.1 Research design**

Engrained in the epistemological keystones of Pragmatism (§3.2), a sequential explanatory mixed-method design (§3.3.1 and §3.3.2) was chosen for this study. The reason of selecting a sequential explanatory mixed-method design lay in the purpose of the research. This study aimed to seek explanation, clarification and understanding of the quantitative data (§4.2) with the results emerging from the qualitative data (§4.3 and §4.4). This was done in order to ensure that an all-inclusive picture of the phenomenon was obtained. From the knowledge gained, possible strategies can be suggested in an attempt to redress the dropout rate and yield matriculated learners coming from a multigrade primary school background who entered a high school in town.

### **5.3.2 Quantitative analysis**

The quantitative section of this research study (§3.4 and §4.2) gives a full description of the use of the content analysis (§4.2.1) of different kinds of school documentation (§3.4.1) and the data analysis thereof (§4.2.1.2 and §4.2.1.3) to complete this section of the research.

#### **5.3.2.1 Content analysis of school documentation and sample**

The information collected (§4.2.1.2 and §4.2.1.3) from the admission registers of five different primary schools, the progression and promotion records of these schools, the matric results of two different high schools as well as information on CEMIS assisted to ensure a valid and reliable (§3.5.3) content analysis.

### **5.3.3 Qualitative analysis**

A qualitative study (§4.3 and §4.4) was done as part of the research in an attempt to elucidate the content analysis. (§3.4.1)

#### **5.3.3.1 Participants**

The participants were identified through purposeful and convenience sampling. The participants in the study comprised two different groups, namely a group of principals (n=6) and a group of former learners (n=9) of a specific multigrade primary school in Circuit Two of the West Coast Education District who dropped out of school before completing grade 12 at

a high school in town. The number of learner interviewees was ten per cent of the original population of learners who dropped out of school over the period of ten years (§3.5.1).

### **5.3.3.2 Collection of data**

The data was collected during face-to-face-interviews (§3.6) with two different sets of participants (§3.5.1 and §4.2.1) according to an interview schedule (§3.6.1). The principals were asked one question in order to acquire their perceptions. In (§4.3) this researcher presented their responses pertaining to why the dropout rate of former multigrade primary school learners entering a high school in town is so alarmingly high. Afterwards the former learners coming from a multigrade primary school setting were asked for their perceptions on why they did not persist and complete their high school careers (§4.4). A set of 25 questions (see Appendix A) were used for these interviews (§3.5.2). The interviews were captured on a cell phone recording app and then transcribed (see attached CD).

### **5.3.3.3 Analysis of data gleaned from the interviews**

The data from the transcribed interviews (see attached CD) were analysed by identifying similarities and themes. Through an electronic re-organising the narrative information were slotted into categories by using a coding system. Once this was done the researcher was able to discuss the categories after identifying, organising and synthesising the patterns found in the data (§3.6.3).

## **5.4 Findings**

For the sake of clarity, the three sub-questions will be answered first, as they work together in order to answer the overarching research question: What strategy can assist rural multigrade schools in Circuit Two of the West Coast Education District to reduce the dropout rate experienced in high school?

### **5.4.1 Research sub-question 1: What is the rate of rural multigrade learners' dropout in high school?**

In order to determine what the rate of dropout was in high school, the following was done. Comparing the quantitative data (see attached CD) by scrutinising the admission register and the progression and promotion schedules of the primary multigrade school in question with



the matric results of the two different high schools these learners attended, it is heart wrenching that only 12 out of a possible 108 learners successfully completed grade 12 (see Table 4.4). Of these learners 82.4% who completed their primary school careers over the period of ten years dropped out of school after they have left the multigrade primary school in West Coast Circuit 2. Except for 1 learner all the learners attended the same high school in town.

#### **5.4.2 Perceptions of principals and learners regarding dropout rates**

In order to answer research sub-questions 2 (What are the perceptions of principals regarding the high dropout rates of learners from a multigrade background?) and 3 (What are the perceptions of high school dropouts who come from a multigrade primary experience?), the data from the interviews with the principals and the learners was merged and the following was found.

When the literature and the collected quantitative and qualitative data are compared significant similarities come to light. We can group the perceptions of the principals and former learners into the four variables (§1.4) as identified by Hansen and Toso (2007:31). These factors also link to the systems theory of Bronfenbrenner (§2.6.4) that individuals develop within multiple layers of environmental influences. Note the crucial importance of the interactions between the different parts of the system (Donald *et al.*, 2010:37).

##### **5.4.2.1 Factors within the individual as emerging from the data**

Respondents hold the opinion that motivation is crucial to ensure persistence in high school (§4.3.5 and §4.4.4). Educators have an important role to play to continuously motivate their learners. Positive behaviour strategies can be implemented to keep up the morale of learners. When learners enter the high school they are excited (§4.4.4.1) and are looking forward to the new experience, but their intrinsic motivation fade (§4.3.5) when there is a lack of positive inputs from the educators.

The low self-esteem and feelings of inferiority (§2.8.1.3) are causing problems too. When entering the high school for the first time learners are overwhelmed by the large number of learners in the school (§4.3.6.1). They feel insecure in the classrooms and on the playgrounds (§4.3.2.3 and §4.4.5.7). Even in the hostel they often feel unsafe (§4.3.2.1 and §4.4.2). Coupled with this, the fact that these learners miss the security of their own homes

(§4.3.2.2 and §4.4.1.2) and struggle to adapt to the hostel life intensify their feelings of not being safe.

#### **5.4.2.2 Factors within the family**

The family is the most important microsystem in the life of a learner. Within this system, according to Bronfenbrenner (§2.3.4), every child learns values, attitudes and behaviours. During the last few decades the family has undergone changes. Single-parent families are more familiar than a few years ago. In many cases extended family members are not as involved as in the past (McWhirter *et al.*, 2007:66-67). These factors place an extra responsibility on the shoulders of the single parent in the household to ensure that enough time is spent with the children to support their linguistic, physical, cognitive and social development. Unfortunately this does not happen in a family with a low SES as either the mother or the father is more likely to be absent from home while struggling to earn an income.

Both groups of participants agree that the decisions of learners to drop out of school are often due to economic reasons (§4.3.3 and §4.4.3). The financial implications of attending the high school in town (§4.3.3.1, §4.3.3.4 and §4.4.3.2) and low income of the family (§4.3.3.2 and §4.4.3.1) play an important role to disengage from school. It is often the case that the learners qualify for social grants, but these are mismanaged by parents (§4.3.3.3).

The lack of academic role models in the family and the often low academic attainment of the parent(s) (§2.8.2.5) contribute to the demotivation of these learners too (§4.4.4.2.2 and §4.4.4.2.3). Learners at risk can be enthused to stay in school by a family that encourages, supports, has high expectations (§2.8.2.6.), gives guidance and has strong values (Donald *et al.*, 2010:162).

#### **5.4.2.3 Factors within the school that can contribute to dropout**

Numerous factors within the school can “push” the learners out of school (Kelly, 1994:5225). A lack of motivation and extra individual support by the educators can contribute greatly to the feeling of being academically incompetent (§4.3.6.2 and §4.4.5.2) which can lead to an early dropout. The large classes are a challenge for learners coming from a multigrade primary school environment (§4.3.6.1). The attitudes of both educators and learners can be problematic for some of the learners from a multigrade background at risk (§4.3.6.3, §4.4.5.1

and §4.4.5.6). These learners are used to caring, empathetic teachers who support them in several ways. They have good relationships with the teachers and their class mates and this give them a feeling of self-worth. This is often lost in the big classes in the high school as learners feel as if they are only one of many. The peer-to-peer welcoming practices (§4.4.5.7) are not always welcomed by these learners as they are scared of the huge matric learners. Learners who dropped out of high school as well the principals mentioned that they are not well-informed about subject choices and possible career choices (§4.3.6.5 and §4.4.5.4). Due to the lack of proper information learners often make incorrect subject choices which cost them dearly. Though not supported by literature these responses were a reality in the lives of the respondents coming from schools in Circuit Two of the West Coast Education District.

#### **5.4.2.4 Factors in society that can lead to early dropout**

Literature highlights violence (§2.8.4.5), substance abuse (§2.8.4.5), values (§2.8.4.5) and neighbourhood poverty (§2.8.4.2) as possible societal causes for disengagement from school. Both principals and former learners agree that when landowners or their wives get involved in their academic endeavours they can get to and from the school more easily. This involvement helps them to complete assignments and adhere to the academic challenges at the high school (§4.3.5.2, and §4.4.4.2.4). If parents seek the help of the landowner, and he refuses it, parents cannot assist their children to travel to school and back on the same day. The remoteness of the farms (§2.8.4.1) actually force learners to stay in the hostel.

### **5.5 Conclusion**

According to the data there are many reasons why learners from a multigrade primary background dropout when attending a high school in town. There is a significant correlation between the reasons emerging from the literature and the reasons evolving from the interviews with the principals of multigrade schools and the former learners of one specific school in Circuit Two. The four main variables, namely personal issues, the school, the family and the society contribute greatly to the decision to drop out. (Hansen and Toso, 2007:31)

In chapter 6 the researcher offers recommendations and considers pragmatic strategies for implementation in high school that may ensure a decline in the number of dropouts. The limitations of the research are also outlined.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **A STRATEGY TO REDUCE THE HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT RATE OF FORMER MULTIGRADE PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

In order to answer the overarching research question, What strategy can assist rural multigrade schools in Circuit Two of the West Coast Education District to reduce the dropout rate experienced in high school?, the data has been merged and placed into context. Solving the dropout problem is not easy as dropping out of school can be related to a number of different reasons. Comparing the perceptions of the principals with those of the former multigrade primary learners who dropped out of high school, the following strategies are proposed for keeping these learners in school.

#### **6.2 Easier transition between primary multigrade school and high school**

To be able to make a smoother transition, the following measures ought to be taken by the educators in the multigrade primary school:

- Ensure that the basic skills of the learners are on par, especially reading, writing and basic mathematical skills. At a principal meeting held during the second term in 2014 a high school principal informed the primary school principals that high schools expect that learners are academically ready when entering grade eight. Many learners enter the high school with an inability to spell properly (see attached CD).
- It is important to acquaint learners with appropriate social skills. Learners need to adapt quickly to the new educators in the high school and have to get along well with class mates. Other skills needed are self-discipline, discipline and mutual respect (Donald *et al.*, 2010:296).
- Expect learners to set own personal goals from a young age. Motivate learners to reach these goals (§4.3.5.1 and §4.4.4.1).
- Support learners with barriers to learning from as young as grade 1 in order to prevent retention. It is not necessarily true that learners who repeat a grade will master the work better during the second year (§4.3.6.1 and §4.4.5.2).

### 6.3 High school improvement

As indicated by principals and dropouts, there are shortcomings in the high school too that need to be addressed. These are:

- Attitude of educators in the high school is not always supportive. Learners complained about the fact that educators did not give extra lessons for those who had backlogs (§4.4.5.2). Educators can start to give support classes after school to assist new grade eight learners to reach the level of proficiency needed in high school. High expectations for all learners are of utmost importance. The high school need urgent and “critical reorganizing ... for success” in order to “effectively educate the underachieving children of poverty” (Barr & Parrett, 2007:32).
- Effective leadership is needed. The “difference between high-performing, high poverty schools and their low-performing counterparts, is leadership” (Barr & Parrett, 2007:59). Where there is effective school leadership, learners will improve and underachievement will decrease. The principal has to maintain high expectations for all the learners in the school. Another important task of the principal is to support and develop the educators in the school. According to Clarke (2007:1) leadership is all about giving direction and purpose to both teachers and learners.
- Schools are built for learners. A school has to have a clear vision for the learners in the school. This vision must be visible, not only on the walls and in the office, but in the actions of learners and teachers in the school. “Everything we do is based on what’s best for the children, period” (Togneri & Anderson, 2003:5). Therefore educators have to come to classes well prepared and committed to the learners and their learning.
- Instruction in the classes is important. Learners should be actively involved in their learning and teachers have to make sure that they monitor learners’ progress regularly. This monitoring suggests that learners’ books will be marked by the educator as well. Reflection of their practises needs to be done regularly too.
- Ensure a safe and supportive environment for learners (§4.3.2, §4.4.4.2.1 and §4.4.2).
- Establish effective relationships with parents.
- Improve the management of the school and the hostel (§4.4.1.2).

#### **6.4 Role of multigrade primary school**

As learners move from the primary school to the high school at a vulnerable age it is advisable that the educators in the primary school assist these learners by:

- ensuring that learners have acquired basic literacy and mathematical skills;
- helping them with coping skills (§4.3.4);
- informing both learners and parents about the expectancy of the high school. This will ensure that there is no shortage of information (§4.4.5.4 and §4.3.6.5) and
- instilling social values (§2.8.4.5).

#### **6.5 Role of parents**

The vital role of parents in the upbringing of their children and in their resilience to stay in school has been explained. Henderson and Henderson *et al.* (cited in Martínez-González *et al.*, 2008:507) state that by “creating a positive learning environment at home, including encouraging positive attitudes towards education and high expectations of children’s success, has a powerful impact on student achievement.” Parents therefore have to be actively involved in the learning of their children. Where parents lack academic proficiency and cannot assist with the actual homework, parents can monitor that homework is done. Parents can ensure that school is attended every day. Absenteeism is often the beginning of disengagement. Due to the remoteness of the homes of the rural multigrade learners attending a high school in town, the lack of own or reliable public transport and economic reasons parents often do not attend parent meetings at the high school. To be able to reach the MDG, parents have to take ownership of their responsibility with regards to the academically attainment of their children (Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch & Darling, 1992: 1266-1281). Parents can assist their children by doing the following:

- Be more actively involved in the schooling of their children, especially in their learning and what is taking place in the classroom (Henderson & Mapp, 2002:14).
- Take time to get to know the teachers who are teaching your child.
- Form positive relations with the school.
- Provide supervision at home by ensuring that you know about the whereabouts of your child and that you set boundaries. Children cannot do what they want. They have to have rules.
- Monitor regular school attendance.

## **6.6 Community**

“Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail, without it, nothing can succeed” (Abraham Lincoln, cited in Vollmer, 2011:69).

The community has an important role to play in keeping learners in school. The community can assist the high school in town in the following ways:

- Many elderly people do not have jobs and they are well aware of all the children of school-going age that walk around in the neighbourhood during school hours. All the people living in the neighbourhood have to take responsibility for the children. Contact the parents and the school principal when learners loiter in the streets when they are supposed to be in school.
- The community has to understand the importance of getting a high school qualification. As it is all the learners are not successful in the high school. The community has to understand that it is necessary that the school has to change the current culture and work hard towards instilling a culture of learning and teaching.
- A relationship of trust between the community and the school has to be restored. The public has to start believing in the school and the educators again (Vollmer, 2011: 70).
- Schools cannot achieve their goals on their own. “The people in the community must join together to create a supportive learning environment” (Vollmer, 2011:70).
- Land owners can play a more supportive role to assist the children of their workers, especially their permanent workers, to be able to attend the high school in town. Their support can be financial, helping with transport or assisting by demarcating an area on the farm where children can work quietly and complete homework after school.

## **6.7 Limitations of the research**

The first limitation experienced during the study was the difficulty to contact the former learners who were willing to grant interviews. The frequent change of cell phone numbers probably caused this limitation. In the end the researcher had to interview former learners who at first were not willing to take part.

The second limitation is that only one guy was willing to take part in the face-to-face interviews. Former male learners did not want to take part in the study. Both males and females have the same needs, so the researcher is not concerned about this gender issue.

A third limitation was that the respondents in the sample came mainly from the same feeder area of the school in question. It could be of significance to have participants coming from farms in the eastern and northern side of the rural multigrade primary school in question. Those learners are further away from town.

Inaccurate data at schools made it cumbersome to ensure the validity of the school records during the years 1996 to 2004 and this can also be classified as a limitation as CEMIS information was only available from 2005. The researcher had to spend a lot of time to punctiliously study the records of different schools in order to ensure the reliability of the results (§3.5.3).

## **6.8 Recommendations**

It could be of value to have interviews with the educators from multigrade schools with regards to their perception of how prepared learners are who are promoted after completing grade seven. The view of the grade eight educators at the high school in town should also be taken into consideration. They work with these learners coming from a multigrade primary school setting in their classes and will also be able to express their views with regards to the backlogs or challenges these learners have to face.

### **6.8.1 Recommendations to improve the current research**

To be able to improve the current research more male respondents have to be included in the study as males and females have the same needs, but sometimes different perceptions.

It could be of value to have interviews with the educators from multigrade schools with regards to their perception of how prepared the learners are who are promoted every year after completing grade seven. The view of the grade eight educators at the high school in town should also be taken into consideration. They have to deal with the backlogs of these learners (if any). They will be able to give valuable input about the skills these grade eight learners need to be successful.



More attention could be given to the instruction in the schools. The participants could be asked specific questions to determine the way that contact time is spent in the classrooms.

### **6.8.2 Recommendations for future research**

It will be interesting and worthwhile to do a study of the same period at monograde primary schools in the same area to determine whether they experience the same high dropout rate. This will then prove that it is not necessarily the instruction at the rural multigrade primary school that is the problem, but rather other factors influencing learners not to complete their high school career.

No specific attention was given to how the current educational instruction in the rural multigrade school in question applies the theories of Vygotsky (§2.7.1), Piaget (§2.7.2) and Gardiner (§2.7.3) in order to send well balanced, linguistically capable and highly motivated learners (§4.3.5) to the high school.

The aim of the EFA (UNESCO, 2000:8) is to improve the quality of literacy of adults by 2015. It would be fascinating to continue with the same study by looking at the period after 2005 to determine if the throughput rate has improved. South Africa is in its 20th democratic year. Its constitution guarantees all its citizens a right to quality education. A lower dropout rate could be an indicator to judge if government is honouring its deal with its citizens. It could help citizens gauge if government does enough to support them. This is true also and especially for its citizens who live in the outskirts. As citizens of a democratic South Africa they should be able to claim their right to education. Conversely, the South African government, like all democratically elected governments, must be judged on account of their use of the votes, resources of and services delivered to its citizens – by all its citizens (see §1.2).

### **6.9 Concluding thoughts**

The perceptions of principals and learners who dropped out of the schooling system assisted the researcher in gaining insight in the challenges that learners coming from a multigrade primary school background experience whilst transitioning to a high school in town. To be able to solve the problem of disengagement, extensive efforts from all role players are invaluable. Learners, teachers, the school principal, the district staff, community members and government will have to take hands to turn the high dropout rate around. The teachers and SMT of the high school need to reflect on their practises of the past, in order to mobilise

the learners on a path to success. There is no quick fix scheme and no one-size-fit-all approach that can solve this problem overnight.

A turnaround leader (Johnson, 2011:40-41) who can drive for improved academic results, lead and manage with confidence, restore broken relationships, communicate effectively and build trust amongst the staff, the learners and the community is what is needed to ensure a decline in the number of dropouts in this rural high school. By focussing on effective instruction, need-based individual support to address academic backlogs, improved learner and teacher attendance, parental involvement and partnerships with the community may, over a period of about three years, change the culture of teaching and learning in a school and result in lower dropout rates.

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## APPENDIX A: QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS WITH SAMPLE OF DROPOUTS

VRAE WAT TYDENS ONDERHOUDE AAN RESPONDENTE GEVRA GAAN WORD WAT NIE HUL SKOOLLOOPBAAN VOLTOOI HET NIE.

1. Vertel my meer van jouself met verwysing na die tydperk net nadat jy Middeldeurlei Primêr verlaat het.
2. Watter emosies het jy ervaar toe jy vir die eerste keer na die hoërskool toe is?
3. Wat was die grootste struikelblokke wat jy ervaar het toe jy na die hoërskool toe is?
4. Hoe was jou ervaring in die hoërskool?
5. Hoe was dit vir jou moontlik om die hoërskool in die dorp by te woon?
6. Vertel my van die verhouding met jou klasmaats en onderwysers.
7. Op watter wyse het die ervaring in Middeldeurlei Primêr verskil van die ervaring op hoërskool?
8. Was daar enige sosiale faktore of gebeurtenisse wat jou sukses in die hoërskool benadeel het?
9. Watter persoonlike redes sal jy kan noem wat aanleiding gegee het dat jy nie jou skoolloopbaan voltooi het nie?
10. In watter stadium, of na watter gebeurtenis, het jy besluit om nie aan te gaan met jou skoolloopbaan nie?
11. Wat kan jy miskien anders gedoen het om suksesvol te wees?
12. Dink jy daar is iets wat die skool anders kon doen om te verseker het dat jy graad 12 sou voltooi?
13. Wat was die moeilikste aanpassing om te maak van laerskool na hoërskool?
14. Hoe ver het jy gevorder met formele onderwys?
15. As jy terugdink aan jou dae op hoërskool, wat was die mees uitstaande gebeurtenis?
16. Sal jy my asb. van jou slegste ervaring op hoërskool kan vertel?
17. Wat het jou laat besluit om nie voort te gaan met jou skoolloopbaan nie?
18. Hoe was jou ouers se optrede toe jy nie verder wou skoolgaan nie?
19. In watter soort gesin het jy groot geword?
20. Watter soort mens(e) is jou ouer(s)?
21. Watter akademiese peil het jou ouers, broers en susters bereik?
22. Vertel vir my van die gelukkigste oomblikke wat jy in jou skoolloopbaan beleef het.
23. Watter persoon het jou lewe die meeste beïnvloed en op watter wyse?
24. As jy een stukkie raad aan ander persone wat in dieselfde skoene staan as wat jy gestaan het kon gee, wat sal dit wees?
25. Waarvan het jy die meeste en minste gehou terwyl jy die hoërskool op die dorp bygewoon het?

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## APPENDIX B: FIRST LETTER OF PERMISSION FROM THE WCED TO DO THE RESEARCH

Navrac  
Enquiries      **Dr A.T Wyngaard**  
IMibuzo  
  
Telefoon  
Telephone      **021 467 9272**  
IFoni  
  
Faks  
Fax              **(021) 425-7445**  
IFeksi



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**-KaaP Onderwysdepartement**

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**Western Cape Education Department**

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**leMfundo leNtshona Koloni**

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Verwysing  
Reference      **20100706-0010**  
ISalathiso

Mrs Susanna Van Niekerk  
PO Box 36  
Piketberg  
7320

**Dear Mrs Susanna Van Niekerk**

### **RESEARCH PROPOSAL: A STRATEGY TO ASSIST RURAL MULTIGRADE SCHOOLS TO PREVENT THE DROP OUT RATE EXPERIENCED IN HIGH SCHOOLS**

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

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **01 August 2010 till 30 September 2010 and 30 June 2011 till 31 August 2011**.
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:  
**The Director: Research Services  
Western Cape Education Department  
Private Bag X9114  
CAPE TOWN  
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.  
Signed: Audrey T Wyngaard  
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**  
**DATE: 05 July 2010**

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## APPENDIX C: SECOND LETTER OF PERMISSION FROM THE WCED TO DO THE RESEARCH



Directorate: Research

[Audrey.wyngaard2@pgwc.gov.za](mailto:Audrey.wyngaard2@pgwc.gov.za)

tel: +27 021 467 9272

Fax: 0865902282

Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000

wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20100706-0010

ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Mrs Susanna Van Niekerk  
PO Box 36  
Piketberg  
7320

Dear Mrs Susanna Van Niekerk

### RESEARCH PROPOSAL: A STRATEGY TO ASSIST RURAL MULTIGRADE SCHOOLS TO PREVENT THE DROP OUT RATE EXPERIENCED IN HIGH SCHOOLS

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

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **20 January 2014 till 30 September 2014**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

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

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard

Directorate: Research

DATE: 21 January 2014

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**APPENDIX D: PERMISSION GRANTED BY PARTICIPANTS**

**Toestemming om deel te neem aan navorsing**

Hiermee verklaar ek myself bereid om  
deel te neem aan 'n studie wat gedoen word deur Me. S. E. van Niekerk.

Ek begryp dat alle inligting as uiters vertroulik hanteer sal word en dat my naam  
geensins gebruik sal word nie, maar dat ek net deel vorm van die teikengroep.

Geteken te ..... op hierdie ..... dag van Junie 2014.

Handtekening: .....

**Onderneming deur navorsers**

Hiermee verklaar ek, Susanna Elizabeth van Niekerk, dat

ek te alle tye die respondent se belange op die hart sal dra, die identiteit van  
die respondent sal beskerm en met respek teenoor die respondent sal optree. Ek sal  
ook nie die vertroulikheid van hierdie onderhoud onder die respondent se naam  
bekend maak nie, maar slegs die inligting gebruik as deel van die studie.

Geteken te ..... op hierdie ..... dag van Junie 2014.

Handtekening van navorsers: .....