



PATHWAYS OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH AND THEIR RE-ENTRANCE INTO THE EDUCATION TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM OR THE LABOUR MARKET

By

ANDILE LAURETH MALETSATSI DUBE

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Department of Education Management and Policy Studies
Faculty of Education
University of Pretoria

Supervisor
Prof. Mokubung Nkomo

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Dedication

My late grandmother, my strength, my reason for hard work! She taught me the secrets of working hard and was a reflection of a woman's strength and left too soon. Eva Dube, she may be gone, but she will never be forgotten!

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Abstract

The study is an investigation into the pathways of out-of-school youth and their re-entrance into the Education Training and Development (ETD) system or the labour market. In the study the pathways of youth who dropped out of school between grades 1 and 11 are traced as they seek re-entrance to the ETD system, or entrance into the labour market. Particular attention was given to the factors that determine the choices that dropouts make either in re-entering the ETD system or entering the labour market. An analysis of the experiences of the interviewed sample of dropouts is presented.

The study employs a qualitative research methodology using interviews to elicit the experiences of dropouts and school managers. The participants (young people and three school principals) were selected through snowballing from a township south of Durban. Individual and focus group interviews were held.

The findings provide evidence of the value of investing in education, as suggested by the youth. This is in line with the human capital theory framework that suggests that there are major benefits to investing in education. The study is concluded by suggesting the need for second chance education in South Africa.

Key words: school-to-work transitions, youth transitions, re-entry experiences, second chance education, youth pathways, information poverty, human capital, investing in education, education policy, successful destinations, rational decision making theory, drop out and drop-in

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A. List of Abbreviations

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ANC	African National Congress
CASE	The Community Agency for Social Enquiry
DoE	Department of Education
DoL	Department of Labour
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ETD	Education Training and Development
FET	Further Education and Training
GET	General Education and Training
HET	Higher Education and Training
HOD	Head of Department
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LURITS	Learner Unit Record Information and Tracking System
NSF	National Skills Fund
NYC	National Youth Commission
NYDA	National Youth Development Agency
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SASA	South African Schools Act of 1996
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UYF	Umsobomvu Youth Fund

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CHAPTER 1

GIVING CONTEXT TO THE STUDY

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In 2001, the Department of Education, through its Education Management Information System (EMIS), reported that there was an indication of a possible high drop-out rate of learners between Grades 1 and 11 in South African schools (Department of Education, June 2003:16). This observation is supported by Kraak's study, which suggested that of the estimated 826 000 learners who register in schools each year, about 551 000 of them do not finish their schooling (Kraak, 2003:13). School drop-outs are not only a challenge for the General and/or Further Education and Training phase of the school system, but also for Higher Education. Letseka and Maile suggest that in the year 2000, around 30% (36 000) of the students registered in higher education did not complete their studies, translating to an estimated R4.5 billion loss (Letseka & Maile, 2008:5).

Schooling is the key to a person's development, not only socially within a community or society, or economically in terms of the labour market and business, but also as it prepares individuals for higher education (Arends & Perry, 2003). When a person succeeds in schooling at a particular stage of an education system, he/she is equipped to pursue further studies at a higher stage in the system.

Schooling by its very nature contributes not only to the attainment of knowledge, But directly and indirectly develops the skills needed for the world of work. Letseka and Maile (2008:xi) suggest that 'education leads to accelerated human development, poverty reduction and sustainable economic growth'.

Education is the suggested means of developing the skills and knowledge necessary in the world of work, personal richness and social value. According to the Economic

Commission for Africa (2005:173), the education levels of the youth in Africa remain one of the ‘significant factors in the longer unemployment spells they face’.

Entry into the world of work is largely associated with academic achievement. While people with lower levels of education are also likely to be employed, their chances are limited in comparison with those of their educated counterparts. The earning potential of the two groups (those with higher levels of education and those with lower) is generally different. Those with higher levels of education tend to earn more or have the potential to earn more than those who have not stayed at school.

Investing in education on the part of government has economic benefits for the country. A study done by KPMG (2009), looking *inter alia* at the funding of higher education in Australia, suggests that investment in education benefits the country’s GDP. The report suggests that while governments invest in education in the present, the benefit they experience is the long-term effect of the return on investment when the students start working. For countries that invest very little in education, the rate of return in the investment is very low. There is also a low return on their investment for countries that have high numbers of students who drop out of school. In short, dropping out is a cost to government and not an investment. While this is an Australian study, it has potential merit in other countries.

Kolev and Saget (2005:161) suggest that a lack of access to the world of work affects a person economically, socially and emotionally. They suggest that ‘a troubled entry into the world of work has serious welfare repercussions for youth, including a higher risk of income poverty and deterioration of their human and social capital’.

The level and quality of schooling are among the main factors that determine a person’s future participation in the labour market, and education is deemed to be a main determinant of the ability to earn (Chamberlain & van de Berg, 2002). The completion of schooling is thus critical for youth development and their adjustment to life in society.

In 1996 South Africa ruled that every South African child should undergo at least nine years of schooling. These nine years are designated as a period of basic education and training, which according to the Dakar Framework on Education (UNESCO, 2005) is a critical period of education for the youth. According to Chapter 2 Section 1 of the South African Schools Act of 1996

...every parent must cause every learner for whom he or she is responsible to attend a school from the first school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of seven years until the last school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of fifteen years or the ninth grade, whichever occurs first (SASA, 1996: Chapter 2, section 1).

The Act further mandates the Head of Department (HOD) to take action should a learner - within the specified age group - fail to attend school. Specifically, the Act stipulates that the HOD must

...investigate the circumstances of the learner's absence from school; take appropriate measures to remedy the situation; and failing such a remedy, issue a written notice to the parent of the learner requiring compliance with the subsection (SASA, 1996: Chapter 2, section 1).

Despite the provision and intent of the SASA policy, post-apartheid South Africa has seen an increase in learner drop-outs (DoE, 2001). Researchers have argued that the increase in the magnitude of the phenomenon of learner drop-outs can be ascribed to a variety of reasons which differ within different contexts, but that in general the numbers are greater in rural communities and among the Black population sub-group.

Dropping out is not only a challenge for the education system in terms of cost and the underdevelopment of a person's capability, but it is a challenge to the youth labour market as well (Crouch, 2005; Kraak, 2003). By 2007, the subsidy per learner in schooling was estimated at an average of R6000 for ordinary public schools. While the estimates are not conclusive, for every youth dropping out of school, the government loses direct and indirect benefits, while the learner becomes a statistic in lost opportunity.

It is the learners who leave the higher education phase that ultimately constitute the youth labour force in the country. There is an obvious relationship between education level, employment prospects and income level. The more educated a prospective employee is, the better the chances of securing employment and the higher his or her remuneration (Sum, Khatiwada, McLaughlin, Tobar, Motroni, & Palma, 2007). There are also rate-of-remuneration links not only to levels of education, but also to particular fields (Moleke, 2005; Marrow *et al*, 2005). Given the strong attachment of competence to academic qualifications in South Africa, dropping out signals youth unemployability (Bhorat & Oosthuizen, 2005).

Thus, dropping out is a serious challenge for the labour market and a learner's future employability. Dropping out clearly affects not only the subjects as individuals, but also the education system and the labour market. It also has adverse effects on the development of social capital.

It should be noted, however, that apart from the youth who drop out of school and stay out of the education system, there are those who 'drop-in' or attempt to do so (CASE, 2000; Grant & Hallman, 2006). Evidence suggests that while some youth succeed in dropping back into school, staying, and completing their schooling successfully, others do not (Grant & Hallman, 2006). The unsuccessful ones face the prospect of a life without skills, formal education or academic qualifications (Kraak, 2003). The labour market, and to some extent the formal and non-formal education system, have not been able to absorb these growing numbers of young people (Kraak, 2003), leaving large numbers of the youth educationally and economically inactive.

The educational and economic inactivity of significant numbers of the youth is evident at a time when there is a high demand for skilled labour in South Africa (Kraak, 2003). An increased demand for skilled labour has plagued the country since the 70s and began to peak in the 90s as a result of the change of the economic structure from a labour-intensive economy to a skills-intensive economy.

Socio-economic development has been the thrust of South African policy since the dawn of democracy in 1994 (Everrat, 2003). The government is committed to

reducing poverty and social inequality generally. As part of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals, the South African government is committed to halving national poverty and food shortages by 2015 (Everrat, 2003). Like most countries, the South African government has also prioritised education for redress in the labour market and as a measure to eradicate poverty (Everrat, 2003). Education and the acquisition of skills are thus seen as tools to eradicate poverty, increase employment chances and improve income levels.

Since 1994, the abandonment of old policies and the development of new ones have created change, not only in the legislature, but also in various structures and mechanisms of government (Everrat, 2003). Post-apartheid South Africa has been praised for its wide range of policies, especially on education and social transformation, developed since 1994 (Everrat, 2003). Although a lot has been achieved in youth education and development since 1994, there has been a debate on the extent to which the education and skills development policies have transformed and improved conditions for the youth and the extent to which these have helped to limit the numbers of the youth dropping out of school, experiencing life out of the school system, and re-entering, or at least attempting to re-enter the system.

1.2 PROBLEM FORMULATION

The high incidence of the youth dropping out of and dropping in to the ETD system is part of the reality in schools and society in South Africa. According to the findings of one youth study (CASE, 2000), many out-of-school youth indicated that they wanted to return to school, technical college, university or night school. Many also indicated that they have attempted to find employment (CASE, 2000). But their experiences in this regard are little understood. Furthermore, the role of education-and employment-related policies in assisting the youth to get back into the ETD system or to enter the labour market has not been clearly interrogated or documented.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study traces the pathways of out-of-school youth who dropped out of school between Grades 1 and 11, as they seek re-entrance to the ETD system, and/or entrance into the labour market.

The researcher intends to investigate the factors that determine the choices made by youth who dropped out, either in re-entering the ETD system, and/or entering the labour market i.e. their dropping-in experience. Additionally, this researcher also wishes to understand their experiences in pursuit of a successful transition to either the ETD system or the labour market, as well as the role that education- and labour-related policies play, if any, in assisting these youth get back into these systems and markets.

This study assumes that the youth who drop out of school attempted to drop back into school at the General Education and Training phase, or at the Further Education and Training phase. It also assumes that many of these out-of-school youth would like to re-enter the ETD system and subsequently enter the labour market. It is in this context that this study:

- Firstly, aims to understand the experiences of out-of-school youth as they attempt, successfully or unsuccessfully, to re-enter the ETD system.
- Secondly, the study seeks to investigate the experiences of youth who attempt to enter or re-enter the labour market.
- Thirdly, the study assumes that particular factors influence the transition of out-of-school youth between high school and the labour market. It thus investigates factors that influence the transition of the youth in this regard. The nature of these factors is of particular interest as it assumes that these factors might be multidimensional and complex.
- Fourthly, while it is possible for some young people to make a successful transition to their occupation, there might be others who do not. Thus, the study further examines the characteristics of successful career destinations for the youth.

- Finally, given the transformative role assigned to education and employment policies in South Africa and the extent to which these policies are aligned to the developmental priorities of the government, the study looks at the role of policy in assisting the youth get back into the education and training system or to enter the labour market. It further looks at lessons that can be learned during the transition from the education training and development system to the labour market.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the statement of purpose elaborated above, the following questions have been posed to guide the investigation:

- What are the experiences of the youth as they try (a) to re-enter the ETD system, and (b) to enter the job market?
- Which factors influence the out-of-school transition of the youth between high school and the labour market?
- What are the characteristics of successful career destinations for the youth who attempt re-entry?
- What role does policy play in assisting the youth to get back into the ETD system, and into the labour market thereafter?

1.5 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

In this section, a number of concepts relevant to this investigation are defined operationally. These are as follows:

1.5.1 Career destinations

In the study these refer to where youths end up after dropping out or continuing with schooling. They could be unemployment, self-employment, employment, or further education.

1.5.2 School-to-work transition

School-to-work transition refers to the ways in which students may successfully effect the transition into the economy through further education, paid employment in a business, or self-employment.

1.5.3 Youth labour market

In the study the youth labour market refers to employed and unemployed persons between the ages of 14 and 35 years (National Youth Commission Act of 1996). There are two main factors influencing the labour market: the demand(s) for and the supply of the labour force in the economy.

1.5.4 Drop-outs/out-of-school

In the study, these are the learners who have left school before achieving the Matric Certificate (i.e. 12 years of schooling) whether by choice or from force of circumstances. These are sometimes (in other countries) referred to as ‘push-outs’, a term suggesting that the system has pushed them out. Before the SASA of 1996, anyone who left school before completing Matric was considered a dropout. However, with the post-1996 legislation of 9 years of compulsory education and the National Qualification Framework, a learner that leaves school after Grade 9 and joins a Further Education and Training (FET) college is not considered a drop-out. The study thus concentrates on the youth cohort that drops out between Grades 1 and 11 and learners who do not finish high school. The emphasis is on the youth with a history of more than three years’ experience of dropping out.

1.5.5 Drop-in

This characterises the re-entry into the ETD system of youth who had previously dropped out of school.

1.5.6 System

This refers to education training and development and the labour market.

1.5.7 Education training and development

This refers to any educational or skills development programme. It could be between the General Education and Training phase (GET), the Further Education and Training phase (FET), or the Higher Education and Training phase (HET). It includes learnerships, skills programmes and so on.

1.5.8 Pathways, experiences and factors

- **Pathways:** The choices people make in terms of their careers. FET/schooling/dropping out/employment.
- **Experiences:** The lived experiences – how getting to their destination happens. What they encounter in their pathways. What they go through.
- **Factors:** Dynamics that shape or contribute to where the youth end up. Factors that influence their pathways.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

A study of this nature has both theoretical and policy significance. There is a vast body of international academic literature on the school-to-work transition. Most of the literature on this subject concentrates on two broad issues. There are scholars who focus their research on explaining why learners drop out of school before they reach Grade 12 (cf. Aloise-Young & Chavez, 2002; Te Riele, 2004; Porteus et al, 2000). The research of the second group of scholars looks at the relationship between educational attainment and employment (Bhorat & Oosthuizen, 2005; Moleke, 2005; Braehmer et al., 2003; Bessant, 2002; Te Riele, 2004). These scholars tend to focus on comparing the chances of matriculants and tertiary education graduates in finding work. There is one factor that unites both groups: neither of them focuses on the experiences and pathways of pre-Grade 12 out-of-school youth in their endeavours either to re-enter the ETD system or to enter the labour market. It is this major gap in the literature that this thesis addresses.

From a policy point of view, the democratic government of South Africa inherited a serious imbalance in the skills levels in the country (DoL, 2001). Blacks represent the population group that has been most challenged in this regard. Redress is one of the principles of the government, and many State policies are guided by this principle. If almost four times the number of registered youth drop out of school between Grades 1 and 11 each year, then the country will continuously be challenged with inadequate skills in the labour market. This study provides one step in strengthening the policy framework on out-of-school youth by documenting their experiences and understanding some of the factors that influence the choices youth make with regard to dropping into the ETD system or the labour market.

1.7 ORGANISATION AND OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter One provides the context of the study by outlining the background, the purpose of the questions and the objectives of the study.

The next two chapters (Two and Three) examine the literature on issues impacting on the youth and their attempts to enter the labour market. Chapter Two looks at the theoretical perspectives while Chapter Three examines the empirical evidence. It looks at the key challenges in this regard. Issues pertaining to the nature and characteristics of their school-to-work transitions and the challenges that they face in this process have also been addressed in Chapters Two and Three.

Chapter Four summarises the methodology used in the study. It outlines the key issues relating to sampling, data collection and analysis.

Chapter Five provides the data and a descriptive account on how the youth participating in this study experience the transition to their respective career destinations.

Chapter Six provides discussions and a synthesis of the study, and finally, Chapter Seven outlines the conclusion to the study.



1.8 SUMMARY

This chapter outlines the background and rationale for the study as well as the problem addressed and the purpose of the investigation. The chapter also provides a clarification of the key concepts used in the study and presents an outline of the contents of subsequent chapters. The next chapter provides a review of related literature.



CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON YOUTH DROP-OUT AND DROP-IN SCHOOL BEHAVIOURS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The research problem and contextual background to the study were outlined in Chapter One. This chapter describes the theoretical literature reviewed on the dropping in and dropping out experiences of youth. The chapter thus looks at the literature related to the questions posed in the study (cf. Chapter One). In the review, particular attention was given to the context and research approach used in previous research, as well as the findings that were reported. Chapter Two discusses these findings and draws relationships and similarities to this study.

The chapter commences with a critical description of the theoretical literature on the experiences in dropping out and dropping in to school or work on the part of youth, as reported in both local and international sources. The theoretical literature in South Africa and internationally is reviewed and its implications for possible out-of-school youth experiences, policies and practices and the choice of a research design for this study are discussed.

A central argument in Chapter Two is that in recent times, the ‘school-to-work’ transition has become a challenge in both developing and developed countries. Dropping out of school is one of the characteristics of the school-to-work transition. After dropping out, some of the youth attempt either to re-enter the ETD system or to enter the labour market. The overall picture is that while some of the youth reach successful destinations in terms of labour market access after dropping out, many others do not.

The chapter commences with a theoretical perspective on youth school dropping-out/dropping-in behaviours, and then proceeds to review the relevance of these perspectives in the South African context. This follows an extensive discussion on the

various causes and consequences of dropping out of or into school. These provide a meaningful framework for the present study.

Central to the study is the human capital theory, the rational decision-making theory, the social environment model, the congruent model and how these relate to the issues of drop-out/drop-in behaviours. The chapter also evaluates these theories and models and assesses how these explain the dropping-in behaviours.

2.2. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON YOUTH SCHOOL DROP-OUT/DROP-IN BEHAVIOUR

Different theoretical perspectives have been put forward to explain learner drop-out or drop-in school behaviours. These perspectives can be found not just in the human capital paradigm but also in the economic rational decision-making model, which draws attention to various cost-benefit considerations (Eckstein & Wolpin, 1999). Each of these theoretical lenses is discussed in turn below.

2.2.1. Human capital theory and issues in learner drop-out/drop-in school behaviour

Schooling, according to the human capital theory, is an investment (Patron, 2008). Schooling generates higher future income for individuals and enhances economic development in a society (McMahon, 1998; Patron, 2008).

The decision to attend (or drop-into) school is often taken in anticipation of educational benefits. McMahon (1998) categorises returns to education as monetary and non-monetary, as well as private and social. Wages are the direct private and monetary returns from education, but non-monetary private returns, according to Patron (2008), include health effects, human capital produced at home, efficient household management, lifelong adaptation, continued learning at home, motivational attributes and non-monetary job satisfaction.

By contrast, Carlson (2002) identifies two monetary social benefits: effects on growth in gross domestic product, and effects on the earning of others, in terms of making them more productive. Non-monetary social benefits are linked to altruistic characteristics such as the gains from living in an educated society (lower crime rates, poverty reduction, democratic stability, and better citizenship) (Carlson, 2002).

Early primary- and secondary school drop-outs are widespread, not just in developing nations but also in developed societies (Hanushek, Lavy, & Hitomi, 2006; Lavado & Gallegos, 2005; Thomas, Webber, & Walton, 2002; Perita & Pastor, 2000). In terms of the human capital theory, the phenomenon of early drop-out can be explained as a consequence of the perceived absence or insignificance of the benefits to be derived from schooling, monetary or non-monetary, private or social.

However, the idea that a learner thinks in terms of these benefits upon enrolling at school has been questioned. As in Manski (1989), the learner initially enrols without knowing how far he/she will progress inside the school system. Patron (2008) states that a learner's progress through the school system is not straightforward as it depends on several systemic factors, many of which lie outside the learner's control. Patron (2008) states that three of these factors include (a) the level of the qualification, (b) the probability of repetition, and (c) the time horizon of the decision-maker.

But some factors might also reside at the household level. Moser (1996) asserts that although education is a household investment that is often protected from external shocks (Moser, 1996; Hunter & May, 2002), the ability of a household to sustain this long-term investment may be hampered by short- and intermediate-term economic difficulties and labour demands. An adolescent's unwanted pregnancy not only endangers the long-term investment made in a daughter's education (NRC, 1993), but also creates additional financial strain that poor households may be unable to handle.

In this study, ‘Human Capital’ refers to the properties of an individual’s knowledge and skills that are derived from education, training and experience. The development of individuals as human capital has the following benefits:

- a) The contribution they can make to society by virtue of being educated;
- b) The contribution made, by their being educated and therefore employed or employable individuals, to their immediate environment (themselves and their families) ;
- c) Their contribution to the global competitiveness of their country. A country with high levels of economically active people gives individuals broader chances of employment.

There is, however, a Marxist view of human capital theory, which argues that the human capital paradigm tends to reduce people into commodities. While the argument has some basis in truth, there are arguably also the individual and governance aspects that need to be considered. While employment benefits both society and government, the association of higher education achievement and higher income benefits the individual (McMahon, 1998 & Patron, 2008).

The phenomenon of young people dropping out of school affects government, individuals, societies and the labour market. The effects of dropping out are not only financial but also social. Dropping out challenges self-sufficiency, self esteem, and the ability to make ‘educated choices’ (knowing what options an individual has).

The government invests in education in the country. There has to be a return on investment so that reinvestment can happen. When a young person drops out of school, employability becomes a challenge for the individual, and thus less economic participation occurs. This affects the taxes that the individual might have had to contribute to the state and ultimately represents no return on investment for the government.

Human capital is understood in two ways. One is the aspect of humans as labour (for production) and secondly seeing humans possessing capital like knowledge, skills,

competency and experience (Kwon, 2009). The premise of the study is centred on human capital as possessing skills and knowledge that assist them in attaining positive destinations, employment opportunities, improved earning power, and social participation, rather than on people as commodities.

The above reflection for learner drop-out from/drop-into school offered by the human capital theory is, however, incomplete. Looking at other models and theories provides a more holistic picture (see section 2.2.5.).

2.2.2. Rational decision-making theory and issues in learner drop-out/drop-in behaviours

An alternative explanation of the human capital proposition can be found in economics literature states that dropping out of and dropping into school are largely the result of a rational decision. Individuals consider the benefits and costs of continuing in school (i.e. continuing and completing their high school education), versus leaving school before this achievement.

In one model espoused by Oreopoulos, Page, & Stevens (2003), individuals consider dropping out or in within the context of several factors. To Eckstein and Wolpin, three of these factors are: (a) academic performance, (b) expectations about the benefits accruing from completing high school, and (c) local work opportunities. Within the context of academic performance, an individual considers, for instance, whether he/she has poor or good academic grades, but in terms of expected benefits and labour market opportunities. The decision is weighted in terms of whether the benefits and/or work-related opportunities are low or high (Raymond, 2008). Eckstein and Wolpin contend that the ultimate weighting of each of these issues leads to a rational decision about whether to stay in school or quit (Eckstein & Wolpin, 2003).

Oreopoulos *et al* (2003) developed a rational decision-making model that included factors other than those put forward by Eckstein and Wolpin. According to them, the

decision to drop out of or drop into school is based on two key aspects: (a) the personal life of the individual, and (b) his/her family background. Their thesis is that a young person from a family with certain socioeconomic and demographic characteristics such as (a) a single-parent household, (b) a low-income family, and (c) parents without high school education, has a much greater likelihood of dropping out of school than one from an affluent family structure without these characteristics.

There are criticisms of the rational decision-making model. Raymond (2008) asserts that the rational decision-making models make two implicit assumptions: that there is (a) perfect information and (b) perfect credit markets. But neither of these is necessarily the case. A lack of information leads to erroneous evaluation of the decision of the net benefits of graduating, or not graduating, from high school. Raymond maintains that as individuals acquire new information about the benefits and costs of schooling, they have the option to reconsider their decision either to remain out of or to return to school.

But access to information can be problematic. Over the last two decades, the findings of a considerable number of studies add support to the proposition that, while controlling for a wide range of socioeconomic factors, access to information is strongly associated with an individual's level of education (Bair, 2004; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002). In their study of inter-district mobility, Greenberg and McCall (in Brown, 2008) reported that the more educated an individual is, the higher his/her probability of finding information about job prospects or education prospects in other schools. Levels of education mediate access to information.

Clark (1992) arrived at a conclusion similar to that of Greenberg and McCall above but projects a more general stance. He notes, '...the higher the level of education of an individual or household, the greater the likelihood of access to information about a place (or school) to which to migrate. This is true in the United States... true of Western Europe and may hold for lesser-developed countries as well'. Similarly, Greenwood (1998) posits that both employment information and job opportunities increase with increased education. Each of these factors in turn tends to increase the likelihood that an individual will return to school.

In terms of schooling, individuals acquire new information and use it to update their evaluation of the net benefits from schooling (Raymond, 2008). ‘New information may pertain to the earnings a high school drop-out gives up to attend school (the opportunity cost), the earnings advantage a high school graduate has (the benefits), the relative instability of employment for a drop-out versus a graduate (the expected benefits), or preferences about a school to attend (the benefits)’ (Raymond, 2008:13). But whether or not school drop-outs (or drop-ins) have access to the kind of information that would allow them to make rational decisions remains an open question.

It may be necessary to question the notion of rationality itself. Both the human capital and rational decision-making models have indicated that there are benefits to acquiring an education. In terms of drop-outs, then, a pertinent question is: are drop-outs or early school-leavers from the education system irrational, ill-informed, or poorly advised? There are two debates around this question, which occur from different perspectives.

One of these debates answers the question in the affirmative. The argument is that the decision to drop out of school reflects irrationality, and must have been made by an ill-informed and poorly advised individual. Those who hold this view say that the monetary and non-monetary as well as the private and social benefits should be sufficient motivation for the individual to pursue education (McMahon, 1998). The contrary argument is that systemic inefficiencies - which create underperformance in the education sector as reflected in high repetition rates and the poor quality of education - make the decision to drop out early, perfectly rational (Patron, 2008). This debate makes quality and efficacy in the provision of the service crucial to an individual’s decisions.

What the latter argument does is to draw attention to the environment or context in which education is provided. It implies that rationality does not have to be based on the perceived benefits from education but might be based also on the perceived chances of succeeding in the system. This last consideration draws attention to

another factor: the nature of the learner cohort entering the school system. To Sautu (1999), consideration of the nature of the learner group is essential as it shapes system efficacy aspects: repetition rates, pass rates and so on. All of this suggests that evaluating the drop-out/drop-in decision is not straightforward, and that the rational explanation itself is incomplete.

2.2.3. Social environment model and issues in learner drop-out/drop-in behaviours

In contrast to the rational decision-making model, the social environment model uses the social environment theory to explain the relationship between the drop-out behaviour of a learner and the social ecology of the classroom (Darkenwald & Gavin, 1987). According to this perspective, discrepancies between the learners' expectations of the school or classroom environment and their actual experiences in that environment promote dissatisfaction (Darkenwald & Gavin, 1987). When a learner drops out of school, it merely reflects this discrepancy: expectation and actual experience are different.

The social environment model provides an alternative explanation to the drop-out phenomenon as it draws attention to both the school or systemic aspect and the learner aspect. Both the school and the learner have expectations of each other, and the early exit from the school system may reflect a breakdown in expectations on either or both sides.

Studies using this perspective measure expectations and actual classroom experiences using several surveys which analyse discrepancy scores, using t-tests and multiple regression (Darkenwald & Gavin, 1987). In one study in North America, Darkenwald and Gavin (1987) found that drop-outs expect a classroom environment characterised by less social involvement with other learners. Witte (1996) found in a European sample that three forces prompt school attendance among learners: (a) the social relations provided in the school environment, (b) interest in academic work, and (c) the prospect of gaining a qualification.

2.2.4. The congruence model and issues in learner drop-out/drop-in behaviours

The congruence model is based on self-theory. A key proponent of this model is Boshier (1973), who states that the congruence model rejects single variables as explanations for learner participation in school or their early drop-out from the school system. Multiple explanations are more plausible as dropping out is a complex social phenomenon.

The congruence model says that participation is a function of the dialectic between oneself and the learning environment of an institution. Similarly, dropping out is a function of the dialectic between the intra-self and the self-versus-others perspective. Any incongruence between these aspects, whether it is the self-institution incongruence, or the intra-self and self-versus-others incongruence, can lead to dropping out or non-participation. These therefore suggest that social, psychological and institutional variables typically studied in drop-out research merely mediate the congruence versus drop-out relationship (Boshier, 1973).

One could argue that the congruence model is an attempt to bring together the previous models discussed above. Patron's (2008) theorisation, which explains learner drop-out or return to school in terms of learner factors and systemic factors, fits well within the congruence model. According to Patron (2008), the drop-out causal factors which emanate from learners are subjective. These causal factors can be categorised into two groups: (a) information/valuation problems, and (b) short-termism.

Information/valuation problems are reflected where a learner is ill-informed about the value of remaining in school, or where he/she has low expectations about the value of education itself (Patron, 2008). By contrast, an illustration of short-termism is where a learner develops low education aspirations and an interest in immediate rewards: the individual is too anxious or too short-sighted, and so perceives that the

time horizon for staying in school is long (Patron, 2008; Brown, 2008b). Where either or both of these situations manifests, there is sufficient internal motivation within the individual to drop out of school.

The other set of factors within Patron's (2008) theorisation relates to systemic factors. Systemic factors lie outside the learners' control. Examples of systemic factors commonly cited in the school drop-out literature are (a) poor quality education, (b) under-qualified teachers or a teacher shortage, (c) an undemocratic school environment, (d) violence in school, and (e) high repetition rates (Patron, 2008; Brown, 2008b). The thrust of the argument in these sources is that the prevalence of these conditions in school increases a learner's drop-out chances due to the increase in the uncertainty of the education investment.

2.2.5. A brief evaluation of the theoretical models and issues in the drop-out's decision to drop back into school

The theoretical models discussed above are not complete in their explanations of why some learners drop out of or drop into school. A combination of these models provides a more holistic picture. Implicit in the learner vs. systemic factor theorisation above is that the absence of the negative learner and systemic conditions might increase the chances of learners' persisting in school. Also these perspectives do not take into account that dropping out or dropping in behaviours are conditional: certain conditions must be in place if learners are to drop in.

In terms of the rational decision-making model, it is evident that as drop-outs acquire new information about the benefits and costs of schooling, they may reconsider their decision and decide to return to school (Raymond, 2008). The same can be said about individuals who dropped out of school to work because of borrowing constraints: the rational decision model theorises that once this individual builds up his/her credit, he/she may decide to return to school (Eckstein & Wolpin, 1999). Drop-outs are often in a position to reconsider their past decision and even reverse it (Raymond, 2008). What the rational decision-making model argues

therefore is that the individual may leave school without graduating and may later return to school as an outcome of having new information or new financial resources (Raymond, 2008). However, the approach lacks in its assumption that all learners make rational decisions regarding their education.

The social environment model positions the debate of dropping out or re-entry into the education system within the interplay of the individual and larger societal factors such as conditions in the home, or in the school, or financial considerations. The merit in this approach is that it recognises the agency that informs the decisions that individuals make in re-negotiating their way back into school or the work environment.

The human capital model suggests that education is an investment that learners should subscribe to. Whilst education is an investment, we need to ensure that learners follow learning pathways that ensure school completion and entry into streams that are in demand in the industry. This approach does not take into account that other factors influence learners' likelihood of attaining employment even if they are educated.

The theoretical models discussed above can be invoked for explanations regarding understanding not merely the causes of cases of drop-out but also the decisions to drop in, and the factors that make these decisions feasible for the learner. As stated earlier, the congruence model arguably brings together the underpinnings of the human capital theory, the rational-decision making theory and the social environment model.

2.3. APPLICATION OF THE THEORETICAL MODELS TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION

The situation regarding school enrolment in South Africa has been documented (DoE, 2006). However, the framework leading to an understanding of the high drop-

out rate and/or return to school rate has not yet been fully developed. For instance, an official report by the CREATE study group (Motala et al, 2007) concluded that the (drop-out) decision process involves personal characteristics as well as those of students' environment. Majority of those youth who drop-out come from low-income families and those with low-education capital.

The above remarks give a sense of the learner cohort from whom the group of those who return to school comes. In the Grade R-12 school system in South Africa, the drop-out/drop-in situation has been shown to be considerable after completion of the nine years of compulsory schooling (Motala et al, 2007).

But systemic repetition is prevalent at different Grades in the system. Firstly, as Crouch (2005) indicates, there is systematic over-enrolment (due to the lack of Early Childhood Development as well as (probably) lax enforcement of age norms in the schools frequented by the poor) of the poorest groups in the early grades, resulting in a lot of repetition in Grade 1. Secondly, the tendency for a bottleneck to develop in Grade 10, due probably to enforced repetition in an attempt to control the flow to Grade 12, is common to all income groups (rich and poor) (Crouch, 2005). Even schools serving the richest segments of the population appear to be holding children back in Grade 10. As both the rational decision-making and the congruence models indicate, repetition reflects systemic failure in the school system and it provides one explanation for drop-out rates.

Patron (2008) has identified the relationship between school repetition and dropping out. The Ministerial Committee (2007) suggests that failure in schooling is an important contributory factor in the occurrence of dropping out. Repeaters are more likely to drop out than non-repeaters (Crouch, 2005; Patron, 2008; Ministerial Committee, 2007). In terms of the congruence model, this suggests that a record of failure undermines a learner's expectations. Repetition rates also severely affect other systemic indicators. Patron (2008) also found that they affect the rates of on-time completion. Crouch (2005) calculated that about 60 per cent of learners reach Grade 12 or its equivalent in Further Education and Training, which suggests that 40 per cent do not. The repeaters will not complete their level on time.

Besides this, in South Africa there is also a general perception that the quality of education in primary and secondary schools has been deteriorating. This is particularly the case in schools serving the lower and working class families, many of whom are in rural communities. Following the democratic transformation in governance, the massification of primary and secondary education – without the provision of adequate human and physical resources – has led to a deterioration in quality, and as a consequence has also led to the deterioration of performance indicators: i.e. repetition and completion rates (ESAR, 2000; Hanushek, 2003; SAHRW, 2006; Motala et al, 2007; Mgwangqa & Lawrence, 2008). The congruence model indicates that these two factors not only push the individuals out of school but also discourage re-entry.

Furthermore, the massification of primary and secondary school education also implies an increase in the diversity of the learner population in the schools. Children from Black, coloured, white and Indian ethnic groups participate in the different levels of the school system. There is a high participation rate among learners from the formerly disadvantaged groups (Grant & Hallman, 2006). At present, about one half of the learners in primary and secondary schools come from unfavourable backgrounds. Performance indicators for the disadvantaged learners are significantly worse than those for the others (Crouch, 2005; Grant & Hallman, 2006). Bucheli and Casacuberta (1999) found that the probability of dropping out is associated with a low socioeconomic background. Academic performance varies with income groups and dropping out further depresses the lower income groups. As the congruence model suggests, the above economic factors are related to learner factors, and they have implications for the chance of drop-outs from lower income groups to re-enter schools.

Crouch (2005) states that the participants in his research who have dropped out of school have signalled why they dropped out. In terms of the congruence model, many of these reasons might be classified as systemic on the one hand and personal on the other hand. Among 16- to 18-year-olds (or Grade 10s), Crouch found that the following facts stand out. Some 6% to 8% of the age group is affected by fees. No other factor really stands out as importantly affecting the age group as a whole, and

even this one factor (fees) is relatively small in its effect on the *whole* age group. As a factor affecting the drop-outs, a perception that education is uninteresting affects a rather large proportion of the boys (17%), and pregnancy, marriage, or family concerns affect a very large percentage of the girls (13% + 3% + 10% = 26%). The difference between male and female drop-outs finding education useless or uninteresting is notable.

As stated above, a systemic factor is related to fees. When a learner drops out of school because of fees, this points to two factors: the socioeconomic background of the individual, and that the chances of the individual's dropping back into school are few. A learner has a small chance of dropping back into school after problems with fees cause him/her to drop-out. In terms of the school-to-work transition, school fees are critical mediators (du Toit, 2005).

Even though few gender differences have been found in educational attainment (Case & Deaton, 1999; Lam, 1999; UNDFW, 2000), some South African researchers have given attention to the factors associated with female drop-outs (Fuller & Liang, 1999; Hunter & May, 2002). These studies found that there was an association between dropping out and a household's economic resources, its social structure, and its labour demands.

Both the human capital and rational decision-making models state that learners make rational decisions about continuing or re-entering school (Patron, 2008). The fact that Crouch found that a lack of interest in education triggered some learners to drop out may support this notion. It may be considered perfectly rational for a learner to exit the school system if he/she does not have the motivation to continue. The lack of interest may be related to several factors, including: (a) the poor quality of the education, (b) the probability of repetition, (c) the relevance of the education to the labour market requirements, (d) previous achievements and/or (e) the expected income differential (Patron, 2008; Sautu, 1999; Heckman & Masterov, 2004). These factors cannot be ruled out of consideration. But rationality is subjective, and what seems rational may just be an outcome of a learner's suffering from an information-valuation problem or mere short-termism.

Apart from Crouch's (2005) work, the Human Rights Watch Report (SAHRC, 2006) refers to critical socioeconomic issues leading to rural school drop-outs. Most are linked to poverty: hunger, leading to petty criminal offences; a lack of toilets, leading to illness, and even death, from cholera; and a lack of infrastructure, leading to poor learning environments and failures (Mgwangqa & Lawrence, 2008). The Nelson Mandela Foundation study (NMF, 2005) focused on the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo provinces. The study, which included 144 primary schools, found that rural education and its potential for development is deeply compromised by poverty. Even though, in terms of education policy provisions, learners should not be excluded because of their inability to pay fees or buy uniforms, these factors often lead to a sense of humiliation among learners and parents, and a loss of motivation to continue schooling (Mgwangqa & Lawrence, 2008).

Motivation indeed appears to be a significant factor in Mgwangqa's study. She shows how the motivation to learn, or to continue schooling, can be seriously affected not only by embarrassment caused by family poverty, but also by a number of other variables such as troubled family/teacher relationships, peer influence, and health-and curriculum-related issues (Mgwangqa & Lawrence, 2008).

Overall, the models above provide a framework in which to evaluate the drop-out and drop-in behaviours of learners. Evidently, the drop-out or drop-in situation in schools in South Africa cannot be attributed to any one factor. all in all, the congruence model provides a fairly holistic way of viewing the drop-out/drop-in phenomenon in the country.

The next section reviews the empirical evidence on the phenomenon of school drop-outs and drop-ins.



CHAPTER 3

EMPIRICAL PERSPECTIVES ON YOUTH DROP-OUT AND DROP-IN BEHAVIOURS

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The research problem and contextual background to the study are outlined in Chapter One. Chapter Two provides the theoretical perspective on youth drop-out and drop-in. This chapter describes the empirical literature reviewed on the experiences of youth dropping in and dropping out of school. Like Chapter Two, this chapter looks at the literature related to the questions posed in the study (cf. Chapter One).

The chapter begins with a critical view of empirical literature on the experiences of the youth in dropping out of and dropping into school or work, as reported in both local and international sources. Like the theoretical perspective, the empirical literature in South Africa is reviewed, and the implications for possible out-of-school youth experiences, policies and practices, and the appropriate research design for this study are discussed. This follows an extensive discussion of the various causes and consequences of dropping out of and into school. These provide a meaningful framework for the present study.

A central argument in the chapter comes from Bhorat and McCord (2003:32). They explain that ‘structural and technological changes in the economy over recent decades have led to increases in capital intensity, on the one hand, but a reduction in demand for unskilled labour on the other hand’. The tenet is that dropping out renders the youth unskilled, thus decreasing their chances of accessing the job market. Evidence from McCord’s work has been used in this study to make the point that rapid economic growth in South Africa has triggered a demand for skilled labour thus lowering the demand for unskilled labour. Much evidence indicates that the above situation comes with remuneration differentials for skilled and unskilled

young people. Chapter Two drew attention to this by arguing that the reduction in the demand for unskilled labour poses critical challenges for the youth who dropped out of school without the skills needed for reaching successful destinations.

The chapter draws on evidence in the international literature to show that dropping out of school is not peculiar to South African youth. The central sources relied upon in this case were UNESCO (2000), which reflected drop-out rates in many parts of the world; the work of Kaufman et al, as well as Dearden, Emmerson, Frayne and Merghir *et al* (2006) in the UK; as well as Aloise Young *et al* (2002) in the US. There was also useful evidence in Te Riele (2004) and Lee and Lee (2003), who reported on this phenomenon in Sydney. In South Africa, the work of Kraak (2003) was a major source. All of these sources dealt with the question of youths dropping out of and dropping into school and the labour market.

3.2. COMPARING LEARNER DROP-OUT CAUSES IN SOUTH AFRICA WITH THOSE IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

In Pennsylvania in the United States of America, the phenomenon of learner drop-out from school is attributed to (i) the learners' poor preparation in their earlier schooling, (ii) the situation where they have missed too many days of school and are unable to catch-up, (iii) their failing their grades, (iv) falling pregnant, (v) being incarcerated, (vi) being admitted to a drug or alcohol rehabilitation programme, (vii) the situation where their parents or guardians are unemployed, (viii) physical or learning disabilities, and (ix) learners in the foster care system experiencing frequent school transfers, and hence inconsistency in the curricula.

Mgwangqa and Lawrence (2008) found that in some African societies, school attrition is sometimes consequent to traumatic social and educational experiences. Young people in their study reported sexual harassment, parental neglect, teacher abuse and HIV/Aids-related conditions as factors contributing to dropping out. Where these negative consequences of being in school were absent, learners showed interest in returning to school (Mgwangqa & Lawrence, 2008).

One study for the East and Southern African Region (ESAR, 2000) provides a statistical overview of the status of school drop-outs from member countries, including Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. All of these countries' reports, produced by ESAR, found that poverty was the major overriding factor in drop-outs, serving as an umbrella for related factors such as illness, the distance from school, family problems, a lack of parental support, pregnancies, and even truancy and delinquency.

Using a non-cause-specific hazard model for the factors associated with school drop-out, Fuller and Liang (1999) found an association between a family's financial strength, measured by the level of household expenditure and access to credit, and the likelihood that a daughter will remain in school. In an earlier study conducted in Botswana, they found that household-asset ownership and housing quality were also consistently related to girls' educational attainment; these reflected the accumulated wealth and investment attitude of the household better than did short-term measures of consumption (Fuller, in Fuller & Liang, 1999).

School failure is an attribute of school retention and a contributing factor to dropping out of school. Failure leaves learners with a particular view of what they can or cannot do and thus opens up options for them. For the youth without strong support within their context, wrong choices or alternatives may be taken as a result. Te Riele(2005) suggests that youth do not drop out of school mainly because they do not want to study, but because they are failing at their studies. Failure is associated with their home backgrounds, local contexts, state of health, and other socioeconomic issues. Learners from supportive and financially stable backgrounds are more likely to remain in the system and ultimately finish schooling than those from low-income backgrounds. The researchers suggest that learners who fail are more likely to be lost in the system and are at risk of dropping out of school.

According to Henry and Roseth (1985) youth who drop out are generally less satisfied with school than those who stay. Structural contributors to youth drop-out

have been identified. They are the climate of the school, school rules and regulations, and the learner's lack of commitment to schooling. Like the home climate, the school climate is a factor contributing to the progress or lack of progress of youth. Teenagers that feel unwanted have a much higher likelihood of rebelling and dropping out. Also youths who feel wanted are likely to try harder even in otherwise adverse circumstances. The school climate thus has a role to play in the retention of learners and limiting their desire to drop out.

School failure causes frustration that results in learners' being alienated from school (Aloise-Young & Chavez, 2002; and Ministerial Committee, 2007). Failure and how the school and parents handle failure has a role in determining whether learners stay and try harder or leave school. Failure on its own has psychological implications and how it is handled becomes critical for the person who has failed.

Other areas of school life that marginalise young people and cause them to drop out have been suggested in Batten and Russell (1995). These include the curriculum, teaching and learning processes, relationships and climate, assessment and credentials, discipline and control, school organisation and administration, environment and resources, external links and, finally, staffing. Thus, in schooling, the culture (relationships and climate, discipline and control, environment and resources, external links) and policies (curriculum, teaching and learning processes, assessment and credentials, school organisation and administration) are the most structurally marginalising aspects in the life of the learner.

Change in the environment and society manifests itself in how the youth expect their environment to be. If one lives in a democratic environment, one is likely to expect all aspects of one's life to be democratic. Social change is thus seen as one of the structural factors leading to youths' dropping out. Te Riele (2004) suggests that states' education policy remains too linear while society and young people live in a non-linear society with access to a lot of choices and a knowledge economy. Despite that, education continues to be structured in linear, discrete and hierarchical ways. While youths participate and interact, the authorities decide on the extent and paradigms of their interaction. Social change widens the scope of interaction and

options for the youth, but other areas of schooling and factors relating to progression minimise the possible ‘democratised’ expectations around the destination of the youth.

The family provides the basis of one’s development. Te Riele (2004) suggests that lack of family support and unstable families seriously affect a learner’s progress or lack of progress at school. Families who show little or no interest in the learner’s progress are least likely to know how the learner is progressing, and as such are the least likely to encourage the learner.

Culture can also drive youths out of school. This is mostly related to the expectations of their community. This could include gender stereotypes that suggest that girls need to get married and boys need to provide for their families, in some communities as early as in early teenage years. In addition, family ‘traditions’ have an effect. Some families might feel that as soon as a boy impregnates a woman he needs to start working and providing, while other families would opt to provide for the new baby themselves until the young father is economically active.

Child-headed households have become relatively common since the nineties. As more and more adults become victims of HIV/Aids and die, children are left to head the households. Malaney (2000) suggests that as a result of HIV/Aids, children can be removed from school to care for their parents and family members. Paying school fees and other expenses becomes a problem. In the Central African Republic and Swaziland, school enrolment is reported to have fallen by 20% to 36% due to Aids and the children’s being orphaned, with girls being most affected¹. In most cases these young people leave school and try to find ways to provide for their siblings. These young people are more likely to drop out of school than their counterparts.

Lee and Lee (2003) employ a theoretical perspective on out-of-school youth. They suggest that dropping out has many contributory factors. They believe that the social system (the family, school and peers) influences dropping out. They suggest that

¹ <http://www.avert.org/aidsimpact.htm>

each system has a subsystem. The family subsystem includes interdependence, homeostasis and adaptability; the school subsystem includes the school climate, commitment to schooling, and rules and regulations and, lastly the peer subsystem include peer types and the peer culture.

The factors contributing to learners dropping out of school in South Africa are not dissimilar to those impacting on learners in other countries. In terms of the Mgwangqa and Lawrence (2008) analysis above, poverty is more severe in South Africa than in many other countries. Overall, the reasons for the youth dropping out of school can be viewed as structural, economic, emotional/psychological and social. These could be also intertwined.

3.3. THE CONSEQUENCES OF LEAVING SCHOOL

Almost universally, young people express great remorse for having left school. Many of these youth show interest in re-entering school with learners of their own age (Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, 2009). But according to Bilchik (1997), too many drop-outs learn too late the terrible lesson of dropping out of school. This sentiment is echoed by Community Agency for Social Inquiry (2000), who maintains that too many drop-outs in later life regret the reckless decision they made to leave school prematurely.

Different themes relating to the consequences of dropping out are identifiable in the literature. They can be economic and non-economic in nature. Some of these are discussed below.

3.3.1. Economic consequences

3.3.1.1 Unemployment and employment instability

There are a number of consequences for dropping out of school. Dearden, Emmerson, Frayne and Meghir (2002) examine the effects of drop-out on access to

the labour market in North American countries. They report that of those who dropped out of school, more than one half were not employed. The school drop-out effect is quite pertinent in the United States. According to the US Census 2000, 90.4% of the 17-year-olds who dropped out of school lived with their parents, and 45% were not in the labour market. The National Center for Education Statistics in the US reported that in 2004 alone, 15% of all the 18- to 24-year-olds who dropped out of school were neither employed nor back in school.

Aloise-Young (2002) states that school dropouts are a serious problem for all European and North American countries, but this could be said for all countries affected by this phenomenon, because those who fail to complete school are more likely to be unemployed. Scholars like Coleman (1988), Angrist *et al* (1991), Barnicle *et al* (2006), and Bessant (2002) identify the challenges of dropping out and the implications for employability and earnings. Their research suggests that the relationship between dropping out of school and and inability to find employment is strong.

Carleton (2009) examines drop-out experiences outside the school among teens, and reports that joblessness and social limitations are major problems. In Carleton's study, one participant described the effects well by noting that he/she did not have a job and "is broke...and can't make it or go anywhere without a job". Joblessness creates a kaleidoscope of social limitations.

In general, dropouts experience more difficulties in finding stable and productive employment than other young people. This is caused, amongst other things, by their lack of the knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies generally acquired in schools, including punctuality, perseverance, and the ability to get along with others. Dropouts also experience the unstable and rapidly changing youth labour market. About 61% of US learners who never dropped out were engaged in productive activities, compared with 39% for dropouts who completed high school and 34% who did not complete high school. About 33% of dropouts who completed and 43% who did not complete high school spent ten months or more in non-productive activities

compared with only 8% of learners who never dropped out. In Australia, dropouts were four times more likely to have spent ten months or more without work.

In countries around the world, high school drop-outs experience greater employment instability when they try to enter the workplace. In the US, for instance, dropouts work less than graduates (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). In terms of wages, young people who drop out of school can expect their annual earnings to be less than half of those of a college or university graduate with a bachelor's degree (\$19,818 vs. \$43,368), and their likelihood of living in poverty is six times higher (21.5% vs. 3.6%) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004).

Carleton (2009) asserts that the most obvious personal consequence of dropping out of school for youths in developed societies is the stark contrast between the incomes of dropouts and the incomes of those more educated. Using regression analysis, Carleton demonstrates that dropouts were as much as three times as likely to be unemployed than university or college graduates. The lower skills level of the dropout is a major contributory factor.

In Canada drop-outs experience greater difficulty than their peers in securing well-paying jobs. They also experience more vulnerability to economic shocks. Their wages are on average lower than those of workers with a high school diploma and their unemployment rate has been five to six percentage points above both the national average and the rate for high school graduates throughout the 1990s and early 2000s (Raymond, 2008). Unemployment is also a challenge in the South African youth labour market. This involves more than 50% per cent of the learners who are registered in the system and drop out of school. According to the State of Skills Report in South Africa (DoL, 2003:5), youth unemployment continues to be one of the country's major challenges and is continuously escalating (DoE, 2001).

As in other countries, in South Africa unemployment is associated with a lack of skills and a low level of education. The skills bias of employment growth is evident in the rising rates of unemployment amongst the poorly educated groups of the labour force. Individuals with up to 9 years of education are more likely to be unemployed

than those with a matric certificate, whilst youth with 13 or more years of education are more likely to find employment than their counterparts with a matric qualification. The Labour Force Survey (LFS) (2003) indicates that most of the unemployed have no more than matric (grade 12 and below), whilst there is a lower level of unemployment amongst those with tertiary qualifications (Moleke, 2005). The Survey on Adult Basic Education and Training (Aitchison *et al*, 2000) also supports this observation by suggesting that most members of the unemployed cohort have a lower education level than their counterparts.

3.3.1.2 *Lost earnings*

In addition to the references above, a number of studies specifically examine the link between school drop-out and earnings (Angrist & Krueger, 1991; Acemoglu & Angrist, 2000; Harmon & Walker, 1995; Oreopoulos, 2003a; 2003b). Dropping out of school prematurely impacts negatively on future earnings. Oreopoulos (2003a) found that one additional year of being in school raises subsequent earnings by 10% to 14% for the youth in countries in North America and Europe. This conclusion is consistent with many previous studies, including Acemoglu and Angrist (2000), who uses differences in school leaving policies in various US states to show that learners compelled to take an extra year experience, on average, an increase of ten per cent in adult earnings.

One other study that demonstrates the relationship between dropping out of school and future earnings is the work of Angrist and Krueger (1991). They found from an analysis of a sample of US dropouts that learners who finish with a year of schooling less than their peers (because of school-entry policies) experience on average 9.2% lower adult earnings than those who leave school later. School policy can push some learners to leave school early. But also, when learners are pushed out for other reasons, such as economic factors, as in the case of many South African learners (as Mgwangqa and Lawrence (2008) state), the effect on future earnings potential is more or less the same.

With regard to the loss of earning potential, males are particularly affected. In a sample of US dropouts, Sum, Barnicle and Khatiwada (2006) found that male dropouts face a number of severe labour market difficulties, with steep declines in their real incomes and annual earnings. Their deteriorating labour market fortunes have reduced their ability to form independent households, to marry, to support their children, and to contribute positively to the fiscal position of the national government (Sum *et al.*, 2006).

In the United Kingdom the effect on earning potential of dropping out of school is the same. Harmon and Walker (1995) examine the effects on earnings arising from changes made to the minimum school-leaving age in the UK. They estimate that adult earnings rose an average of 15.3% for each additional year of school a learner had taken. Dropping out of school prematurely, and a subsequent decision not to return, imply that the individual affected cannot access these income benefits.

Earnings in the US vary more by gender than by high school completion status. Male dropouts have higher monthly wages than either male non-drop-outs or female drop-outs. In Australia, at age 19, male drop-outs in full-time work receive higher monthly earnings on average than male high school graduates. This might be because of their longer exposure to the workforce and longer periods in employment. However, as soon as they acquire experience, the wages for graduates rise steeply. The gap is reversed for females, with female graduates earning more at age 19 than their counterparts who dropped out of school, even though they have been exposed to the labour market for a shorter period. This reveals the disadvantage female drop-outs experience in obtaining secure, well-paid work. They experience greater disadvantage in the transition to work (Carleton, 2009).

Carleton (2009) expands the literature on drop-out earnings potential by examining the lifetime earnings gaps between school drop-outs and non-drop-outs. Using an annual average income gap of \$9000 US dollars for the earnings of a secondary school graduate versus a drop-out, and an average income gap of \$35000 for a university/college graduate versus a drop-out, Carleton demonstrates that over the course of a lifetime drop-outs stand to earn about 1.6 million dollars less than

university/college graduates. He argues that this factor contributes to their poor general quality of life, as drop-outs are twice as likely to be situated below the poverty line.

But as in the case of many South African drop-outs, poverty is a reality in their lives even before they drop out of school. Dropping out merely exacerbates their poverty. Perhaps one over-arching lesson that can be drawn from the evidence above is that it supports the hypothesis that education is a worthwhile investment, at least in so far as employment and earning potential are concerned. Dropping out is the antithesis of making this investment (Oreopoulos, 2003b).

3.3.1.3 Restricted career and job options

In many societies there has been no great attempt to grapple with the problems of school drop-outs, such as the lack of job options and career paths. Eckstein and Wolpin (1999) examine the career options of drop-outs in European countries. They argue that the failure to leave school at the normal exit point severely limits drop-outs' career options and access to the job market. One area where this is evident is the limited number of jobs available to drop-outs (Carleton, 2009; Gatto, 2002).

Carleton (2009) found that as the job market becomes increasingly competitive, a growing number of high level jobs are demanding at least a grade 12 school-leaver's certificate as a pre-requisite for applying. When a learner drops out of school, therefore, he/she is automatically excluded from this market. Both monetary and long-term career success are contingent upon completing and graduating from secondary school but it seems that many adolescents fail to recognise this hard reality until it's too late (Oreopoulos, 2003a). Learners could offset the consequent feelings of regret at having a less than fulfilling career by staying in school.

But Rumberger and Lamb (1998) found in a cohort of dropouts in the US that male drop-outs hold similar jobs to those who never dropped out. About a third of each group – non drop-outs, drop-out-completers (those who re-entered and completed schooling), and dropout non-completers (those who re-entered and did not complete

schooling) – hold jobs in the skilled trades and another 17% of each group hold sales and service jobs. But drop-outs-non-completers are more likely than those from the other two groups to hold jobs as labourers (which generally pay lower wages) and less likely to hold jobs in managerial, professional, and technical areas (which generally pay higher wages) or the military. Females who never dropped out are more likely to be employed in clerical jobs, while female drop-outs who never completed are most likely to be employed in sales and service jobs. In Australia, the majority of male drop-outs in full-time work are in skilled trades at age 19.

The reality is that without a high school certificate these young people are likely to end up in low-wage jobs that have few career prospects and no benefits or job security (Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, 2009; Ingersoll & LeBoeuf, 1997; Raymond, 2008).

But the drop-out evidence in many countries worldwide suggests that many learners do not have a choice of whether to stay at school or leave prematurely. Certainly, within the South African literature the opinion is expressed that economic and social barriers have kept many learners out of school (SAHRC, 2006; Motala et al, 2007). These forces have the effect of restricting the career pathways available to learners who drop out of school.

But the question of career pathway hinges upon other factors. In some countries, particularly countries in the developing south, formal sector economic activities have all but ground to a halt. In Somalia and Zimbabwe, for example, formal sector labour market activity is virtually nonexistent. In contexts such as Somalia, pursuing schooling to find jobs in the formal sector provides little or no motivation for learners. In terms of the rational decision-making model (cf. 2.2), dropping out of school is a more rational thing to do in such a context, as the current cost of investing in education is higher than the prospective future benefits. This implies that restricted career opportunities in the wider society can trigger drop-out decisions, as drop-outs choose what's best for them under the circumstances.

3.3.1.4 *Level of education and issues of access to the labour market*

Several studies assess the effects of education from additional schooling for learners who would otherwise have left sooner. These studies use the notion of compulsory schooling as a reference point. In terms of formal educational development, dropping out robs learners of appropriate cognitive development. Angrist and Krueger (1991) use differences in school-entry policies to identify learners dropping out with less education just because they were born before the entry cut-off date as opposed to just prior to the date. Learners who finish their schooling with a year less because of these policies experience on average much lower adult educational attainment than those dropping out later (Angrist & Krueger, 1991). As the sections above illustrate, having lower educational attainment has implications for participation in future labour market activity (Oreopoulos, 2003a; Schmidt, 1995; Lleras-Muney, 2001; Lochner & Moretti, 2003).

The level of education of a job seeker always proves to have a major impact on unemployment. ‘The South African economy’s increasing appetite for highly skilled labour ...lower skilled and poorly educated workers are likely to bear the brunt of unemployment rates by individuals’ highest level of education’ (Bhorat & Oosthuizen, 2005). Bhorat further suggest that there are now more people with matric and below who are seeking employment than previously. These numbers have increased in the post-apartheid era within the youth band. Why these disparities? Is dropping out of school the major reason for the lack of levels of skills required for employability?

Challenges to the youth associated with dropping out and consequent unemployability are more likely to happen to members of the Black groups than their white counterparts in South Africa. The race/class phenomena in dropping out, retention and employability have been suggested by scholars like Aloise-Young. She suggests that in the United States the problem of dropping out is higher for the Hispanic than for non-Hispanic white adolescents. In South Africa, Molete (2005) identifies higher numbers of Black graduates as being unemployed, and Du Toit

(2005) suggests that unemployment is more generally prevalent among Black youth in South Africa than among other South African groups.

Research (Molete, 2005) shows that Blacks not only have the highest prevalence of dropping out of school in South Africa, but also have the highest prevalence of unemployment in the country. For some, underemployment is also a challenge, and is as a result of their low skills level.

3.3.1.5 Geographic location and issues of access to the labour market

In addition, the geographic location of the job seekers also plays a role in the unemployment rate in the country. This suggests that individuals from the rural areas are more likely to be unemployed than their counterparts in urban areas. While unemployment is more frequently experienced in rural than in urban areas, there is a trend towards an increase in urban unemployment as a result of the youth moving from the rural to the urban areas.

The recurring nature of unemployment in South Africa can also be associated with the background of the unemployed. As Bhorat and Oosthuizen (2005) put it, a large proportion of the broad unemployed are members of households with few or no wage earners. This results in the continued marginalisation of the poor; making the poor even poorer.

The literature above suggests that the lack of access to the labour market for South African youth still marginalises particular groups. The labour market is still characterised by gate-keeping relating to the education level, skills level, race, social background, geographic location, and gender. The less qualified you are the fewer are your chances of getting employment. For those who are qualified there is still another gate-keeping characteristic of the labour market to act as a barrier to employment, in that potential employers look at experience in addition to qualifications to determine whether or not the candidate can perform a job well.

3.3.1.6 Youth demographic factors and issues of access to the labour market

Race, social background, geographic location and gender are some of the issues relevant to failing to gain access to the labour market. South African policies like the Employment Equity Act (1998) have been developed to address these characteristics of the labour market. The implementation of these Acts is affected by the disparities between the policies' intentions and their implementation. This is mainly because the likely beneficiaries are the people with better educational qualifications. This is mirrored by the nature and character of school-to-work transition. While Acts like these have good intentions, without skilled labour the implementation is challenged and the need for redress is prolonged.

Household labour demands also influence the likelihood that a young woman will remain in school, as will whether or not she becomes pregnant. Fuller and Liang (1999) found that a mother's participation in the formal wage sector might depress a daughter's likelihood of remaining in school, perhaps as a result of increased household labour demands. Grant *et al* (2006) found that urban mothers of preschoolers in Guatemala are more likely to work for pay and work longer hours when their 15-18-year-old daughters are co-resident. Evidently, youth demographic factors must also be considered in considering the consequences of dropping out of school.

3.3.2 Non-pecuniary consequences

3.3.2.1 Crime

Research also demonstrates that youth who are not in school and not in the labour force are at high risk of delinquency and crime (Synder & Sickmund, in Ingersoll & LeBoeuf, 1997). Lochner & Moretti (2003) find that in some European societies compelling children to remain in school decreases the likelihood of their committing crime and going to jail. In the US, Harlow (2003) provides evidence that shows that three quarters of state prison inmates and 59% of federal prison inmates were school drop-outs. According to Catterall (1985), drop-outs are 3.5 times more likely than

grade 12 completers to be imprisoned at some stage in their life. In a recent analysis, Carleton (2009) puts this figure at eight times more likely than grade 12 graduates. The chances of becoming social deviants decrease with the duration of schooling.

3.3.2.2 *Poverty*

The fact that school dropouts stand to earn substantially less in annual income than those who complete schooling (Angrist & Krueger, 1991) puts drop-outs at risk of poverty. Carleton (2009) estimates that in the US, drop-outs are twice as likely as graduates (university or college) to live below the national poverty line. Although limited, this evidence draws attention to the serious consequences of living a life as a school drop-out.

But Carleton's argument presupposes that the individual concerned was not already poor. In many developing countries such as South Africa poverty conditions define the lives and households of many learners prior to their dropping out of school. One half of the learners who drop out of primary and secondary school in rural South Africa do so for economic reasons (HRW, 2004). For the poor, dropping out of school can have an intergenerational effect: it can impact not just on the present but also on future generations.

3.3.2.3 *Life expectancy*

Lleras-Muney (2001) examines the effects of education on mortality. She estimates that an additional year of schooling substantially lowers the probability of dying among elderly people. This suggests that dropping out of school decreases one's life expectancy. The findings of Lleras-Muney correspond to those of Oreopoulos (2003a), who reports that staying in school one additional year improves subsequent life factor variables such as one's health and chance of employment.

Carleton (2009) reports that among the 3000 plus learners who call it quits from school every day in the US, the majority experience remorse for their decision to drop out prematurely. Many of these individuals say that they would return to school if they could. In health research, remorse is a source of psychological stress

(American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Psychological stress impacts negatively on life expectancy. It is not clear how many of these consequences for drop-outs are taken into consideration prior to their making the decision to quit school.

3.3.2.4 *Societal consequences*

Not only are there personal consequences for each individual who drops out of school prematurely, but there are heavy social costs as well. Wolf (2000) and others (Carleton, 2009; Oreopoulos, 2003a) estimate that North American countries will lose 3 trillion dollars in the next decade as a result of school drop-outs. In Canada, Lafleur (1992) estimates that for 140 000 drop-outs it costs the state \$4 billion over their working lifetime in 1989, which corresponds to \$58.7 billion 2005 (Raymond, 2008).

Moretti (2005) submits that drop-outs reduce the productivity of their communities by incurring a high social cost and contribute minimally to the development of these communities. Furthermore, there is evidence that drop-outs are less engaged in civic activities than grade 12 or high-level graduates. Graduates tend to live longer and raise happier, better educated children (Moretti, 2005). This implies that many generations are affected each time a child drops out of school prematurely (www.silentepidemic.org; www.americaspromise.org). When a learner drops out of school he/she misses out on the prospect of living longer and raising happier, better educated children.

As drop-outs go into adulthood with a lower level of education, they stand a higher chance of being involved in criminal activities and being imprisoned (Carleton, 2009; Oreopoulos, 2003a). Dropouts cost communities in the form of government assistance, jail charges, crime, violence, and drug money (Moretti, 2005; Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004). They also cost the communities in terms of cash, public assistance income, and in-kind transfers such as food stamps, rental subsidies, energy assistance, and medical aid to support themselves and their families (Sum *et al*, 2007). These cost factors are common not only in developed countries such as in

Europe and North America but in many developing nations as well (Moretti, 2005; Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004; Sum et al, 2007).

In the US in 2001, Carleton (2009) found that 40% of young people without secondary school leaver-certificates receive some form of government assistance. The cost of this assistance can be quite high in states with abnormally high school drop-out rates. Each instance of dropping out means that society is losing a potentially valuable, fully contributing member.

3.4. THE EXTENT OF AND MOTIVES FOR SCHOOL DROP-INS

While there is a proliferation of literature showing the nature and extent of the learner drop-out phenomenon in South Africa (ESAR 2000; Hanushek, 2003; HRW, 2006; Motala et al, 2007; Mgwangqa & Lawrence, 2008), less has been written about the volume of the drop-outs who actually return to school. Regardless of the context, not all school drop-outs remain out of the education system forever. There is evidence that some dropouts do return to school to complete their schooling (e.g. Barro in McLaughlin, 1990). Illinois Task Force (2008) submits that in different countries around the world, many of the youth who dropped out of school are in fact learners who would like to return to earn their school-leaving certificates.

As mentioned before, the number of studies that have investigated drop-outs' re-enrolment is limited. Raymond (2008) makes this point well, noting that there are few studies in literature that address school returns by drop-outs. The few exceptions include the study conducted by Bushnik (2004), Brown (2008), Grant and Hallman (2006), and Maharaj, Kaufman, and Richter (2000) in South Africa. The rest were done in the United States: Sum; Khatiwada; McLaughlin; Tobar; Motroni; and Palma (2007), Illinois Task Force (2008), Berliner; Barrat; Fong; and Shirk (2008), Chuang (1997), De Vos (2005), Wayman (2001), Barro (1987), and Betty (1986).

3.4.1. Pathways back into education: proportion of and motives for drop-outs' return to school

3.4.1.1 Proportion of dropout return to school

It has been mentioned in previous sections most dropouts do not necessarily stay out of school forever. In the High School and Beyond Longitudinal Survey conducted between 1981 and 1986 in the US, Barro (1987) found that among the 40 000 dropout cohort, nearly half (46.5%) dropped back into school and completed their secondary schooling or received an equivalent school-leaver certificate. Berliner, Barrat, Fong and Shirk (2008) found that about one third of the drop-outs in a large urban US district return to schools. Work by Illinois Task Force (2008) in districts in other states produced similar findings.

In Canada, Bowlby and McMullen (2002) reported that in 1999 approximately 15% of young men and 9% of young women aged 20 years had not completed their secondary schooling, but by the end of 2000/01 approximately 20% of them had returned to school. Between 1991 and 2005, the national rate of dropouts returning to school in Canada gradually increased over the 15-year period (Raymond, 2008). In the same country, Bushnik, Barr-Telford and Bussiere (2004) used regression models on data collected from a sample of 2 350 drop-outs to show particular geographic areas more or less likely to experience school drop-ins, with drop-ins more likely in large cities such as Quebec and less likely in small towns such as Alberta.

Ball and Lamb (2001) examine vocational education and training activities and the experiences of non-completers of Grade 12 in the initial post-school years in Australia. Their sample of 2 067 respondents included young people who did not continue at secondary school beyond Grade 10 and Grade 11 as well as those who left during Grade 12 without obtaining a Grade 12 certificate. The study was a Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth (LSAY) and Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS)

mainly for 1995, 1996, 1997 and 1998. The researchers found that over 40% of all non-completers re-enter trade-related courses. A quarter re-enrol in non-trade skills courses.

The study by Rumberger and Lamb (1998) examined the experiences of high school dropouts from the United States and Australia. The study analysed longitudinal surveys in both countries. In the former, 25 000 Grade 8 learners in 1998 were used, and in the latter 5 500. In the US, 44% of dropouts returned to complete the high school equivalency certificate. In Australia, only 2% returned to complete their schooling. However, the majority of these dropouts in Australia re-entered Technical and Further Education College, courses including apprenticeships, traineeships, and other certificate courses which do not require a Grade 12 certificate for entry. More recently, cross-country work by Oreopoulos (2003a; 2003b) which drew on samples from three countries – the US, Canada, and the United Kingdom – refers to the re-enrolment of school dropouts, but the precise proportion returning to school is not given.

Evidence of dropouts re-enrolling in school in South Africa is also documented, but there is a dearth of literature on the subject. Large-scale surveys are notably absent. Grant and Hallman (2003; 2006) used data collected in 2001 in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, to examine youth schooling, work, and childbearing, and the factors associated with schoolgirl pregnancy. The study further explored the likelihood of school drop-out and subsequent re-enrolment among pregnant schoolgirls. It found, *inter alia*, that 32% of 14–19-year-olds who had ever been pregnant were currently attending school (Hallman and Grant 2003). Maharaj *et al* (2000) used the 1993 SALDRU data to examine transitions and tensions in household and communities regarding children's schooling (Maharaj, Kaufman, & Richter, 2000). They found that approximately 35% of African girls aged 19 and younger who had given birth at least once were currently attending school.

There is no South African study as far as could be ascertained that investigated male drop-out re-enrolment in school. This limitation hinders gender comparison, for instance. A study by Brown (2008) in the Eastern Cape examines the experiences of

ex-drop-outs in school after re-enrolment in schools in the province. The study uses both male and female ex-drop-outs in the sample, but it is a case study of ten individuals. More importantly, however, this study provides some evidence that both male and female drop-outs re-enrol in schools.

In other African countries, evidence of the re-enrolment of dropouts in school has been reported (Ahmed & Sayed, 2009; SADOH, 1999; Johnson-Hanks, 2002; Grant & Hallman, 2006;). For instance, an ethnographic study in Cameroon indicated that young women sent their children to live in the father's household or otherwise relinquished parental rights to other relatives in order to continue their education (Johnson-Hanks 2002). The wealth of evidence in different countries on these learners' return to school shows that while the proportion that returned varies across contexts, the phenomenon remains a reality in the school system inside and outside South Africa.

3.4.1.2 Motives for the decision to return to school

There are both 'push' and 'pull' factors in learners' motivation to drop-out and return to school. The literature describes labour market experiences that push learners back into school to complete their education – wider employment prospects, higher earnings, higher skills demands, disappointing labour market experiences, recognition of the economic benefits obtained from completing school – while principals, teachers, sports coaches, and counsellors help to pull drop-outs back to primary and secondary school by offering to immediately re-enrol them and by providing counselling and academic assistance on their return. This is particularly the case in developed countries (Berliner et al, 2008; Rumberger & Lamb, 1998; Bushnik, Barr-Telford & Bussiere, 2004; Raymond, 2008).

In general, Raymond summarises some of the common characteristics that are shown to 'influence the decision to return to school' (Raymond, 2008:15). These are displayed in Table 1:

Table 1: Characteristics that influence the decision to return to school

NO	CHARACTERISTIC	EXAMPLES OF DIMENSIONS	INTENDED VARIABLE
1	Personal and family characteristic	Has one or more children	Captures financial constraint
		Lives alone	Captures financial constraint
		Main parent has postsecondary education diploma, certificate or degree	Captures individual's notion of the value of education
		Main parents' education unknown	
2	Educational experience and aspirations	Repeated a grade in primary school	Captures costs for returning to school, having lower ability, having lower self-confidence
		Last maths course was postsecondary education preparatory	Captures intentionally-temporary drop-out
		Last maths course was Grade 9 level or below	Captures intentionally-temporary drop-out
		Wants to get postsecondary education	Captures intentionally-temporary drop-out
3	Dropout circumstances (last grade completed)	Grade 10	Captures the cost of returning to school
		Grade 11	
		Grade 12	
		Numbers of years since left school	Captures the cost of returning to school
4	Reason for leaving school	Academic	
		Personal	
		Wishes to work/money	
		Other	
5	Labour market activities and conditions	Did not work in the autumn of 1999	Captures the cost of returning to school
		Greatest number of hours worked per month in one job in autumn 1999	Captures the cost of returning to school
		Local unemployment rate for 15-year-olds and over (gender-specific, by economic region)	Captures the potential supply of jobs
6	Location	Township	
		Town	
		Farm	
		Village	

Source: Raymond, 2008

The Table shows that many of the factors that triggered dropping out also influence dropping in. Personal and family background, educational experiences and aspirations, drop-out circumstances, reasons for dropping out, labour market activities and conditions and location are the main characteristics that influence a youth's decision to return to schooling.

Family-related pressure factors push drop-outs back into school. Evidence to this effect has been reported in some Africa-based studies. In South Africa, Grant and Hallman (2006) found that 29% of 14–19-year-olds who drop out of school when they are pregnant had returned to school at the time of the survey, compared with 52% of 20–24-year-olds. But with every year that passes after dropping out of school, young women are significantly less likely to return to school. The likelihood of return to school decreases with each higher grade, particularly after Grade 9. This difference most likely relates to the longer period of time that the older cohort has had to return to school after the pregnancy. Younger girls who have dropped out of school because of pregnancy may return to school in the future, perhaps at a postsecondary level.

The extent of household assets and the education levels of adult family members are not determinants of South African females' return to school after a pregnancy. In the cohort of dropouts that Grant and Hallman (2006) studied, household wealth, as measured by asset ownership, is not significantly associated with a return to schooling, nor is the level of education of adult household members. But the composition of the household is significantly associated with a return to school. Young women living in households where an adult female aged 25 to 49 or aged 60 and older is present are more likely to return to school than are young women living in households that lack an adult woman. The rationale for the age disaggregation is that 25–49-year-olds are normally considered of prime age and as economically active adults in terms of either market or home production, whereas South African women aged 60 and older are eligible for the state old-age pension (Grant & Hallman, 2006). The older member often plays the role of caregiver.

Apart from household factors, age at school entry and grade repetition influence South African female drop-outs' re-enrolment. In the Grant and Hallman study,

neither age at school entry nor ever having repeated a grade is significantly associated with the likelihood of returning to school. Young women who had previously withdrawn from school for non-pregnancy-related reasons are half as likely to return to school as are young women who had never withdrawn for pregnancy related reasons. This finding may indicate a young woman's motivation and interest in school, independent of her current circumstances.

3.4.1.3 Demographic factors in motives for the decision to return to school

Furthermore, certain demographic factors are common among dropouts who return, or do not return, to school. These include whether or not the parents have postsecondary education, the dropout's academic ability, his/her age, the duration of the period out of school, and the perceived cost of returning (Raymond, 2008; Berliner *et al*, 2008; Oreopoulos, Page, & Stevens, 2003).

- Race/ethnicity variation in re-enrolment

There is evidence of race/ethnicity variation in drop-out re-enrolment in school. This is the case in different contexts. Among US drop-outs, Berliner *et al* (2008) found that re-enrolment rates are lowest for Asian learners (13.3%), who also had the lowest drop-out rate (22.6%). In contrast, Hispanic, English language learners and male learners also had low re-enrolment rates but are more likely to drop out than are other learners. The fact that the learner population in many South African schools is multiracial makes an understanding of this race dimension particularly important in this study.

In the US, Hispanic learners had a higher drop-out rate (39.0%) and a lower re-enrolment rate (27.9%) than learners of other races/ethnicities. English language learners dropped out at a higher rate (43.3%) than did other learners (32.5%) and re-enrolled at a lower rate (25.6%) (Berliner *et al*, 2008).

The highest re-enrolment rates were found for Grade 9 drop-outs (49.4%), Black drop-outs (43.4%), female drop-outs (34.7%), and learner drop-outs not classified as English-language learners (33.7%). But the majority of re-enrolees in the US drop out in their first year of school (Berliner et al, 2008). The higher re-enrolment rates, especially for Grade 9 and Black learner drop-outs, demonstrate how drop-out events can be a temporary interruption rather than a permanent high school outcome. Grant and Hallman (2006) argue that the time horizon explains the greater re-enrolment in Grade 9, compared with higher grades.

- Gender

School drop-in is also varied by gender. Berliner et al (2008) report that male learners are more likely to drop out than are female learners (39.5% compared with 30.7%) and less likely to re-enrol (28.1% compared with 34.7%). Work by Raymond (2008) in Canada echoed these findings. Raymond submits that fewer women than men drop out from school and more women drop back into school. Also, the reasons that drove young men to drop out do not affect their decision to drop in. In contrast, the reasons for dropping out distinguish which young women return. Of the utmost importance is Raymond's finding that more than 50% to 60% of drop-outs who re-entered the education system failed.

The gender gap in returns to school may be the product of differences in school-return aspirations, particularly at the time of dropping out. For the male and female learner subgroups low re-enrolment rates mean that drop-out events become permanent exits from schools. This kind of outcome is particularly negative in contexts where labour market activities are limited.

School performance disaggregates gender group re-enrolment. Prior poor school performance, measured as grade repetition or temporary withdrawal from school, is highly predictive of which young women will drop out and show disinterest in dropping in (Raymond, 2008; Berliner et al, 2008; Meekers & Ahmed, 1999). Meekers and Ahmed (1999) found that among young women in Botswana who dropped out of school following a pregnancy and subsequently returned to school,

the majority of returnees stayed in school until they received their matriculation certificate. This is in contrast to Berliner *et al* (2008), who found in the US that drop-outs stay in school about a year after re-enrolment and are unlikely to stay until they finish schooling.

Meekers and Ahmed (1999) speculate that highly motivated learners with good school performance prior to pregnancy are those most likely to return, but also that any learner who manages to return to school following a pregnancy is likely to have the impetus to advance her education. This is consistent with the hypothesis that there is a greater urgency to re-enrol among females than among males.

The eagerness shown by females to return to school as reported in studies conducted in Europe and North America does not necessarily apply across contexts. Qualitative research in South Africa has found that some young women marry or move into their partner's home following a pregnancy, and are thereby subject to the financial and labour priorities of their new household, which may not place a priority on their continuing education (Kaufman, 2001). Maharaj *et al* (2000) demonstrate that adolescent mothers whose children are not co-resident are more likely to be attending school currently.

A further factor influencing school continuation by gender is women's fertility subsequent to the birth of their first child. Although South Africa's total fertility rate is low (2.9 children per woman of reproductive age in 1998) compared with that of other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and the median birth interval for second and third births is nearly 50 months (SADOH, 1999), young women who have a second child shortly after the first is born may, for practical reasons, no longer have the option of returning to school. Disentangling a woman's education and fertility objectives is difficult, however. The possibility of returning to school may lead women to postpone their second birth if they can (Kaufman *et al*, 2001).

Bushnik *et al* (2002) investigated the phenomenon of return-to-school by gender in a sample of 2 350 school drop-outs aged 18 to 20 years in Canada. They found that both male and female drop-outs return to school but report qualitative differences in

their motives. While very few factors influence young women's decisions to return to school such as (a) the circumstances that brought them to leave school in the first place, (b) their aspirations to obtain a postsecondary education, and (c) the time elapsed since they left school, young men on the other hand, returned to school because of (a) their negative labour experience, (b) their past academic experience and decisions (those with good experiences being the more likely to return), and (c) their aspirations to obtain a postsecondary education. For both men and women, the results suggest that '

major determinant of returning to school is whether the absence from school was considered temporary, as captured by their long-term postsecondary aspirations' (Raymond, 2008:8).

But while drop-outs return to school, their completion rate seems to vary. Also, the analysis found that 'as a greater proportion of leavers return to school, fewer return to complete their high school diploma, instead choosing to seek a postsecondary diploma or degree' (Raymond, 2008:11). The largest increase was in university programmes, most likely [sic] university certificates targeted to mature learners.

There are limitations to the above study. The analysis does not provide clear pathways to the workplace, and like the Ball and Lamb (2001) study, it does not trace newly graduated drop-outs to the workplace in terms of enhanced opportunities and performance. There is a need for further research in workplace pathways. There is also a need for research into why the majority of dropping-in youth are not making it in the system.

This study has several implications for both the policy and practice of rescuing drop-outs in South Africa.

3.5. DROP-OUTS AND THE LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.5.1 The labour market challenges

Although education is a primary investment strategy used by poor families to escape poverty in less developed countries, evidence from South Africa indicates that labour-market incentives for youths 15–24 years old to complete secondary school are not high and may even be declining. In terms of employment, trends have not kept pace with the growth in the South African economy. Between 2000 and 2007, the average annual economic growth was 4.1% while the growth in the employment rate was 1.8% (DoL, 2008). Growth in the economy over the period has not translated into an equivalent growth in employment rate in the labour market in South Africa (Pollin, Epstein, Heintz, & Ndikumana, 2006). About 26% of the labour force in the country is currently unemployed (Pollin *et al*, 2006). A United Nations Development Program (UNDP) study (Pollin *et al*, 2006) states that there is a severe problem of mass unemployment in South Africa today and cautions that if the South African economy continues to operate with its existing policy package along its current trajectory, the likelihood is high that the official unemployment rate will be substantially above 30% by 2014.

The above assessment does not augur well for South African youth in general, and those who dropped out of school in particular. Young people make up the majority of those who have never worked (Banerjee, Galiani, Levinsohn, McLaren, & Woolard, 2008). Employment is the most important source of potential income for the majority of South Africans. This fact establishes a fundamental link between unemployment and poverty: that joblessness is the single greatest cause of mass poverty and, correspondingly, reducing unemployment would be the single most effective means of reducing poverty. As the discussion in sections 2.4 and 2.5 above indicates, poverty-related conditions push many youths out of school. When these drop-outs find themselves out of school, they are faced with the prospect of living

without being formally engaged in livelihood activities in the labour market. In this way, many young drop-outs are caught in an education and unemployment trap.

Like the drop-out statistics (cf. section 2.4), the severity of unemployment in South Africa differs by gender and population group. Women consistently experience substantially higher rates of joblessness than do men (Pollin *et al*, 2006). But more men drop out of school than women. Female unemployment rates are about 50% higher than those for males (Banerjee, Galiani, Levinsohn, McLaren & Woolard, 2008). Even though fewer females drop out of school than males, females are less likely to find employment.

Banerjee *et al* (2008) found that among the different population groups, white South Africans have the lowest unemployment rates (an average of 5.1%) and Africans have the highest unemployment rates (an average of 31.6%). The unemployment rates for the Coloured and Indian/Asian populations are significantly higher than those of Whites (averaging 19.8% and 19.0% respectively). As section 2.4 shows, unemployment among drop-outs tends to follow a similar pattern, which reinforces the cycle of problems drop-outs experience in the labour market.

The burden of unemployment also differs geographically in South Africa, with the highest concentration of unemployed workers being in rural areas (Banerjee *et al*, 2008). As of March 2005 unemployment by province - using the official definition - ranged from 17.6% in the Western Cape to 32.4% in Limpopo - a difference of 14.8 percentage points. The Western Cape is the second most heavily urbanised province in the country, while Limpopo is the most rural.

The differences between the regions are still sharper with respect to the numbers of discouraged worker seekers. Thus, in the Western Cape only 6.3% of the working-age population is discouraged, whereas in Limpopo, discouraged worker seekers account for 21.9% of the working-age population. Overall, discouraged worker seekers are even more heavily concentrated in rural areas than are the official unemployed. Of all the unemployed who have never worked in the past, 76% are aged from 15 to 30

years old. The lower end of this age range shows that unemployment features strongly among youths of school-going age.

Finding an easy pathway into the labour market after dropping out of school is rare in South Africa, at least in as far as the formal sector economy is concerned. The fact that many of the unemployed who have never worked are young and that many of these young people remain unemployed for long periods of time is representative of South Africa's serious problem of youth unemployment (Bhorat & McCord, 2003).

Even young people who have completed their secondary education have high unemployment rates. In 2002, 34% of the young unemployed were Black Africans between 15 and 24 years old, with grade 12 or tertiary qualifications (Emmett *et al*, 2004).

3.5.2 The prospect of returning to school

In addition to improving their employment prospects, education for women offers potential returns beyond the labour market. In conducting focus-group research in South Africa, Kaufman *et al* (2001) found that education is strongly associated with the valuation of a woman's bride-price, a fact which often encourages parents to support their daughters' return to school following early pregnancy and childbirth.

Moreover, because job opportunities are so scarce for young African women, popular attention has turned recently to the availability of the child-support grant (HSRC, 2005). Rather than continuing with their schooling or seeking employment, some girls 14 years old or younger in poor households in South Africa reportedly fall pregnant as a means of getting access to the child-support grants provided by government (HSRC 2005). This survival strategy further complicates the range of factors drop-outs often consider regarding whether or not to drop back in.

3.6 POLICY AND PROGRAMMES SUPPORTING SCHOOL DROP-IN IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.6.1 Primary/secondary schooling

3.6.1.1 *Policy supporting post pregnancy girls' return to school*

Although in many settings having a child marks the end of schooling for girls, a policy formalised in South Africa in 1996 but informally upheld previously by some school principals allows pregnant girls to stay in school and also allows young mothers to do so if they can manage logically and financially (Kaufman *et al*, 2001). This policy, although not universally enforced, is credited with the observed lack of gender differences in total educational attainment and is believed to contribute to the observed long delay before the birth of a second child to adolescent mothers in South Africa (Grant & Hallman, 2006). The policy has encouraged several females to return to school after giving birth to complete pre-tertiary education (Maharaj *et al*, 2000; Hallman & Grant, 2003).

3.6.1.2 *No-fee school*

A no-fee school policy was implemented in South Africa in 2007. The no-fee policy empowers the Minister of Education to exempt certain schools from charging fees, based on the poverty levels of the area they serve. The government determines which schools qualify to be no-fee schools using data from the Poverty Index supplied by Statistics South Africa (DoE, 2006). The three poverty indicators utilised for this purpose are the income, unemployment rate and level of education of the community. These are weighted to assign a poverty score for the community and school. In terms of this policy, a school drop-out who wishes to return to school cannot be denied entry on the basis of his/her inability to pay the fees charged by the school. In this way, the policy supports the return of drop-outs to the formal education system.

Ahmed and Sayed (2009) point out that the no-fee school allocation is developed using five considerations. These are linked to the rights of learners, the minimum basic package to ensure quality education, the prices of goods and services, the national distribution of income difference and poverty, and finally the state budget (DoE, 2006). The emphasis is on allowing poor and disadvantaged learners access to education, regardless of whether the learners are attempting access for the first time or not. Sayed and Ahmed (2008) support this position by asserting that the fee exemption policy is a way of ensuring that access is not denied to any learner.

The form of exemptions differs. Parents of learners have the opportunity to apply for a full or partial exemption of fees at any school, regardless of whether the school serves a richer or poorer community (DoE 1998). Drop-outs are therefore given a wide range of schools from which to choose. This could be interpreted as meaning that drop-outs have the flexibility of returning to their previous schools or starting at new ones, as they wish, particularly if the reason for their dropping out of school is linked to their geographic location.

Two major categories of learners are catered for in the no-fee policy. The first is learners who are orphans or abandoned children, and those receiving a poverty-linked state social grant (Sayed & Ahmed, 2008). Learners in this group qualify for a full exemption of fees. The second category requires learners to apply for inclusion. Learners may be granted a full or partial exemption based on their parents' income in relation to school fees. The relation of parental income to the full school fee is determined by a set formula that schools need to utilise upon receiving a written application from a parent. In theory these exemptions permit even the poor to attend rich or fee-charging schools (DoE, 2006).

3.6.1.3 South Africa School Act

The South Africa School Act (SASA, 1996) sets out a framework for school governance that allows for the existence of democratically elected School Governing Bodies as juristic persons in charge of a school. All children have a right to education, particularly education up to Grade 9, which in the South African context is deemed

basic education. The Act establishes compulsory education, allows schools the right to charge school fees, and cedes a great deal of autonomy to schools. But the SASA supports a linear transition in the formal education system from Grade R to Grade 12. It does not give consideration to other pathways such as non-formal schooling.

3.6.2 Postsecondary schooling

Some policies are linked to strategies for connecting secondary school drop-outs between the ages of 16 and 24 to pathways to the attainment of postsecondary credentials that have value in the labour market.

3.6.2.1 Education White Paper 4: A Programme for the Transformation of the Further Education (FET) Sector 1998

The Education White Paper 4 resulted in the establishment of a new FET system. The policy outlines close collaboration with the Ministry of Labour in the governance of the FET sector. The central objective is to build the policy foundation and scaffolding for a new FET system that is responsive to the skills-related needs of the youth and that is efficient, effective and accountable to its learners and stakeholders.

The establishment of the FET system provides an alternative education pathway to learners who dropped out of secondary schools and who wish to re-enter the education system. One provision of the FET policy is that learners with a Grade 9 level of education can enrol to continue their education (Reddy, 2007). For learners who dropped out of secondary school before reaching Grade 12, the FET schools are an alternative pathway to gain credentials that have value in the labour market.

The FET sector consists of technical colleges that provide education and training in specialised fields such as Engineering, Business Studies, and the Arts (Gewer, 2002). In these colleges, training is provided up to the National Qualification Framework levels 2 to 4 for the National Certificate Vocational NATED programmes (Gewer,

2002). FET colleges were formed through the merging of several former technical colleges and training centres (DoE, 2001). The FET schools are pathways for drop-outs to drop into the education system, where they can gain the skills needed for the labour market.

3.6.2.2 *SETAs' learnership programmes*

The Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) in is another South African mechanism that provides school drop-outs with a pathway into education and training and work. The SETAs were established in 2000 through the Skills Development Act of 1998. The SETAs are supported by a levy taken from employers' annual payrolls (Skills Development Act, 1998). They are structures that seek to assist both employed and unemployed out-of-school youth in skills development through training (Butler, Bell, & Murray, 2007).

Butler *et al* (2007) describe this system well by noting that there are twenty-three SETAs, each representing one sector or industry cluster – and each is to ensure that the skills requirements of the various sectors are identified, and that the adequate and appropriate skills are readily available. They are also to ensure that training is of the appropriate quality, meets agreed standards as laid out by the national framework, and caters for the training needs of new entrants to the labour market as well as the currently employed work force.

The SETA programmes are of direct significance in the school drop-out debate in South Africa because SETA training links drop-outs directly to the labour market. One of the reasons drop-outs are challenged to access the job market is that they are unskilled (Banerjee *et al*, 2008). The SETA training is able to develop the skills capacity of drop-outs, thereby improving their level of education. Because of this, the SETA programmes open a pathway for dropouts to re-access the education and training system en route to the labour market.

Each SETA is tasked with distributing the money that is raised from skills levies back to their sector, developing learning programmes that are relevant for its sector and

maintaining the highest standards of training. Drop-outs who access SETA programmes can be assured of quality skills development because quality assurance is conducted via a SETA Education and Training Quality Assurance body (Butler *et al*, 2007).

The programmes that the SETAs are responsible for are 'learnership programmes'. Learnerships are contractual agreements between a learner, a training provider and an employer. In practice, a significant portion of the learning and the subsequent assessment are conducted in the workplace. How sufficient the learnership programmes are by themselves for opening up access to higher-wage opportunities for drop-outs who gain access to them remains an open question. An equally important question is whether or not these programmes are bringing the majority of the youth served to any level of postsecondary readiness. Despite these questions, the SETA programmes are intended to provide an alternative pathway for secondary school drop-outs to improve their education.

3.6.2.3 *UMsobomvu youth funds*

Umsobomvu Youth Fund is a government-backed organisation that provides training and monetary assistance to South Africans between the ages of 18 and 35 to start a business (Shinn, 2008). Umsobomvu was established by government in 2001. Umsobomvu has relevance to the school drop-out situation in South Africa as its aim is to reverse the unemployment trends in the country by supporting entrepreneurs and giving training and consulting services to hopeful young business people.

Umsobomvu Youth Fund organisation offers counselling to young people and delivers various training programmes focusing on life and job skills, entrepreneurship, and assisting youth with school to the work contexts (Shinn, 2008). Sometimes school dropouts wish to have access to training that links them directly to employment (Harris & Ganzglass, 2008). This is the pathway that Umsobomvu programmes provide.

Like Umsobomvu Youth Organisation, the National Youth Commission is a branch of government that deals with issues affecting youths between the ages of 14 and 35 years. The two organisations are now in the process of merging (Gabara, 2009).

3.7 SUMMARY

This chapter reviewed the literature relating to empirical perspectives on learner school drop-out and drop-in behaviours. Policies and programmes aimed at providing pathways for drop-outs to re-enrol in school or access the labour market have also been reviewed. The review showed that various factors can contribute to drop-out and drop-in to school, but these factors are not as fully understood in South Africa as in other countries. Regardless of the national context, access to the job market for drop-outs is not easy. While South Africa makes provision for out-of-school youths to improve their education and skills, the extent to which these young people are aware of these opportunities is unclear. Also, clarity is needed regarding whether or not these pathways are actually followed by school drop-outs.

The next chapter develops the methodology for the study, which is an empirical investigation of the pathways followed by drop-outs back into the ETD system or the job market.



CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, a report is given of the research design and methodology used in the empirical phase of this study. The empirical phase involved the researcher in entering the field of out-of-school youth to answer the main research question: ‘What are out-of-school youths’ experiences in dropping into the education and training system, and/or entering the job market, and the factors influencing their transition between school and the labour market?’

This chapter provides an account of the research paradigm and design. It also provides an account of the research methods adopted. These methods include a study sampling frame, data collection methods and data processing techniques, ethical considerations and the measures adopted to ensure the trustworthiness of the investigation.

Qualitative methods were used to investigate the major issues. Participants were selected through purposive sampling methods, which included snowballing, to provide an in-depth account of the experiences of the youth within a particular context after dropping out of school. The chapter commences with a description of the research paradigm.

4.2. RESEARCH PARADIGM

This research was aimed at gaining an understanding of the relevant social phenomenon, which is the experiences of out-of-school youths’ entry or re-entry attempts to the education system and/or the labour market. Interpretive researchers are interested in the meaning that people give to phenomena. The phenomena considered in this study were the out-of-school experiences of the youth and the

perspectives of school principals regarding dropping out. The study attempted to look at the pathways that the youth follow.

Kelly, Terre Blanche and Durheim (2006) explain that an interpretive paradigm involves taking people's subjective experiences seriously as the essence of what is real for them (the ontology), making sense of people's experiences by interpreting with them and listening carefully to what they know, tell us and believe (the epistemology), and making use of qualitative research techniques to collect and analyse information (the methodology). This view of the interpretative paradigm guided this investigation.

The interpretative paradigm involves qualitative research. Qualitative research is concerned with the investigation of small, distinct groups (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:375), and aims to generate information that is useful in certain contexts (Kelly, 2006:287), rather than information which can be generalised to a whole population (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:375). In this study, the aim is *inter alia* to generate information enabling us to understand the out-of-school experiences of the youth about dropping into the ETD system or entering the job market.

In this paradigm, the researcher interprets the social environment and looks at human behaviour (Fien, 1992). Through this paradigm, it is possible to get a rich, in-depth understanding of the 'lived experiences' of participants. The qualitative approach allows one to enter the participants' life-worlds and study their lived-experiences (de Vos, 1998). This means that the dynamic, holistic and individual aspects of the experiences of the youth could be captured. The researcher was keen to capture this holistic aspect in its entirety, within the context of the out-of-school youth who experienced it.

4.3. RESEARCH DESIGN

A number of research designs fall within the interpretative paradigm. Saunders *et al* (2003:125) indicate that the research design chosen must suit the nature of the research being undertaken. Since the purpose of this study is to understand the

unique phenomenon of the re-entry of out-of-school youth into the school system or the job market, a case-study design was deemed suitable.

Yin distinguishes between a single-case strategy and a multiple-case strategy by noting that whereas in a single-case strategy a unique phenomenon is studied, in a multiple-case strategy more than one case is studied. The multiple case approach allows the researcher to establish if the findings of one case occur in other cases (Yin, 2002). This study adopts a multiple case design approach since each participant is treated as a case. The multiple-case approach provided the flexibility to study the cases in depth. Furthermore, the main logic behind choosing the multiple-case design and working qualitatively in this study was its nature of exploratory discovery and inductive logic (Creswell, 2003). It is a pertinent design to provide detail and insights into participants' experiences of the contexts, and thus create meaningful accounts of their experiences of school-to-work transitions.

4.4. METHODS

4.4.1. Sample and sampling

The sample consisted of fourteen out-of-school youths. Individual interviews were held with six of the youths - three males and three females - and the focus group interviews were held with eight of the youths. Three of the six youth participants in the individual interviews were also among the eight focus-group participants. During the conceptualisation of the study, ten participants were envisaged for individual interviews. Consideration was later given to the desirability of conducting both individual interviews and a focus-group interview. All participants were aged between 21 and 34 years. The National Youth Policy (1996) defines the youth as being between 14 and 35 years. The participants dropped out of school between Grade 1 and 11. All lived in the Folweni district in KwaZulu-Natal province. The sample also included three principals.

Purposive sampling was used in this study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method (Saunders *et al*, 2003). In purposive sampling, personal judgement

is used to decide on the selection of participants. This is to ensure that participants deemed information-rich are selected (Saunders *et al*, 2003). The idea of key informants is supported by Morgan (in Smith, 1995:45), who advises researchers to concentrate on those population segments that can provide the most meaningful information. This notion of information-richness guided my decision in this investigation. The participants were chosen based on their having dropped out of school and their attempts to re-enter the ETD system or the labour market.

Given the particular nature of the investigation, it was anticipated that locating participants would pose a challenge. The purposive sampling technique of snowballing was therefore adopted. A participant with the particular attributes (dropping out, youth and location) was identified and then asked to identify others, a method recommended by Saunders *et al* (2003). They then led the researcher to other potential participants. In other words, the sample was selected by starting with one person and asking him/her for further contacts. Although this method would hardly lead to country-wide representativity, it was chosen because of its potential to reach a research population that was hard to find

4.4.2. Access to the research site and participants

During the research, the local schools offering Grades 1 to 11 in the Folweni area were visited and the research was discussed with the school principals. Efforts had been made to get permission to access the schools via the District Office but these efforts had proved futile. The school principals were therefore contacted directly. One agreement reached with them was that official documents would not be divulged. The principals gave the researcher access to a list of learners who had dropped out of school. These individuals were then tracked down in the Folweni community. They were then asked to participate in the research, and some of them agreed to do so. This was a voluntary decision. A consent letter which was translated into Zulu and back to English (see appendix A) was read to the participants. They were given a chance to ask questions. Those who agreed to participate met the researcher, the research was discussed with them individually, and an interview date was arranged.

All of the participants were over the age of 21, and parental consent was therefore deemed unnecessary.

4.4.3. Data collection

4.4.3.1. The researcher as instrument

The researcher acted as an instrument in that the responses given by participants were solicited, collated and analysed by the researcher herself. In order to prevent interpretations being influenced by subjective understanding, two measures employed by Sherrard (1998:253) to counter such biases were used. Firstly, close attention was given to the participants' own words. Secondly, such biases were countered by maintaining an awareness of where the researcher was situated according to relevant dimensions of the participants' life-worlds (Sherrard, 1998:253). For this study, the researcher perceived herself to be close to the participants as an educator and a parent. At the same time, there was a distance in respect of the family circumstances of the participants and the difference in age.

Sherrard (1998:253) maintains that awareness of researcher-respondent distance serves as a strength in qualitative research, rather than simply as a means of countering bias. Perceptiveness is increased by finding the 'dimensions of researcher-respondent difference and similarity' (Sherrard, 1998:254).

4.4.3.2. Focus group

One focus group interview was conducted. This was done to answer the research question: What are the youths' experiences as they try to (a) drop into the education and training system, and (b) possibly enter the job market (see Table 2 below)? The researcher chose to use a focus group for various reasons. Firstly, Schulze & Lessing (2002:3) suggest that this technique is the best way to research experience; secondly, because focus group interviews would give the young participants an environment in which they could interact and extend their ideas through such interaction without

the domination of the researcher, and, lastly, the presence of the researcher would be less threatening in a group setting than in an individual interview.

An interview guide was used during the focus group session to ensure consistent focusing on the main issues captured in each research question. The researcher had developed the guide after an analysis of the literature and from personal experience. The themes covered in the interview guide included the following: demographic characteristics; reasons for dropping out; attempts at getting back into the system; reasons for attempting to drop in; what guided the attempts to re-enter; and the participants' personal experiences in each of the above. Other themes included: school-to-work transition experiences; and experiences in accessing different career destinations.

Although these themes were identified prior to the meeting of the focus group, during the focus group interview the natural flow of conversation was followed. The themes were used as prompts, as and when necessary, to explore the full meanings and experiences of participants. The focus group meeting lasted approximately 60 minutes. The interview was conducted in Zulu and the session was tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interview was held at a local youth centre in Folweni.

4.4.3.3. Individual interviews

- Out-of-school youth

Follow-up individual interviews were also conducted with the youth. This was in order to clarify the points of view expressed in the focus group meeting. They were used also to facilitate the gathering of data to answer research questions two and three (see Table 2). All of the participants were interviewed individually.

Table 2: Research questions and data processes

Research questions	Data source	Data collection
Which factors influence the out-of-school youths' transition between high school and the labour market?	The youth	Individual interview
What are the characteristics of successful career destinations for the youths who attempt re-entry?	The youth	Individual interview

- Principals

In addition, three school principals were interviewed to gain insight into the following research question: 'What role does policy play in assisting the youth to get back to the education and training system, and into the labour market thereafter?' The themes covered in this interview were as follows: general destinations for these youth; policy implications; possible advice they give to these youths in re-entrance; perceived pathways for the youth; and the role of education policy and the system in assisting out-of-school youth. An additional aspect covered in the interview was that of the possible reasons for learners 'dropping out' and 'dropping in' to school, the potential activities that these members of the youth embark on after dropping out, and what the school's experiences are in relation to the youth who have dropped in. This was to corroborate the responses to similar questions posed in the interviews with the out-of-school youths.

Both the principals and the out-of-school youths were interviewed in a convenient place. The principals were interviewed in their offices at school, while the youths were interviewed at the local youth centre. Each interview lasted about 60 minutes, and was tape-recorded. This was done with their permission.

4.4.4. Data analysis

Constant comparative analysis was employed. This is a cyclical process in which data are collected, read and re-read, categorised, coded, and then analysed and compared (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The focus group and phenomenological interviews were

conducted in the Zulu language as people in the Folweni district are largely Zulu speaking. Before the data were analysed, they were translated into the English language.

In the analysis, the data were divided according to each research question (cf. Chapter One). Data pertaining to each question were then analysed in the following way (Johnson & Christensen, 2000:426):

- *Segmenting*

Segmenting involved dividing the data into meaningful analytical units. The researcher did this by carefully reading the transcribed data, one line at a time, and asking: is there a segment of text that is important for this research? Does it differ in any way from the text that precedes or follows it? Where does the segment begin and end? Such segments often included words, and/or one or more sentences. Once identified, segments were bracketed in order to indicate where they began and ended.

- *Coding*

The segments of data were identified by means of category names and symbols. For example, *poverty factor* was indicated by PF; *struggle* by S; and *conflict* by C. In addition to these, face-sheet codes which applied to single complete transcripts were given to each transcript to enable the researcher to search for group differences. For example, each PF in the three school principals' transcript was coded P1, P2, and P3 respectively.

- *Compiling of a master list*

All of the category names developed, along with their symbolic codes, were placed on a master list. These codes were reapplied to new sections of text, and each time appropriate sections of text were discovered. New categories and codes were added to the master list as necessary.

- *Checking for inter-coder and intra-coder reliability*

In order to address intercoder reliability, the researcher checked for consistency in the appropriate codes between herself and an assigned external analyst. The external analyst also checked the researcher's analysis for intracoder reliability. This assisted in ensuring that the researcher's coding was consistent.

- *Enumeration*

The frequency with which observations were made was noted in order to help the researcher identify important ideas and prominent themes occurring in the research group as a whole or between different sub-groups.

- *Showing relationships among categories*

Spradley's (in Johnson & Christensen, 2000) summary of nine possible relationships in the text in a data set was used as a guide to find relationships between categories. These included (a) means-end (X is a way to do Y); (b) rationale (X is a reason for doing Y), and so on. Following the analysis of the data, the researcher commenced with writing up the arguments and themes.

4.5. MEASURES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS

De Vos (2005) argues that the verifiability of qualitative research is accurately assessed according to its trustworthiness. In this study, Lincoln and Guba's model for ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative data was employed (De Vos, 2005:346). In accordance with this model, four criteria are used to ensure trustworthiness. These are truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. The tactics employed in each of these criteria are as follows:

- Making the sampling decisions carefully;
- Circulating the findings to the participants to ensure that their views were correctly reflected;
- Using a tape recorder and making verbatim transcriptions of each group interviewed (five individual interviews with the youth participants, one focus group and three individual interviews with the principals, one of which was later withdrawn);

- Obtaining feedback from participants when unsure about the meaning of their statements;
- Asking other out-of-school youth participants in the focus group if they could identify with, or recognise the experiences of their counterparts. Their identification with the experiences would improve the credibility of the results;
- Data triangulation; that is, comparison of the empirical findings with other research findings studied in the literature, and with each other; and
- Having the supervisor check the analysis to ensure that there is agreement regarding the interpretations made and the meanings given to the raw data.

The use of these strategies ensured that truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality were achieved.

4.5.1. Research context

Out-of-school youth and principals of schools in the District of Folweni participated in the empirical investigation. Folweni is located in the heart of Umbumbulu, on the South Coast of Durban, in the KwaZulu-Natal province. Folweni was known during the 1980s as a violence-stricken area, with a lot of fatalities as a result of the political conflict between the African National Congress and Inkatha Freedom Party.

Since the 1980s, on any given weekday Folweni roads are generally busy, as the youth, who are largely unemployed, roam the streets freely. In 2001 the unemployment rate stood at 47% (Census, 2001). The youth make up 42% of Folweni's unemployed community members (Census, 2001). Given the downturn in the economic situation in the country since 2007, the unemployment rate in Folweni today is assumed to be much higher.

Folweni is a semi-rural township. The area has a local councillor. The community and the councillor tend to know the activities of the locals. The community has eight primary schools, three combined schools, and six secondary schools. One Further Education and Training College is located in the proximity of the area (about 20km

from the township). The nearest university is about 30km away. In terms of commercial activities, the community is supported mainly by informal businesses, which include family-run small shops and unskilled employment.

Access to quality education is restricted for most of the learners attending school in Folweni by the fact that most parents are unemployed or are unskilled labourers, and as a result cannot afford to send their children to the 'better' schools.

These factors made Folweni a suitable site for this investigation.

4.6. ETHICAL MEASURES

The ethical measures undertaken, which served as guiding principles throughout the empirical investigation, were as follows:

4.6.1. Informed consent

The researcher undertook to obtain informed consent from all participants by means of engaging in a dialogue, during which each participant was informed of the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Informed consent ensures that participants are provided with adequate information regarding (a) the researcher's credibility as a researcher, (b) the procedures to be followed during the research, (c) the goal of the investigation, and (d) the possible advantages and disadvantages of participating.

Furthermore, the researcher had to ensure that participants were competent to give their consent, and had to make them aware that they were free to withdraw from the investigation at any time. The participants were able to make voluntary decisions to participate or not.

4.6.2. Anonymity and confidentiality

The participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. The specific settings and participants' identity would not be revealed or be identifiable in print. Code

names for people and places were to be used to ensure anonymity (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993).

4.6.3. Deception and privacy

The researcher undertook to avoid deception through obtaining informed consent, and through protecting the privacy of participants. The taping of focus group and individual interviews proceeded only with the knowledge and consent of the participants. The participants were assured that they had the right to refuse to respond to certain questions, and to decide what sort of information they wanted to disclose.

4.6.4. The researcher's competence

The researcher recognised the importance of ensuring that the research was conducted in a competent manner. In order to do this, the researcher undertook, as proposed by Strydom (2006:63), (a) to accept the ethical responsibility to ensure that she was adequately skilled to conduct the investigation; (b) to remain sensitive to the needs of the participants in the study; and (c) to refrain from making value judgements about the points of view of the participants.

4.7. METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES AND LIMITATIONS

The study was an intergenerational study. The age of the adult researcher would inevitably have impacted on the findings in some ways. However, the researcher attempted to minimise this limitation by privileging the voices of the participants throughout the study.

The focus group interview allowed space for interaction between the participants and for the researcher to fade into the background. After the initial questioning, the participants tended to take over the discussion and even to respond to their peer contributions and challenge one another's views.

4.8. SUMMARY

The methodology employed in the investigation has been described in this chapter. The findings arising from this investigation are reported in the next chapter.



CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, an account is provided of the findings of the empirical investigation. The chapter begins with a discussion on the composition of the research sample, which takes the form of a description of the focus group and individual interview participants that were involved in the investigation. The findings presented are an outcome of both kinds of interviews.

5.2. COMPOSITION OF FOCUS GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

There were fourteen youth participants in total and three school principals. Six out-of-school youth participants were interviewed individually and eight were part of the focus group. Three school principals were interviewed and one later withdrew. Of the eight youth participants (in the focus group), three had participated in individual interviews. The three school principals were interviewed individually.

5.2.1. Out-of-school youth

The out-of-school youths participated in both the focus group and the individual interviews. Of the six youths ($n=6$) who made up the individual interviews (some of whom participated in the focus group), three were male and three were female. The three females were between 24 and 26 years of age. The males were aged between 22 and 27 years. The participants had been out of school for a number of years. The three females had been out of the school system for an average of six years. One male had spent three years out of school, while the other males had been out of school for between four and eight years. All of the participants had made attempts to drop back

into the school system, as well as to enter the job market. A summary of the participants' demographic and secondary school characteristics is shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Participants' demographic and secondary school characteristics

Participants (pseudonyms)	Gender	Age (in years)	Grade of drop-out	No. of School drop-in attempts
Maz (P1)	Female	24	9	1
Shorty (P2)	Female	26	11	3
Moon lady (P3)	Female	22	9	2
Armani (P4)	Male	27	11	4
Lk (P5)	Male	22	11	2
Westy (P6)	Male	23	11	1

There were no married participants in the group. All of the participants indicated that they were single and unmarried. At the same time, all of the female participants acknowledged that they were parents. Female participant 1 (P1) was mother to a child who died after a short illness. She gave birth to the child during her teenage years (age 15) while in school. Participant 1 lived with her mother, older sister, brother, a niece and two nephews.

The other two female participants (i.e. P2 and P3) each had daughters, with P2 having one and P3 having two living daughters. P2 had a 10-year-old daughter, born while the mother was in grade 11. In contrast, the daughters of P3 were aged five and seven. These children were born after the mother (P3) had dropped out of school. Both of these female participants lived with their parents, children, and other siblings.

Of the three male participants that made up the focus group, one (P4) was a parent. This father participant, who has two sisters and a brother and lives with his

grandmother, has a three-year old son. Like most participants in the study, he dropped out of school in Grade 11 (aged 16). The other two male participants were not fathers. All lived with their parents within the Folweni area.

5.2.2. Principals

Three school principals ($n=3$) were interviewed separately. All but one of these participants was female. Their average age was 45 years. The participants were principals of secondary schools and had been working as school heads (principals or acting principals) for an average of 18 years.

5.3. FINDINGS

The findings have been presented in accordance with the four research questions posed. These questions were: (i) What are the experiences of the youth as they try to (a) drop into the ETD system, and (b) possibly enter the job market? (ii) Which factors influence the out-of-school transition of the youth between high school and the labour market? (iii) What are the characteristics of the career pathways taken by the youth who drop out of or after drop-out drop into the ETD system? (iv) What are school managers' (principals') views regarding youth drop-out and possible drop into the ETD system, and into the labour market thereafter?

The findings relating to each of the four research questions are outlined in the sections that follow.

5.3.1 Research question 1: What are the experiences of the youth as they try (a) to drop into the ETD system, and (b) possibly enter the job market?

5.3.1.1 Recognised valuing of education by the youth

The youth acknowledged the importance and value of schooling. However, schooling was viewed as valuable for extrinsic, instrumental reasons. In all of their

commentaries the young participants expressed little or no concern for or interest in schooling for its intrinsic benefits. In other words, there was an obvious absence of intrinsic valuing of education by participants. This point was openly made by all of the out-of-school youths. A typical comment was:

We need to finish school so we can find good jobs; and take care of our family. Educated people have good jobs. Look at you [referring to the interviewer]; you have a new car every year and you take care of your whole family. All educated people get good jobs – even if they do not drive good cars, they still make enough money to get everything that they want. [P2]

The association of formal schooling to access to jobs reflects an extrinsic, instrumental valuing of education. The out-of-school youth associated the result of schooling with getting a qualification and improving one's chance of getting employment. They all wanted to drop into the ETD system. The reason they wanted to do this was to get a qualification that they perceived would assist them to get a job.

There was a clear indication that the participants attached great importance to education. It seems that much of this came as a result of their out-of-school experiences. They held a distinct recognition of the value of education outside school. A common experience which brought participants to further internalise the significance of schooling was:

When you seek a job, you are asked for qualification... everything you do you are asked to produce matric certificate. You can see from this that education means a lot. [P3]

The youth also valued schooling for its development of personal awareness, but it seems that this awareness was not appreciated for its own sake. Rather it was for being in a better position to survive socially. There was agreement in the group that:

People without matric [a person completing his/her grade 12 level education] can't think... just listen to them... I often listen to them when they come to my salon business. You can't even have a chat about current affairs; they don't know what is going on around them, compared to a person in school or one with matric. [P4]

These youth evidently placed more value on the formal schooling processes than on informal processes of socialisation. There is a belief, it seems, among these youth that by being socially aware, one stood a greater chance *inter alia* to exploit opportunities in their environment. Such a perception implicitly suggests that a person completing grade 12 has a better chance to do so.

5.3.1.2 Experiences leading to youth exit from school

But while the youth valued schooling, it was pertinent to understand what in their experiences caused them to drop out. For the female participants, the underlying causes were their pregnancy and financial instability. Relevant statements made by the females were:

...I mean, I don't know why I left school; I got pregnant and I didn't have money for me and my child. I dropped out of school as I could not manage. [P2].

My experience is that I left school in Grade 9... I dropped out because I was pregnant (in 2000); I was also sick; I had an eye problem; when I exercise or read, my eyes became red and tears just kept running out. I still have that problem today but it is not like before. The doctors told me that I developed some allergy with a type of tree. [P3].

I dropped out of school in 2000. It's... I got a baby. I was pregnant. I stopped at grade 11. After that I was home. [P1].

Motherhood and its associated responsibilities evidently accounted for initially pushing the females out of secondary school. The male participants had very different experiences.

For the male participants, drug use, pilfering, and parents' financial instability pushed them out of secondary school. This is illustrated in the following quotes:

My experience is that I dropped out of school at grade 11... I had no uniform and no school fee... the principal was giving me problems and my parents were not paying so I stayed at home. My father worked as a machine driver but he used to say he did not have enough money to pay yet he drank a lot of alcohol [P5].

The love of money caused me to drop-out... I got caught up with the wrong people.... I thought I would make a lot of money stealing, me and my friend... we influenced each other. At my home, there was no one working to pay for my schooling [P5].

In general, as one male participant explained, boys used drugs and smoked dagga. As a result, these youths end up not studying, and used alcohol instead: ‘...you see here when people are supposed to be at school they are busy with these things and at the end they fail their subjects and lose hope of ever trying again. Sometimes it’s stupidity; people fail until they are helpless and end up throwing the towel in when it’s time to write exams’.

These observations offer some insights into the reasons for the participants dropping out of school. Many of these were corroborated in the views on the issue shared by the school principals, where the following, for instance, had been noted:

Many of the youth use the school as a hiding place, hiding from the cops and anything wrong they have done out there in the wider community... Many of these youth enrol in school at the beginning of the year, not because they want to be educated but because they are hiding from the police. You see they commit crimes, and then enrol at school just so that when their cases are heard or they are arrested, the school can give them letters to say that they are high school students. Once that ‘cloud blows’ over they go back to where they belong: in groups and gangs, which pinched them out of school, especially boys. In most cases, they leave the school within three months [PRINCIPAL A].

Also, many of the students in the school are from broken families and do not get much support from their families. Of course, some of them drop out because they are pregnant – these learners are not even scared: some die from AIDS, and the HIV/AIDS prevalence is very

high. Some drop out because they are poor or orphans [PRINCIPAL A].

The principals raised one pertinent issue that was not mentioned in the focus group. That is, some youth use the school as a cover for their criminal behaviour. This implies that what is termed drop-out may for these individuals in fact be exiting from a hideout, as they may have had no desire to be in school. This underlines the complex nature of the reasons for some youths' dropping out of school.

5.3.1.3 *Youth out-of-school experiences*

(a) Experiences from dropping into the ETD system

Both male and female participants attempted to drop into the ETD system. Participants attempted to drop in along two pathways: (a) via the formal school system, and (b) via the non-formal school system. In terms of the formal system, some participants attempted to drop into secondary school, technikon, and university. But via the non-formal pathway some tried to gain access to unaccredited short training courses to develop specific skills (these courses do not provide them with any credits). Examples of participants' comments in this regard were:

I dropped out of secondary school then I went back... from there I tried my luck at the technikon [P4].

I gave birth and I went back to [secondary] school after a year [P2].

Other participants noted:

After dropping out of secondary school, I did not try to go back. I made one attempt instead to do a short (10 days) course at one college to learn how to compile a business plan [P1].

I tried to go back to secondary school but I discovered it was difficult. So now, in town, I was going to try and study for a certificate... at one Shoprite store they said they wanted a certificate for being a teller so I am trying to get that [P3].

As participants made attempts to drop into the ETD system, many recounted difference experiences. These dropin experiences fit into two categories, namely: (i) constraining experiences on dropping-into school, and (ii) rewarding experiences in school drop-in.

(I) Constraining experiences in dropping into the school system

- Financial challenges

Participants spoke about finances as a constraint in their experience of dropping into the ETD system. A lack of financial support inhibited their drop-in attempts as well as their attempts to complete their schooling after drop-in. Some typical comments of participants were:

We tried to go back [to school]... the reason I am not continuing with school is that there is no one working at home. There is no one who can pay for my schooling... is just sitting here with the sorrow of not completing school. I'm just on the streets [P5].

I left secondary school at Standard 9 [grade 11]... that was in 2000, and I did not go back. We didn't have money and I had to take care of my baby. Unfortunately, my child died in 2001... I was devastated [by this incident] [P1].

The lack of finance was a major obstacle to dropping into the school system. It seemed that the same issue of finance that pushed some participants out of secondary school impeded their drop-in attempts. Many were openly saddened by their experience of being unable to re-join the formal education system due to their financial constraints. In many ways, the money problems that these youth experience reflects a much wider problem of the poverty in which they were brought up as children.

Even in the instances where participants managed to drop into the formal school system, they struggled to acquire basic requirements such as a uniform, lunch fees,

money to cover transportation costs, and so on. Their poverty was an ominous marker in the lives of these participants in school, which, in the case of the female participants, was exacerbated by their status as mothers.

One participant recalled his constraining financial experiences after dropping out of secondary school but then later returning to complete Matric, after which he received an initial bursary to enter tertiary level studies. The participant stated:

Finances created a problem for me when I was in school. There was no money at one stage and I dropped out of secondary school but then I went back and continued and finished my Matric. I didn't have money to continue my studies to a higher level in that year that I Matriculated. But I heard about bursaries at the Department of Education and Culture, so I applied and got one.

After that I started studying the following year, 1998 at the Technikon. But I dropped out of the Technikon after a year two because the Department didn't pay up my bursary to the school; the school asked me to sit out because I owed them (R21 000). The Department of Education never paid; when I look at it, it seems like a lot of fraud took place at the Department because the Department is under the impression that all the bursaries have been paid but the school hasn't received the money. [P4]

The participant's experience is that of being a repeated dropout. There was clear frustration and sadness in the experience, evidenced in the participant's remarks such as, '...there is no proof that I once studied there [Technikon] because I owed money...' The common thread in this experience is that the participant's schooling was thwarted through no fault of his own. For all of these participants, their inability to finance their education, or have it financed, was a major disruption in their lives.

- Class outlier: misfit in class with younger peers

Some participants found that their age was a major impediment in their drop-in experiences. The age factor seems to have been an impediment because conventional wisdom in the secondary school phase says that learners within a certain grade

should be within a particular age band. Deviation from this norm seems to put one in a position of being a misfit within a grade, and a target for social ostracism, isolation, and mockery. This view appeared to have defined the experiences of some participants who dropped into secondary school to finish their education. They said 'We tried to re-enter. I once did so at Greytown where we used to live. I even bought the uniform. But I found it quite difficult. My age was an issue for me... when I went back [to school] the children were teasing me, and then I stopped going because it was difficult'.

They [the other children] laugh because in the class, there were those children that were much younger than I was. Many of them knew me because I used to be in school before. They mocked me; saying that they found themselves studying with their granny... some even said 'Wow, Sipho's mom!' [P3]

It was at that moment that I realised it was necessary to put the pen down. I couldn't imagine myself studying with younger children. My sister's child, who was much younger than I was, was already ahead of me in school. Studying in this environment gave me stress. [P3]

There was clear psychological distress in their experience. For these participants, this distress distracted them from their academic work. They felt unwelcome and unwanted within the class environment, which caused them to be astonished about their decision to return to secondary schooling in the first place. It seems many expected some sort of social support and protection from their class teachers, but this did not materialise. One participant commented that:

The teachers didn't say anything when other learners teased us. It was a bad experience for me. When I decided not to go back to the school, my family was disturbed but after a while they said that I might as well stay at home rather than being made a laughing stock by children. I am now trying to study for a certificate to become a shop teller. [P3]

The psycho-social pressure leads some participants to become repeat drop-outs. The intensity of this pressure was strong enough to overcome these participants' will to finish their formal education. It seems that support structures for learners who drop

into the formal school system after dropping out had not been offered to these individuals.

In the interviews with school principals it emerged that these principals would rather avoid dealing with the over-age factor of returnee drop-out learners than to help them fit back into the school setting. One participant principal remarked that:

As much as we all view education as a right, we have to consider other factors... For instance, their age: Sometimes they do not fit age-wise with their colleagues [peers] in class... There is always a room for conflict, as a result of the age gap. Most of the drop-outs who are readmitted to school are beyond school-going age, or beyond the age that they should be in... they find it difficult to cope in class and to submit to their youthful teachers. They refuse to accept corrective measures. [PRINCIPAL B]

It seems that a school manager's apprehension to readmit out-of-school youths is informed by fear (or actual experience) of undisciplined behaviour by these individuals. It implies that there is an onus on readmitted out-of-school youths to conduct themselves in acceptable ways in the school. But the principals were of the view that a majority of the readmitted learners are usually '...focused and demonstrated a will to achieve educationally'. These views above provided another perspective on the youths' experiences as misfits in class at school.

- Negative teacher attitudes

Some participants spoke not only about unwelcome experiences with their classmates but also about some teachers' negative attitudes towards them. The female participants were the main victims of the negative teacher behaviours. They experienced verbal abuse from their teachers, a situation that occurred mainly in the classroom. As one female participant stated:

The principal only wanted my report [the previous year's report card to prove that she had passed]. My problems started when I encountered the school community. The teachers started saying nasty

things about me. They mocked me... Said that is the reason I left school before... And that I will get another baby soon. They labelled me as a prostitute.... This hurt me and I left. I failed twice. [P2]

The nasty comments from the teachers add to the psychological hurt felt by the readmitted learners. One participant explained that she sometimes felt like a punch bag, as a result of her teacher's negative attitudes towards her, and that she sometimes felt like a vending machine (having to give of herself all the time) – as a result of their teacher's demanding, egocentric attitudes. Such encounters seemed to aggravate the stress experienced by these learners as a result of both their academic work and their parental responsibilities.

Several of the participants thought that the nasty attitudes that some teachers displayed towards them were surprising. As these participants explained, ‘...there is a policy which says you can go back to school after giving birth’. The surprised reactions of participants suggested that they had been unprepared – at least psychosocially - to return to school.

- Self-doubt and limited social support

Self-doubt also appeared to frame participants' secondary school drop-in experiences. Some participants were doubtful that they could cope with the demands of the school curriculum. One participant, who had been away from school for the past eight years, expressed a common view:

It's been a long time out of school and I think my brain would fail me... I might not grasp things [academic work] like I used to. I have seen other people failing. That is why I do short [non-formal] courses instead...

I have never tried to go back to the secondary school or to a [FET] College. [P2]

There are clear signs of low self-esteem and fear of failure in these responses. With such a mind-frame, it is unsurprising that this participant found it a challenge to again drop into the formal school system, resorting instead to the non-formal

pathway. It may well be a result of the greater chance of being successful in the non-formal route, but one needs to be open to broader explanations. The self-doubt expressed by the participant did not appear to come from direct experiences of failure. Rather, it appears to have been acquired vicariously: i.e. from indirect experiences. One participant commented: 'I know many people who failed in school'.

There seems to be limited support at home or school to help these individuals cope with their distress. One school principal's remark affirms the difficulty that readmitted learners experience: 'The learning fields of the NCS [National Curriculum Statements] are largely different from the interim core-syllabi. This makes it difficult for these youth [readmitted learners] to work tirelessly to cope'. He further noted, 'Most of these learners are from broken families and do not get much support from these families'. Such views reinforce the low self-esteem of these returnees.

The participants who had been away from school for a long-time (four years or more) expressed more self-doubt than their counterparts who had been out of school briefly (less than four years). It was not immediately apparent why, but one could speculate, especially, that the capacity to remember often fades over time.

- Criminal record label

Some participants spoke about their involvement in criminality and their subsequent incarceration. It was mainly male participants who shared this experience. The label of a criminal became a barrier to dropping back into the formal school system, which one participant was well aware of. He asserted:

I got arrested in 2000, after I dropped out of secondary school. But when I was in prison I continued with my Grade 11 work in the prison... unfortunately I didn't finish it also because I was released before I could. Now I have a criminal record so I can't go back to school... plus am too old for these public schools and I have no money... [P5]

The participant was clearly aware of the consequence of having a criminal record, which may be why he did not bother to apply to drop into secondary school. In the interviews with school principals it was affirmed that youths with criminal records were unlikely to be readmitted into the secondary school system. A typical comment from the principals was that:

As much as we all view education as a right, allowing a dropout back to school is quite circumstantial... We do visit our records to establish the factors that led to their leaving of the school prematurely. If our records reflect unbecoming behaviours, we deny them entry. In fact, we encourage them to pursue their education at technical schools. We do not allow learners with criminal records back into the system. [P5]

It seems from the remarks above that out-of-school youth with criminal conviction stand little chance of dropping into the secondary school system to continue their educational experiences. The stance of the principals on the matter appears definitive. To access school, these youth might have to go via alternative pathways, such as through the private, technical, or non-formal system.

- Accessing information about post-secondary schooling opportunities and requirements

Most of the participants dropped out of school in Grade 11. By virtue of this, they qualify for the FET (Further Education and Training) colleges. But many of the participants did not know about pathways other than post-secondary school opportunities to continue their education. They were unaware of the FET or the requirements to enter such training institutions. A typical comment was:

I heard about FET on TV and in the papers. But I did not know you could enrol there with a Grade 10 pass. I never thought about it. As such, I never tried to enter into FET as I thought they wanted Matric and I have not passed Matric. [P6]

For some participants, their experience with regard to dropping back into the education and training system was largely vicarious. They had only read about the

opportunities or were aware of other people who had been attending these institutions and the sort of things that go on there. For other participants, however, there was no experience of the formal school system beyond the secondary level. Their experience rested within the non-formal system.

(ii) Rewarding experiences on school drop-in

- Reuniting with friends and completing matric

Participants who had dropped into secondary school spoke about their positive experiences. For some participants, reuniting with friends was a hallmark of their positive drop-in experience. A relevant comment was: 'I was very happy to see my friends... we laughed and chatted about what had happened in school while I was away... I told them about what it was like being out of school and about what happened to me [pregnancy]. They helped me to catch up on my schoolwork. It was fun'. For these participants, building social relationships was important and meaningful.

Of the six participants, one was able to drop back into secondary school and successfully completed Matric. It was this experience that was most rewarding for this participant. He explained:

Because I knew the difficulties of the [Folweni] community, I had to work very hard when I got readmitted at school. It was a struggle for me. I had to read a lot; I dedicated myself to my books, and worked late nights because I had a lot of catching up work to do; that helped me. [P4]

My friends helped a lot; they encouraged me and supported me... we formed a team and studied as a group. When I passed my Matric, I was overjoyed; maybe it was because I put so much of my energy into studying. [P4]

Hard work and diligence were features of this youth's experience. It seems that good supportive friends and friendship were keys to the rewarding experience of success in

the Matric examination. It demonstrates how education and maintaining friendship can coexist.

But escape from the difficulties of the community and perhaps a life of destitution was a motivation to succeed in Matric for this participant. The difficulty was marked by struggles, as the participant explained: 'I struggled to get back into secondary school. There was no money my mother wasn't working... but eventually she found work in town. That made the difference for me; she got me back into school'. Being able to go back to school gave this participant hope. He noted: 'It [dropping back into school] gave me hope because I would have been sucked into the crime and violence that was so prevalent here... At my place at Golokodo section, if you were a boy and you were not part of the [criminal] activities of the area at the time, you would be in trouble with the people [the gangs] in the neighbourhood'.

- Completing short courses

Some participants did not drop into secondary school, but went instead into the non-formal education system. These participants spoke about their positive experiences.

While at home I heard about a 10-day course at Umbumbulu College. The community was called together and we were told that those of us who didn't work had to come and indicate what we would like to study. It was free so I went and learned how to compile a business plan. I succeeded in the course... we all passed. After finishing, we managed to form a Cleaning Company business... but we had difficulty finding work. [P1]

Similarly, another participant noted:

I once did a bricklaying course for co-operatives at Umbumbulu... they wanted unemployed people from the community... it was a good experience because students were provided with money for transport. But the bricklaying courses are not very useful as people only get work for a few months when there is construction work going on. [P4]

For these participants, completing the course was an achievement but it was overshadowed by the challenge of finding work. This is one example of the fact that accessing the labour market needs more than mere certification. Being able to create your own job and manage it is as important.

(b) Experiences entering the job market

Participants had mixed experiences in trying to enter the job market. For several participants, their options in the job market were limited, not only because of the few job opportunities in their area but also because of the requirements to enter the job market. Post-secondary and tertiary qualification was a key requirement to access jobs, but many had no such academic credentials. This frustrated the pursuit of jobs for many, as they had little choice but to take on piece-meal, menial, unskilled jobs – if, as, or when offered. Common sentiments were:

It's not easy [getting jobs]... the problem is that every time you go and market yourself, they [employers] want certificates. You see now, I don't have one. [P5]

I have tried to find a job. I am not lucky to find anything. But there are too many people who have even stopped looking. There are no jobs for people who are not educated. [P6]

Beyond the qualification, nepotism played an important role in some participants' attempts to access the job market. Relatives and friends helped them to find jobs, not only in the taxi industry, but also in the manufacturing sector. One participant remarked: 'I'm working at Toyota... my mother helped me find the job there... she is a team member at Toyota, assembling car seats... she has a Matric qualification. I don't know what strings she pulled to get me in, but it has been great being there'. Another commented: '...at Folweni...most of the things [jobs] are managed by certain people and the people who benefit are the few people around them... by the time you hear about these opportunities it's too late... a good example is the building of RDP houses and the bricklaying training course'. Information related to the job market

flows to only a few people and seems to frustrate the search for jobs of some of these out-of-school youth.

Some participants gain access to the job market by becoming entrepreneurs. Two of the six participants had their own business. But for those who undertook this pursuit, their entrepreneurial experiences were of mixed fortune. Relevant comments reflecting this were:

I opened my own salon in 2002, and it's been operating since then. It was a struggle to get it up and running... it needed money. There aren't a lot of people in the area who can come for hair treatment so the target group is small. This has made the business a bit of a struggle. In 2004 I tried to get some assistance from the Umsobomvu programme but I was turned down. The salon business was not a priority category for them; they promised to get back to me but they never did. [P4]

I am blacklisted by the credit bureau as a result of unpaid Technikon fees so I can't get loans, so I have to work at Toyota in order to keep the salon going as I want. It's been difficult. [P5]

The challenges of managing one's own business are clearly evident in these experiences, but the participants did not crumble under the burden of these challenges. Their experience is in contrast with that of the participant who explained: 'It was a group of us [group of ten] that started the Cleaning Company... government gave us R30 000 as start-up capital. We bought the equipment and materials... we registered the company and placed it on the Internet. But we never received any jobs, despite trying. We were called to places to do work but the lack of a company certificate caused us to lose the jobs and not get tenders. Our company certificate got misplaced... this frustrated us and we had to close down'.

Inexperienced management is reflected in the above experience. The participants' will to be gainfully employed pushed them to focus more on accessing work than on the careful management of the enterprise itself.

5.3.2 Research question 2: Which factors influence out-of-school youth transition between high school and the labour market?

The data suggests there is no single factor that is responsible for the school-to-work transition of youth. The interview with the out-of-school youths and with the principals highlighted a number of key factors perceived to have an influence on the youths' transition from secondary school to the labour market. The data suggest that these factors include (a) academic qualifications, (b) networks of family/friends, (c) altruism: the desire to care for the family, (d) the desire for a better life, (e) job availability, (f) incomplete training in the ETD system, and (g) personal agency.

(a) Academic qualifications

The participants attempted to drop back into the ETD system so that they could attain some form of academic qualification for employability. This point was succinctly made throughout the interviews with the out-of-school youth (cf. section 5.3.1). Their view of schooling is instrumental (cf. section 5.3.1.1). For instance, when asked about her plans to drop back into school, one participant remarked: 'I am still going to try...I want to study for a certificate to become a teller... Shoprite store said they wanted such a certificate'. The significance of certification in the shift from school to the job market is recognised by the youth.

(b) Family/friend networks

Participants cited the importance of connections between family/friends and business people to their attempts to find jobs. This was clearly demonstrated in the interviews with the out-of-school youths (cf. section 5.3.1.1b). This last observation points to the value of networking in the transition process.

But social networking is not strong among many young people. Employment opportunities therefore often escape them. One participant remarked: 'I got some of the information from a friend... if you hear some of these things it's by luck, and sometimes by the time you hear it it's already late'. It appears that the weak social network among members of the community influenced some participants to

associate successful transition to the job market with luck, being at the right place at the right time, and hope.

(c) Altruism: the desire for a better life and to care for the family

The participants spoke about their desire to ‘carve out’ a better life for themselves and to assist their families as the motivation in their attempts to drop back into the school system or enter the job market. A common view among the participants was: ‘I want to change my life... I can only do that with an education... I see a lot of people being independent... I can be of great help at home like eradicating some of the family problems’. Another participant stated specifically: ‘...studying gives you opportunities... assists you to live a better life’. The participants’ altruistic motivation seems to drive them in the process of shifting from school to the labour market. The belief that education is a necessity for job market access and personal success is consistent with the education and social mobility hypothesis.

There seems, to be an almost religious belief among the participants in the education-social mobility link. Yet such a link remains questionable. Cases of individuals dropping out of school and being successful entrepreneurs in the first economy are rare. However, participation in the second economy as entrepreneurs is common. Some participants in the study believe they have a chance as entrepreneurs in the area. At the same time, several participants view themselves as useless and as failures when they do not make the transition from school to the labour market successfully, that is, completing school and finding a job that matches their competence. This view is well captured in the sentiment of one unemployed drop-out participant who stated: ‘I’m nothing... I can’t help my family; I can’t care for my children... I still live with my parents... I’m nothing’. By implication, being something to him means acquiring a formal school qualification and being able to do the abovementioned. It is in this way that a better life is perceived: i.e. better than the one they currently experience.

(d) Job availability

Job availability is a major determinant in the transition from school to the labour market. The majority of the participants acknowledged this point. The Folweni

community, where the participants reside, was characterised as difficult, violent, rundown, and lacking infrastructure – a place where, in the view of one participant, ‘...there is no progress like there was in the olden days because many people do not have trust in the area, and do not want to invest their money in the area. When you want something proper [restaurants, shops, supermarkets, library], you have to get out of Folweni’.

This comment implies that there is a dearth of job opportunities in the community. The participants have to compete with others for whatever jobs are available there. When there are limited job opportunities, a person’s chance of accessing the job market is minimal, regardless of his/her academic qualifications. Often, the alternative is migration out of the area for those who can leave. For the rest, there is a life of unemployment. The latter situation characterised the life of two of the six out-of-school youth in this study.

(e) Incomplete training in the ETD system

Participants acknowledged that when one does not complete one’s schooling, access to the labour market is much harder. This view is stated consistently throughout the interviews. Some participants explained: ‘When you leave school before completing Matric, it’s only crime that you do... you end up in crime’. The fact that this view was expressed is unsurprising, given the recognised emphasis placed on qualifications in the labour market (cf. academic qualifications, above).

5.3.3 **Research question 3:** What are the characteristics of the pathways taken by youths who drop out or drop into the ETD system after dropping out?

The career pathways taken by youths who drop into the ETD system and those who remain as school drop-outs are outlined in the summary Table 4 below.

Table 4 Participants' Matric status and participation in post-secondary schooling pathways

Participants	Matric		Universi ty		Technik on		FET		Learners hip		RPL		SETAS		uMsobo mvu		Skills progra mme	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Drop-in the ETD system																		
P1		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P2		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P3		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Remain as school dropouts																		
P5		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P6		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The Matric status and post-secondary schooling pathways in which the youths participated are shown in Table 4. Two participants did not drop back into secondary school after dropping out the first time. Of the rest who dropped in, only one was able to complete Matric after dropping in. Findings on the career pathways of these two groups (youth who dropped back into the ETD system and those who remained as school drop-outs) are outlined below.

5.3.3.1 Career pathways taken by drop-outs who did not drop into the ETD system

For the individuals who did not drop into the ETD system, the common factors in their lives since dropping out of school have been periods of working as casual labourers and periods of unemployment. By virtue of not dropping back into the ETD system, these participants by-passed both the formal and non-formal schooling pathways and instead sought directly to access the labour market. When working,

these youth, as one explained, ‘...clean the streets, operate as taxi conductors, or do piece-jobs on the road: dig trenches for plumbing works... sometimes it’s for a week or two weeks’.

All of the participants noted that they found the majority of school drop-outs who did not drop back into the ETD system in the semi-skilled and informal labour market sectors. One of the principals interviewed stated: ‘...most of them [the drop-outs] end up in the taxi industry... and they end up there not even as taxi drivers – who need a licence – but as sliding door operators... that’s the new name for them [the conductors]’. Another was of the view that some girls who dropped out of school take up careers in prostitution, while the boys engage in criminal activities. One commented as follows:

There have been some cases wherein some of our drop-outs were spotted in the act of confiscating cell phones from in-school learners... also some of the drop-outs are drowning themselves in alcohol.
[PRINCIPAL A]

One can conclude from these observations that many school dropouts who did not drop back into the ETD system end up in menial jobs in the labour market, if any. The work they receive is occasional. The participants acknowledged the difficulties inherent in finding these jobs and the challenges in accessing employment when one does not have academic qualifications. They feel regret at not having completed Matric, or going further than Matric.

5.3.3.2 Career pathways taken by youth who dropped back into the ETD system

The participants who dropped back into the ETD system pursued their education to different levels before seeking to access the labour market. One participant completed Matric and went on to a Technikon. But while the others failed to complete Grade 12 – only managing to reach Grade 11 before dropping out a second time - some were able to take up a post-secondary schooling pathway along non-formal channels, such as participating in the uMsobomvu and the government skills programme (cf. Table 4).

But some of the youths who dropped back into the ETD system did not know about many of the non-formal pathways that were available to pursue their post-secondary schooling. The lack of awareness of these pathways was the common thread connecting the majority of the out-of-school youth who participated (cf. Table 4). There were instances where some participants took part in training programmes organised under these non-formal schemes without knowing that they were alternative schooling pathways. One participant stated: ‘I think the skills programmes are the ones that took me to Umbumbulu College where we had been trained to be co-operatives’.

The career destinations of the youths who dropped back into the ETD system varied. Some became entrepreneurs in the salon business and the cleaning business, or found jobs in the manufacturing sector at Toyota in the area. Others worked in the taxi industry. Because of being in possession of some form of academic qualifications, these youth had a greater chance of accessing the labour market than the youths who did not drop back into the ETD system.

5.3.4 *Research question 4:* What are school managers’ (principals’) views regarding youths’ dropout and possible drop into the education and training system, and into the labour market thereafter?

All three principals reported incidents of drop-outs at their respective schools. They also reported cases of youths dropping back into the school system after dropping out. The principals were flexible in their attitudes toward re-admitting drop-outs back into their schools. One stated: ‘There is no policy that speaks specifically to how to deal with drop-outs who seek re-entry... we just take them back; the policy of the school allows it’. But it was often conditional. Drop-outs with criminal records were not given automatic drop-in. The decision seems to be at the discretion of the schools.

The principals spoke about the work attitudes of youth who dropped back into the school system. For them, the majority of the returnees were hard working. One

commented: ‘some of them [the drop-outs] come with outside influences and are not co-operative... but others come with a revived vigour, willing to work hard because they have some experience of the outside world... but some come in and drop out again’.

It does not seem that there is any consistent strategy across the schools to discourage learners from dropping out. Some principals spoke about encouraging the learners to make use of their teachers and invited guest speakers to talk to learners, while others refer problem cases to the social workers. But there were few remarks on the effects of these measures regarding stemming drop-out incidents.

Comments on the labour market have already been made in other parts of the above analysis.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

6.1. INTRODUCTION

Firstly, this chapter summarises some of the key discussions of this study (cf. 5), linking these to the theoretical and empirical insights that emerge from the study. Secondly, it addresses policy issues specifically relating to SASA; thirdly, it addresses the need to invest in second-chance education for the youth; and, finally, it raises issues of significance in the area.

In responding to the critical questions of the study, the above issues are discussed in relation to the theoretical framework of the study (cf. 2), which argues for education as an investment in human capital.

This chapter is divided into four critical sections. Firstly, the experiences, characteristics and factors influencing out-of-school youth transition are further interrogated. Secondly, the interplay between the youth labour market and youth drop-outs is further discussed, looking specifically at the skills and the youth, the character of the labour market and implications for their finding successful destinations in the labour market, and their employability. Thirdly, a view of the psychological effects of prolonged transitions is expressed. Lastly, youth development and policy issues are discussed.

6.2. EXPERIENCES, CHARACTERISTICS AND FACTORS INFLUENCING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH TRANSITIONS

6.2.1. The youths' experiences of school-to-work transitions

This section highlights the experiences of the youths as they (a) attempt re-entry into the ETD system and (b) enter the labour market.

(a) Dropping in: the education and training system experience

It is evident that some of the reasons why youth drop out are complex and intertwined, and the youths themselves are unable to pinpoint one single reason for their dropping out. For Lee and Lee (2003) many factors contribute to dropping out. The association between a family's weak financial situation (Fuller & Land, 1999) and poverty as an overriding factor in dropping out (ESAR, 2000) and a lack of family support (Te Reile, 2004) were evident in the reasons cited for dropping out.

The female participants in the study tended to get pregnant, and financial challenges independent of the affordability of schooling worsened their chances of being able to drop back into the ETD. The latter was also the case with the male participants, who tend to dropout for financial reasons and then end up in destructive activities like crime and drug abuse. It was noted that while the male participants possibly impregnated girls at some point, this was not one of the reasons leading to their dropping out. This supports the literature that suggests that dropping out is a socioeconomic issue. The youth drop out for economic reasons (affordability) and for social reasons (pregnancy and poor health, etc). The youth in this study articulated similar reasons. Socioeconomic realities directly and indirectly affect youth's transition.

Judging from the data, a lack of academic success (which the DoE's ministerial committee refers to as school failure) and 'helplessness' are mentioned as some of the reasons why young people drop out of school. This concurs with the research by the DoE (the ministerial committee) on retention, which suggests that:

Grade repetition has been identified as the single most powerful predictor of dropping-out. Studies conducted internationally have revealed that learners who have repeated a grade in their schooling career are most likely to drop out of school. Learners become disillusioned, and generally disengaged from school activities. The fact that grade repeaters are taken through exactly the same material and content when repeating the grade, exacerbates the situation (Ministerial Committee, 2007: XV).

Lack of family support continues to be a challenge and a factor contributing to dropping out. Most of the young participants in the study are from single-parent and less supportive households. They need a sense of identity and a sense of belonging, and the lack of support seems to play a role in their decisions to leave their school. School principals in the study supported this view by suggesting that parental involvement is a necessity for youth's retention in school. This concurs with the perspectives within the rational decision-making model which suggests that dropping in and dropping out decisions are largely influenced by or based on factors which include family background and the personal lives of individuals seeking the transitions (Oreopoulos, Page & Stevens, 2003).

The reasons for dropping out have been researched by writers like Aloise Young (2002), and Batten & Russell (1995). Understanding the underlying reasons has been a huge research endeavour given the complexity of the reasons why young people actually dropout. While the reasons given accord with most of the research data, the literature shows that youth who drop-out of school either want to or attempt to re-enter the system, especially the school system (Community Agency for Social Inquiry, 2000).

I found that the youth participants in this study recognised the value and benefits of education and associated it with accessing employment. They viewed ETD as their main poverty alleviation strategy or the single most important strategy that would ensure that they were able to provide for themselves. For them, re-entry into the ETD system is their most desirable option and the possible bridge for their successful transition from school to work. The participants' reflections emphasise the importance of education and the need for them to get some form of qualification in order to gain entry into the labour market. This opinion concurs with the human capital school of thought that recognises schooling as an investment with direct and indirect benefits.

The young participants in the study recognised the value of education, and some had attempted to drop back into the ETD system. However, the views they hold about

their academic capabilities inhibit their progression to successful destinations. This lack of academic self-esteem is one of the major constraining factors to successful school-to-work transitions for out-of-school youth. There is no evidence of direct experience of failure at school. Instead, the lack of self-esteem relates to their previous failure to stay within the school system. Experience has affected their self-belief, and as a result they tend to think they cannot achieve academically. Prolonged absence from the school system is a contributory factor to the wounded self-belief of these young people.

The environment, within which their learning happens or is supposed to happen after re-entry is not helpful. The teachers and their classmates tend to marginalise them directly through their negative comments, and indirectly by frequently making them aware of the age differences between themselves and their peers.

Their experiences of economic and socio-psychological constraints make their re-entry experiences even more problematic. The system of dealing with these older learners should be an integrated strategy which includes the attending to their emotional needs as well as to the relevant social and economic factors. In the absence of such strategies, avoidance sometimes becomes an option for the principals. For some young people these challenges and the lack of a supportive schooling environment encourage them to drop out a second time.

Their previous activities or experiences tend to stigmatise the re-entering learners, thus interfering with their schooling experience. This stigmatisation has a lot to do with their belief that they can change, given that the authorities that are meant to ensure that change happens still carry the past into the new rehabilitation processes. For example, youths with a criminal record are often treated with suspicion and are seldom given the chance to believe in themselves and demonstrate their ability to change.

The literature complements this view by showing that most drop-outs do recognise the importance of education and training, want to re-enter the ETD system, and

believe that education and the acquisition of qualifications are the major bridge to the labour market.

The pathways young people can take into the ETD system are both formal and informal. The formal include re-entering schooling as a route to higher education, and the informal include short courses training them for employment. For some, dropping back into the system has yielded positive outcomes, others have been less successful.

Economic or financial factors are the main reasons for dropping out and a constraint when attempting to drop back in. Financial and poverty-related constraints have been at the forefront of policymaking and priorities for poverty alleviation globally. It is against this backdrop that South Africa committed to the Millennium Development Goals. However, for the young participants in this study, destitution traps them and insulates them from successful participation in the national economy.

This remains a concern, given that policy in South Africa suggests that learners cannot be ‘refused’ education based on their lack of resources. The ‘no-fees’ policy, information about which is not always readily available to those who need it, addresses part of the problem, but there are other expenses associated with schooling, such as the need to buy a school uniform. ‘Free education’ thus addresses one component of education financing and the rest is still the responsibility of the family. This remains a challenge for policy makers.

Their financial problems drive learners to drop out of school and are an impediment when they try to re-enter. The only way in which they can overcome these problems at the moment and acquire the social capital they so strongly desire is to break out of the poverty cycle.

According to the participants, prospective employers are more interested in their qualifications/certification than in the skills they possess. Those with a higher level of education suggest that there is intrinsic value in education. One participant suggests that young people with higher levels of education are more aware of issues

around them, and are more thoroughly socialised.. But for most of the participants the intrinsic value of education is of less value than its potential financial benefits. The human capital view suggests that highly educated people are generally highly skilled too, and skilled workers tend also to be more productive. This focus on the relationship between levels of education in a society and levels of social and economic development has become more pronounced as the world economy has shifted to areas of economic activity that depend on knowledge and skills. This construct is supported by the belief that societies with well-educated labour forces tend to have higher levels of economic and social development (World Bank, 1999; Coleman, 1988; and Becker, 1975). In particular, studies of knowledge- and-skills based economies clearly illustrate the importance of education for the progress and wealth of nations.

The social conceptualisation and the policy construction of schooling ages confine youth into categories which become problematic when they attempt to drop back in. Age gaps between the current learners and those who re-enter the schooling system remain one of the factors limiting re-entry. Youth who have been out of school for a lengthy period find it difficult to adjust to the new circumstances and tend to experience or assume they are experiencing marginalisation within the schooling environment when attempting re-entry. The age gap and the differences in the curriculum are factors constraining re-entry and contribute to the drop-ins' frequent lack of success. This concurs with the perspective of the social environmentalists,, who believe that the youths' expectations and their actual experiences in schooling influence their decisions.

Whereas some of the participants had negative experiences, others had positive re-entry experiences. These were associated with building positive social relationships, fresh motivation, and the associated outcomes. A sense of belonging and enhancement or developments of academic self-esteem are affirmative experiences associated with dropping in.

A sense of belonging seems to be one of the positive factors associated with dropping back into schooling. The youths who dropped back in had a chance to rebuild

relationships with the youths within the schooling environment. These relationships yielded positive results as they developed a sense of belonging to a more progressive group. These relationships also motivated them to work hard so as to sustain their positions in the group.

Success raised the participants' academic self-esteem and provided them with a new self belief. Those who completed short courses had new hope, and aspired to achieve even more. However, for these participants, the short courses they attended did not act as pathways to successful career destinations.

The young participants tended to make choices that in the hope of successfully reaching their destinations rather than choosing courses that matched their interests. These youths are less likely to choose postgraduate diplomas and degrees when re-entering. This phenomenon differs from the suggestion in the literature that the youth generally aspire to obtain a post secondary education (Raymond, 2008). The youths in the study would settle for any qualification that would ensure that they gained entry into the labour market.

(b) Attempted entry into the labour market experienced

Some youth participants in the study did try to enter the labour market. However, their entry was constrained by their circumstances. Their level of education, certification or qualification and the limited number of jobs available to the unskilled in the area in which they live are the main constraints for the out-of-school youth participants. The participants suggested that the labour market demands a Matric qualification as the minimum requirement for access, while the possession of a higher education qualification puts one at an advantage.

Because of their lower levels of education, the young participants had unsuccessful experiences when attempting to enter the labour market. They could find only underemployment or casual employment mainly in the local taxi industry or in short-term construction work.

Most of these youth have adult responsibilities as parents. However, they have no or very limited experience in an adult role, provisioning and financial independence. As shown in Chapter 5, most of the young participants are parents but cannot fulfil the financial responsibilities of being parents (cannot support their children). If family (social) background really does have an impact on dropping out, as suggested by the literature, then the socio-economic conditions within which these young people live are drivers for their chronic dropping out.

Those who opted for self employment did not have sustainable businesses due to their lack of management skills, the limited customer base available to them as a result of the high rate of unemployment in the area, and a lack of the financial support needed to grow the business.

Young South Africans with lesser levels of education tend try to make a living on their own terms in the informal economy. However, the second economy in South Africa is still problematic and unsustainable. Research has shown that it is populated by the marginalised groups in the country, those that they are located in rural or peri-urban areas, unskilled, unemployed or unemployable. Kisten (2006:2) suggests that the participants in the second economy are ‘caught in a poverty trap’, are ‘unable to benefit from growth in the first economy’, are ‘difficult to assist’, and are ‘underdeveloped’.

6.2.2. Factors influencing the out-of-school transition of the youth between school and the labour market

The findings of this study are interpreted within the framework of the human capital theory, which links investment to education and considers the direct and non-direct returns of educational attainment. It is evident that the choices of transitions made by people such as the participants in this study are strongly influenced by their perceptions of what constitutes a better life. Their qualifications, networking, their altruism, their desire to care for their families,, their employability or lack of employability, the extent of their training in the ETD system, and personal agency

² DBSA SA Second Economy Presentation (Nov 2006)

are the major factors influencing school-to-work transition (see Chapter 5) for the youth participants in the study.

Financial independence remains the main factor influencing school-to-work transition for out-of-school youths. Their need for a better life and altruism are the main reasons why they consider re-entry into the system. For the young participants income-generating activities like employment are regarded as the main route to financial independence. For these youths, participating in voluntary projects is not seen as a long-term or a short-term option for employability or financial independence.

The youth's progression from childhood to adulthood should sociologically be aligned to their progression from dependent to independent adults, or from moving from school to work. Their unemployability, however, forces them to remain dependent even when they should be providers. Unemployment for these youths affects not only their economic and social status but also impacts on them psychologically and affects their transitions from childhood to adulthood. These factors create identity crises for these youth, who get stuck in roles where they cannot perform or 'measure up' to the institutionalised characteristic associated with these roles.

6.2.3. Information poverty and transitions to both the ETD system and the labour market

The key factor in the unsuccessful school-to-work transitions is information poverty. The challenges are two-fold. Firstly, the young from disadvantaged backgrounds have no access or only limited access to information media (the radio, television, adverts on the roads, etc). Secondly, the young do not have the capacity to receive and assess the impact or the potential role of the information on their situations. One participant states that people with lower levels of education tend to have very limited knowledge of current affairs.

The young participants in the study 1) did not know of the alternatives or points of entry for them (which do exist), and 2) either did not know about the development agencies (like the Umsobomvu Youth Fund and the National Youth Commission³); or the role or potential role these agencies could play in helping them to reach their destinations.

The reasons for their lack of access to information are firstly structural in the sense that the structures that are the holders of information do not translate the information into comprehensible levels for these youths. Secondly, the challenges are related to the economic status of these youths and the resources they can or cannot afford. These are operational in the sense that the structures and agencies that implement and advocate these do not reach some of the levels and locations within which the youths are based.

Whilst there was a lack of access to information for those participants who were relatively educated compared with the rest of the participants, the troubling lack of information for the less educated ones (those who dropped out of school much earlier) was worse. This suggests that this group of the youth would have to try pathways to the youth labour market and different destinations within the labour market other than the programmes, structures and agencies established by government policies. Their lack of access to information challenges their constitutional right to information.

Access to information and knowledge has been associated with improved chances of poverty alleviation and improving living standards. Warah (2004) suggests that development agencies have recognised the role of information and knowledge in alleviating the poverty risk and improving the livelihoods of poverty-stricken people.

This view is shared by scholars such as Brito (2006), who suggest that breaking out of the cycle of poverty starts with gaining improved access to resources such as

³ This merged in 2009 into National Youth Development Agency

information and education. This is the case in most developing countries, including South Africa.

6.2.4. Characteristics of the career pathways taken by youths who drop out, or drop back into the ETD system after dropping out

For youth participants in the study, transitions are multidimensional. They struggle with the intertwined movement back and forth in schooling while young, while also dealing with the responsibilities associated with being young adults. Successful pathways from schooling to the labour market tend to be linear, however. Participants struggle with these multidimensional transitions while they exist within the context of linear transitions.

These changes in the level and extent of responsibilities include moving out of home, attaining skills and education, creating and changing relationships (Ross, 2004), changes in their education and training, their lifestyles, their marital status, and moving from dependence to independence. However, the intertwined changes are dependent and influenced by the economic status of the individual or family. Youth transitions are strongly influenced by their level of education and their employment prospects.

The nature of such transitions has changed from the swift transitions of the 60s and the 70s, and is currently influenced by the current global economic, social, political and technological order. Ross *et al* (2004) suggest that:

- in the 1960s the metaphor of filling society's 'niches' reflected the emphasis on successful integration into adult roles;
- in the 1970s the emergence of the 'pathways' metaphor captured changes in the youth transition process, which was now perceived to be longer and more complex as a result of an increase in participation in education, due to a decline in youth employment;
- in the 1980s the term 'trajectory' indicated that social forces (not government-designed pathways) were a powerful influence in determining the availability of resources to the young person, and the momentum of the transition itself; and

- in the 1990s the metaphor of ‘navigations’ suggested that through the exercise of personal agency, individuals tried to actively shape their lives within the opportunities and constraints that they encountered.

It may be argued that within the current context both internal and external policies pull together these eras (1980s and 1990s) and while in the 60s integration into adult roles was central to transitions, the emphasis was more on social aspects like fitting into the institutionalised gender roles of being providers (for males), and caretakers (for females). Currently adulthood is associated with material provisioning and is thus linked to the ability to access income, whether through employment by others or self-employment. The challenge for the young participants in the study is their limited integration into adulthood and the fact that have overstayed the role of being a young person. They then struggle with identifying the roles within which they are integrated.

Their attempts to re-enter the system, whether the school system or employment, are constrained by structural issues rather than personal failings. After dropping out they are inclined to recognise the value of education and the benefits associated with investing themselves in education, firstly in terms of their improved chances of employment and secondly in terms of their increased ability to be productive. However, the lack of an established system of second-chance education, the lack of clear entry points to alternatives, their lack of access to alternatives and their limited access or absence of access to finances are structural barriers preventing them from succeeding in their endeavours.

The transitional pathways required here should not be clear-cut ‘school-to-work’ routes, as this notion excludes the social context and the complex dimensions of youth livelihoods and transitions. Social issues compel the young participants in this study to follow a multidimensional youth-to-adulthood transition model.

As previously stated, information poverty is a major re-entry constraint. Alternatives exist for some of the youths, but they lack access to the necessary information: accessing FET in schooling or college (National Vocational Certificate bursaries),

Higher Education (National Skills Fund), Recognition of Prior Learning, and accessing relevant programmes, learnerships and skills programmes, and funds for entrepreneurship (from Umsubomvu Youth Fund). Lack of information about these alternatives contributes to the difficulties they have with school-to-work transitions. They do not know how to access these pathways and whether or not they qualify to do so.

The competitive nature of the alternatives for the out-of-school youth is one of the barriers to school-to-work transitions. For entrepreneurship, one needs to put together a business plan before accessing financial assistance. For acceptance into learnerships and skills programmes (even as an unemployed youth beneficiary) one needs (1) to meet minimum entry requirements, (2) to have particular knowledge and skills and (3) an employer as a host. The young participants in the study do not have sufficient skills with which to compete in most government-related programmes and thus are structurally marginalised by the competition associated with access.

6.3. THE YOUTH LABOUR MARKET AND YOUTH DROP-OUTS

6.3.1. Skills and the youth school-to-work transitions

Skills development is crucial to the development of South Africa as the country moves further and further away from its history of apartheid. In order for the country to truly develop and provide its citizens with opportunities for prosperity and comfortable livelihoods, the country must provide the necessary framework for the development of skills, specifically the type of skills that are critical and would contribute towards the socioeconomic development of the country. The development of skills and an effective second chance for all is the main argument in this thesis. I move from the premise that youth who seek entry into the labour market or the ETD system should be given an equitable chance and access regardless of their level of education and skills, or theoretical knowledge.

The lack of skills further marginalises the youth who experience information poverty, are from disadvantaged backgrounds and who have few productive social networks.

They need to possess skills to be able to keep up with changes in society, contribute to their own wellbeing as well as their wellbeing in their social milieus, and to cope with changes in their immediate and global environments.

The development and enactment of policies, strategies and processes for school-to-work transitions is crucial for effectively enabling the employability of the youth, who are presently discouraged and are dependent on random transitions. While these policies and strategies should be all encompassing, emphasis should be given to the localities and backgrounds of the youth, including their academic strengths and self esteem. The development of the out-of-school youth is especially crucial in the country's poorer locations, particularly the rural and the semi-rural areas.

6.3.2. The characteristics of the labour market and the implications for the youth's achieving successful destinations

The employer's view of the employable individual has been transforming in line with global industrial and technological trends. Labour market segment theory (Tchibozo, 2002) has described the attributes associated with the employment of an individual. These include personal and behavioural attributes, stability, the cost of recruitment training and retention, and the protection of competitive intelligence. Productivity is associated mainly with the filter theory, which uses qualifications as an indicator of whether or not the individual is productive or has the potential to be productive, the individual's adaptability and potential to cope with technological changes, and the individual's personal context (gender, marital status, social activities, etc).

For those attempting entry to the labour market, however, the main attribute or indicator is the qualification indicator. This is largely because, even before a prospective employer invites an applicant to an interview, the level and relevance of the applicant's qualifications impacts on the employer's view of whether or not that individual has the skills and attributes which will ensure that the employee is adaptable, productive and a good return on investment for the employer.

These youths, as suggested before, do not have experience of environments outside their immediate contexts, their homes and their community. In view of the poverty of the area there are few adult role models for them to follow, and they therefore have few opportunities to learn and copy positive adult behaviour. An association with positive adult role models could assist them youth to develop intrinsic values and emulate the values of these adults, thus contributing to their own development.

As youths struggle to acquire status within their environment, they tend to be prone to emotional gratification rather than progressive behaviour. This is essentially an attempt to fit in, to be recognised and to have a sense of belonging. While this gives them status within their social contexts, it does little to improve their chances of progression to positive career destinations.

6.3.3. The labour market's view on employability

An important attribute of the school-to-work transition is how the labour market decides what makes an individual an asset. This could be the individual's qualifications, personal attributes or behavioural characteristics. The checklist depends on the demands of the employer at a given time. What distinguishes one person from the rest is the needs of the labour market.

How can individuals with no qualifications, a meagre view of their own capabilities or a lack of the knowledge of what they are capable satisfy the criteria of the market place?

6.3.4. Youth drop-outs and skills demand and supply

In the South African context, skills challenges are felt more strongly in the higher skills bands than on lower skills levels. There is a shortage of skilled labour in the country, both in quantity and in quality. While different institutions advocate skills development, the out-of-school youth (the drop-outs) do not stand a chance of accessing the institutionalised skills development programmes and progressing into the higher skills band.

- Despite the fact that there are many young people in the country who are within the labour system and stand a chance of having the skills levels needed in the labour market, a larger number of the youth will not be absorbed or retained by the system due to their low skills levels. A higher number of these youths will not acquire the skills on demand for absorption into the labour market.

6.4. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT OF PROLONGED AND INEXPERIENCED TRANSITIONS

The young participants regret the actions that led them to their current status, the reasons they are where they are, and the lack of progress in their lives. Firstly they lament leaving school and secondly they lament their inability to provide for themselves and their families. Regret, within their context, is associated with prior experiences and the instability in their lives. This is evident in the way they view themselves and their peers. One participant suggests that it is only after dropping out that they realise that their lack of education is the main reason for their not reaching their desired destinations. Also the recognition of the value of education in creating a better life makes the young participants regret leaving school.

The analysis shows the interplay between hope and hopelessness for the young participants from their low socioeconomic backgrounds. These youths contemplate their futures in terms of hope rather than of a planned progression. Given their experience and the gap between their previous activity and their current status, they are hopeful that their destinations will be reconfigured - and yet they do not have a plan for re-entry or entry into the labour market.

Youth participants within the Folweni context tend to associate with persons from the same environment. Their exposure to other environments is limited. This marginalises and excludes them from environments and agencies that would assist their transitions. They have little experience of development agencies and the

structures established to assist with their development. These institutions are essential for their fundamental development.

The youths with unsuccessful destinations develop a ‘failure syndrome’. This is defined by psychologists mainly as a feeling of incurred failure associated with one’s environment and the recurrence of that failure within one’s context. This would be associated with a history of failure in one’s family and peers. This syndrome affects the personal and behavioural characteristics of these young people. As a result their desired destinations are built on quicksands, as they believe they will fail even before attempting to succeed.

These youth believe that they are the victims of who they are, their family backgrounds, and their locations, and thus feel self-pity. However, they have little or no determination to change their circumstance. This self-pity affects their personal and behavioural characteristics.

6.4.1. The ‘forgotten’ skills

The many unemployed young people in South Africa has potential to develop skills to meet the demand in the labour market, but these are neither explored nor maximised. While these youths think of themselves as being simply unemployed, the labour market views them as being unemployable, and demands of them as a condition for entry qualifications that they do not have. This makes sense in terms of the human capital view used in the theoretical framework, which suggests that skilled individuals tend to be more productive than unskilled individuals. The youth have also suggested that their lack of the qualifications needed in the labour market, especially Matric, is one of the main reasons they are unemployed. In their view, their lack of higher levels of education is the main reason why they are ‘unacceptable’ for employment. While the labour market looks for other related indices, like personality, attitude and values, entry is largely related to qualifications as an indicator of productivity (Tchibozo, 2002).

The youths believe that success for them, after dropping out, would have to be mostly based on luck, hope, and being at the right place at the right time. For example, one of the participants suggests that his accessing employment was the a result of his knowing someone. The other participants hope they will be lucky enough to get employment. These are positions in line with notions contained in the random approach (Glover & King, 1997). This approach suggests that the transition from school to work has little to do with what one does and more to do with being lucky. The participants' limited experience of social and economic variety affects the depth and extent of their learning, whether formal or informal. As their environment shrinks, their capacity to broaden their learning context shrinks as well.

6.4.2. Delayed or void transitions

Youths who drop out of school either take longer periods to drop back in or do not drop back in at all. This makes their transition from school to work take longer than it should WHY? or it could prevent this transition from occurring at all. These youths tend to have delayed or void school-to-work transitions until their late 20s. This trend is different from the usual trend of human development from childhood to adulthood and the transition from learner to worker.

The youth in Folweni, most of whom come from disadvantaged families which can offer them little in the way of support, experienced their adulthood before their attainment of economic self-sufficiency. These youths become parents before they have had experience of taking care of themselves financially. This creates a confused transition for them, as they try to find their identities as adults (as parents) who are still dependent on their own parents or grandparents.

The destructive encounters with which the youths involve themselves while grappling with the attempt to reach successful destinations also contribute to their failure to progress. The outcomes of these encounters are seldom positive. For example, pregnancy results in their becoming parents; the use of drugs results in despondency; and crime results in jail. These events complicate their transitions and create a cycle of challenges for them to overcome.

6.4.3. Youth, adult dependency and grant dependency

Unsuccessful transitions affect the family structure and have an undesirable effect on the government's ability to provide for them. Youths from poor socioeconomic backgrounds develop dependency characteristics as a result of their unsuccessful or prolonged school-to-work transitions. The youth in the study depended on pensioners or their parents for their basic needs. The extent of their dependency is evident from their view that they are entitled to use their children's grants for themselves.

Their dependency is dragged into adulthood, given that they enter that phase without the means to provide for themselves and their children. This has a huge impact on the older members of their families. Furthermore, the unemployed status of these youths creates a characteristic of grant dependency in the area.

6.4.4. Transition conceptions

The school-to-work transitions in the South African context are determined mainly by one's social background. For the young participants in this study, the lack of family support, their financial conditions and their location played a massive role in their intertwined transition experiences. According to Tchibozo this is clear evidence of what he calls the determinist approach to transitions (Tchibozo, 2002), which suggests that transitions are determined by the individual's social background. There is little evidence for random transitions (transitions dependent on chance) (Glover & King, 1997), chaotic transitions (the individual's past experiences influencing the transition despite the social background) (Gardecki & Neumark, 1998), or strategic transitions (transitions influenced by a person's decisions) (Tchibozo, 2002) in this context.

6.5. POLICY AND CHANGE

6.5.1. Youth development in South Africa, policy and change

Youth development in South Africa has faced a lot of criticism from academics, the media, political parties and the youth cohort. The criticism arises from the fact that very little development has taken place since the inception of the development programme, which is the responsibility of the National Youth Commission. The Commission, by its nature, has no powers to implement anything. The co-ordination and monitoring of the programme is the responsibility of other departments, which have not been greatly active in this regard. (Until the establishment of the National Youth Development Agency (the NYC) in 2009, youth development in democratic South Africa had had structural, policy and implementation challenges and had been mainly *ad hoc*. One has to hope for better things in the future.)

Everatt (2000) suggests that the NYC ‘lacked power’, given that while they could design policies, the endorsement, funding and implementation of those policies depended on the Cabinet. Everatt’s submission is an example of how policy design and implementation is reliant on power relations. He further suggests that the concerns of the youth were not at the heart of the design of the policy. The experiences of the past years seem to have given good grounds for such concerns.

There has been broad consensus from academia on the disjuncture between the intended and the implemented policy, whether around the policy as it influenced political intentions and pressures (Levinson, 2001), as authoritative matter or allocation of values (Ball, 1990), or representing public needs and interest (Levinson, 2001). It is clear that the disjunctions between the formulation of the policy, its endorsement, its funding and its implementation challenge the empowerment of the recipients; in this case, the youth. As the government has changed, political demands have necessitated policy changes, and youth policies were among those. In the case of youth development, the haphazard formulation of policies, structures and institutions has resulted in the establishment of a commission instead of an implementation agency for youth development.

The researcher's discussion follows the line that policy should be informed by 'policy action' and that issues of infrastructure and resources should be taken into consideration in policy design. The policy implementers tend to ignore aspects of policy that necessitate the allocation of infrastructure and resources (for example resources to monitor the implementation of SASA and compulsory schooling). They concentrate therefore on aspects of policy that are not only understandable but also don't involve huge changes in the *status quo*, and that require the allocation of few resources in both management and administration. And lastly, policy design and implementation in South Africa tend to be unidirectional and to lack accountability, thus limiting the feedback that might give rise to the realignment of policies.

The challenge of bringing about integrated youth development is both a structural and a policy challenge in that: (1) the State's youth development policies have not been responsive to the youth issue, and (2) there has been no specific department responsible for the implementation of youth programmes. The National Youth Development Agency has been one of the few recent successes in the field of integrated youth development.

The ETD system has not been an exception. The gap in the education, training and development policies addressing the challenge of out-of-school youth and youth at risk is one of the contributing factors to nation's problems with labour supply and demand. SASA, the stipulation of nine years of compulsory education and the age specification are some of the policies that are based on international trends and which are divorced from the local context.

6.5.2. Policy and out-of-school youth

The Department of Education is the main agent and custodian of youth skills and knowledge development from entry level into schooling, until the learners are qualified for work. It is for this reason that what goes on in the development and implementation of youth-related policy in the other government departments should be closely linked to the education policies in South Africa.

That said, the Department of Education should ensure that the compulsory years of education in South Africa are the most effective and efficient for eliminating the challenges of dropping out. If effectiveness and efficiency is met, the challenges of dropping out between Grades 1 and 9 would decrease, leaving the country with the challenge of learners dropping out of Grades 10 and 11.

While compulsory schooling applies until Grade 9 or age 15, and the Basic Conditions of Employment Policy (DoL, 1997) suggests that these learners are fit for employment, employers still marginalise these youths due to their poor skills levels. If the policies see these youth as ready for the labour market, the transition policies should effectively advocate for these and provide incentives for the labour market to be receptive to new job seekers. Skills development initiatives should also be driven in a less competitive process and thus provide equitable chances for young people to attain skills and theoretical knowledge.

When skills development happens for the young drop-out, the focus should be mainly on developing situations in which the level of skills developed is adequate to meet the needs of the labour market and matches the individual's strengths. For example, the participants in the study believe that the current training programmes occasionally provided in the area are not sufficient for them to get sustainable employment or incomes.

Skills development in South Africa is targeted mainly at satisfying the demands of the labour market rather than the individuals' needs. A skills shortage is defined as 'a situation in which employers are unable to fill, or experience difficulty in filling vacancies in a specific occupation or specialisation due to an insufficient number of workers with the required qualifications and experience' (Labour, 2003). The challenge for South Africa is to coin a favourable term from the point of view of individuals who have no skills or qualifications to make them employable, so that when South Africa develops strategies for skills development it will be for the benefit of the individual rather than the employers. If that is achieved, youth school-to-work

transitions will slot into those strategies so that their needs determine their development.

While the analysis of the demand and supply of skills in South Africa concentrates on the range of skills needed in the field and quantifies them, (DoL, 2003) the view should extend to looking at the availability of people who can develop those skills. Not only is the skills front in South Africa threatened by the lack of field-specific skills, but there is a limited number of individuals who can develop these skills. For example, there is a pool of individuals who are targeted for field-specific skills development mainly for the skills needed by the labour market. This excludes the youth who do not have the basic skills to qualify to be in this pool. But if the 'pool' does not have enough individuals in it, then that is a very significant threat to skills development and the labour market.

Skills development should thus look at strategies for the development of youth who are discouraged, in order to qualify them to be in the 'pool' and stand a chance for field-specific skills development. This, however, cannot be achieved without the strategic nurturing of the youth who have no work experience, have limited knowledge, have not attained enough skills to compete for selection in the learnerships and other programmes, and who may have only functional literacy.

While SASA aims to ensure that the young attend school, it establishes no process to ensure that the DoE is accountable for the implementation of the policy. While the policy suggests that the HOD has to investigate the circumstances of learner absence and take action in that regard, school principals believe that the department has no processes in place to investigate dropping out between Grades 1 and 11.

One of the challenges hampering the development of the youth is the lack of learner knowledge and experience of the labour market environment amongst people in late 20s. These youths have to compete for jobs with peers who have had some level of labour market experience, who have some knowledge, and who have higher levels of education and productive social networks. While the game is the same, the playing fields are not level and not all players in the game start on an equal footing.

6.5.3. Policy and the school principal

Interviews conducted with high-school principals yielded interesting perspectives on education policy. Principals were asked to provide insight into what their experiences were at their respective schools, describe the experiences and pathways of out-of school youth and make recommendations from a policy perspective.

The Principals articulated that the Department of Education could do more to educate parents on the South African Schools Act (SASA) so that they understand more clearly the stipulations made around compulsory education especially for children under the age of fifteen. This said it is the view of this study that the Principals themselves have a very limited understanding of the South African Schools Act (SASA) and what it advocates. This is evident in the manner in which Principals deal with the issue of learner readmission, their role in the implementation of the Act and their understanding of the role of the Department of Education at district level.

Principals generally readmit youth back to school and in some cases observe that learners who re-enter the schooling system are more committed and therefore work harder. Principals verbalised that the only learners that are not readmitted to school are those who have a criminal record. The Act however does not state that a learner should be disqualified on the basis of a criminal record and therefore this disqualification is unconstitutional. There was a strong sense from the interviews conducted with Principals that learners who are readmitted into the schooling system were being granted a favour as opposed to its being a right for learners to have access to second-chance education.

The principals also did not understand that according to the SASA Act, the HOD of the schools is responsible for ensuring the following:

“....investigate the circumstances of the learner’s absence from school; take appropriate measures to remedy the situation; and failing such a remedy, issue a written notice to the parent of the learner requiring compliance with the subsection” (SASA,1996: Chapter 2, Section 1).

The principals did not recognise that they were responsible for following up on learners who were not attending school by communicating with parents and if no correspondence is received from parents; their role involves reporting these cases to the Department of Education. It was also evident when interviewing the principals that they had very little understanding of the role of the Department of Education in enforcing conditions as stipulated in the SASA Act. The principals believe that more could be done to train educational managers regarding the implementation of SASA.

The principals do not have a standardised method to track learner drop-out rates but do so by looking at learner figures at the beginning of the school year and comparing them with figures at the end of that school year. Unfortunately there is no indication of whether these learners end up in other schools or at FET colleges in the area so the magnitude of the drop-out statistic is questionable. However, subsequent to the introduction of the learner tracking system, LURITS, the magnitude of the learner drop-out statistic will be better understood. This said, being able to quantify the learner drop-out statistic does not aid in retaining and managing learner drop-out rates.

6.6. CONCLUSION

The reasons for why youths drop out of school are complex and intertwined, and in many instances the youths themselves struggle to articulate the main reasons. Those they identify include poverty, pregnancy, having dysfunctional family units, a lack of support from their families, a lack of educator commitment, and the pursuit of economic opportunity. They come to realise the value of education after experiencing the hardships of being out of school and thereafter attempt to re-enter the ETD system or to enter the labour market.

Dropping into the ETD system and the labour market is largely constrained. The circumstances that led to their dropping out tend to hinder them from dropping back into school successfully. Dropping into the labour market is constrained by their low levels of education and their lack of qualifications. As a result of the challenges

associated with re-entry into the ETD system or entry into the labour market, these youths are prone to experience psychological difficulties.

An evaluation of the school principals' understanding of the SASA and their role in the implementation thereof yielded the fact that school managers have a very limited understanding of the Act. Also they do not have an understanding of the role of the DOE in this regard. It is the opinion of this researcher that this can largely be attributed to the lack of empowerment by the department for school managers (including principals) and the lack of monitoring of the implementation of this policy.

Different government departments have different programmes aimed at assisting the youth. Unfortunately these initiatives are not integrated to the extent that they should be, resulting in duplication and the non-alignment of their interventions. Kraak (2003) argues sensibly that the successful implementation of youth policy requires an integrated approach. However, with the introduction of the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) the intention is that these initiatives will be synergised to a much larger degree.



CHAPTER 7

CONCLUDING CONSIDERATIONS

7.1. INTRODUCTION

This final chapter provides some recommendations and points to policy implications with respect to the phenomenon of having large numbers of learners drop out of school, and highlights the significance of the study. The chapter starts by considering the issue of second-chance education. Then it links the core of the study to the human capital theory and rational decision-making theory and suggests further research on school-to-work transitions.

Central to the chapter is a recommendation for the establishment of a second-chance education system designed to receive those who wish to re-enter the ETD system. The study proposes that only after these youths have been afforded an opportunity at second-chance education should we look at labour market entry. This assertion is based on interaction with the participants in this study.

7.2. INVESTING IN SECOND-CHANCE EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR THE YOUTH

7.2.1. Dropping out: Does the definition need alteration?

Given the definition of dropping out in South Africa, what are the interactions with and the implications for the education system and the youth labour market? South Africa has defined dropping out as ‘the percentage of pupils who dropout from a given grade in a given school year. It is the difference between 100% and the sum of the promotion and repetition rates’ (Ministerial Committee, 2007). The ministerial committee suggests that ‘there is a problem of learner retention, which is more pronounced after Grade 9. The dropout rate below Grade 9 is statistically

insignificant, but increases sharply from Grades 10 to 12.' The question thus becomes, if a person leaves school after the compulsory stage, why does the system still assign a negative derogatory implication to dropping out? Should a new term be coined to affirm a positive status to these youth, so that the labour market can be receptive of them? While the then Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, stated that 'the lion's share of the drop off in enrolment takes place in the post-compulsory school phase' (DoE, 2005), the ministerial committee has argued that learners dropping out after the post-compulsory years or Grade 9 does not constitute failure to the DoE. Despite that argument, like most South Africans, the Minister was also 'concerned with the number of learners who do not complete Matric' (DoE, 2005).

While the DoE and policy makers are arguing about the numbers and grades within which dropping out is occurring, the system is in need of:

- Redefining dropping out in South Africa;
- Developing strategies and policies which will address the non-completion of matric or the equivalent as per the NQF;
- Developing alternatives which provide equivalent chances; and
- Promote these on the labour market.

The inadequate accountability of the principals and the DoE at a provincial and district level regarding policy implementation needs to be addressed if we are to address the issue of learners dropping out of the ETD system. It is obvious that while the legal accountability for school attendance lies with the HOD, the actual responsibility lies with all stakeholders including the HOD, the parent, the SGB and the principal. Policies are a point of departure, but without implementation processes and accountability, school-to-work transition in South Africa will remain a challenge and a threat to the skills and economic status of many of the youth from disadvantaged backgrounds.

There is thus a need for the planning of strategies to develop and improve a second-chance education system aligned to the NQF which ensures the equitability of school-to-work transitions. This should be in line with the principle of addressing the

transformation of the youth, irrespective of level of education and locality, thus contributing to the process of redress and justice and ultimately addressing poverty eradication through the employment of the young. These strategies would have to be inter-departmental if they are to prove successful in focusing on the plight of the youth when entering the labour market.

7.2.2. An integrated model for assimilation into the ETD system for the out-of-school youth

Re-entry into the ETD system should not be viewed as an academic exercise only. It should be viewed as the development of life skills, psychological development and academic performance for the youth who re-enter the system.

The Australian government, in response to the challenge of out-of-school youth, developed a 'Youth Pathways Programme'. This programme was based on the individual, and its purpose was to assist young drop-outs or youth at risk. This programme was a strategy devised in response to national youth transition challenges similar to those in South Africa and most other parts of the world. South Africa needs similar strategies. These need to be linked to DoE or DoL strategies.

7.2.3. Advocating for second-chance education

The experiences of out-of-school youths have an impact on their understanding of the value of education for them as individuals in their contexts. These youths therefore want a second chance. In South Africa, second-chance education is more accessible to youth who have work experience or are currently employed. South African policies and youth development models have to recognise the value of re-entry and giving a second chance to unemployed young people who have dropped out of school. South Africa thus needs some policy or programmes on second-chance education.

In 2001, while South Africa was rejoicing about its achievements since the year 1994, the DoE recognised the need for second-chance education. Their report states:

There may be greater demand for second-chance education by learners returning to education after an absence from the system, or for more flexible learning opportunities for those who are ill, caregivers, or wage earners. On the other hand, these demands may be offset by fewer births and more deaths of under-fives, and the fact that families will have less disposable income for school fees (DoE, 2001).

The notion of establishing a second-chance education system was supported in a speech by the Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, in 2008, when she suggested that:

Education cannot be separated from training. Basic and secondary education is the foundation on which an effective vocational education and training system should be built. Good quality basic education and initial training, availability of adult and second-chance education, together with a learning culture, ensure high levels of participation in continuous education and training.

Second-chance education in South Africa should be viewed as a corrective measure and a necessity for the out-of-school youth who dropped out, and should provide components addressing the youth-at-risk cohort. It should also include basic components that provide positive and effective transitions for the recipients.

There are three basic qualities required of a genuine second-chance system (Inbar & Sever, 1989):

1. Accessibility – second-chance systems should be non-selective
2. Effectiveness – second-chance systems should improve educational attainment
3. Equivalence – second-chance programmes should lead to similar if not the same rewards for success as the first chance provides

Source: Ross (2004)

Developing an integrated model is basic to second-chance education, which should largely be based on the ‘reconstruction of identities and self-worth’ (Munns, Nanlohy & Thomas, 2000).

Second-chance education should be flexible and responsive to the integrated assimilation of the youth as they re-enter the ETD system. The notion of flexibility in education is also suggested by Coombe (2000) when advocating interventions like ‘providing more second-chance basic education for never-schooled children, or for those whose schooling has been random’ (Coombe, 2000).

7.3. SIGNIFICANT ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

While the reasons for dropping out are intertwined, environments that are conducive to retention and positive transitions are also intertwined. Extending compulsory schooling from age 16 to age 18 may better capacitate the youth to manage their immediate social contexts. Because of their maturity levels at this age, the youth are better able to assert their social standing and are therefore more likely to resist temptation.

It is also notable that the disparities between the FET and GET phases pose real problems for the youth and impinges on their employability. FET in schools and colleges is intended to provide more skills needed for employability than the GET phase. Per policy intention, youth with FET qualification (whether from schools or colleges), are meant to gain more industry-related skills than their counterparts. Whether these fundamentals of the FET phase are manifested in our day-to-day experience or are actually implemented is debatable.

The tracking of Learner Unit Record Information and Tracking Systems (LURITS) needs to be extended to tracking youth information until they are employed. Having records of where and what activities youth are involved in will assist in providing

structured programmes to assist youth with school-to-work transitions. LURITS is a system that needs to be supported by a responsive strategy. For example, LURITS assists government in determining the number of learners lost in the system, but does not assist with retention, and there is still no system for assisting with re-entry.

Establishing that youth do understand the value of education and its potential contribution in their lives is important to their re-entry and their ability successfully to follow their desired pathways. While there are alternatives, accessing these would assist with positive destinations. Revisiting access to alternatives and the existence of alternatives for the out-of-school youth thus become a matter of transformational urgency.

The DoE has argued that the models or formulas used for determining the drop-out numbers are not accurate. However, from the social studies perspective and the DoE statistics and observations, dropping out is a social and economic challenge. Addressing the challenges of dropping in and retention is necessary and urgent for poverty alleviation.

7.3.1. Linking the study to the human capital perspective

There is consensus among the respondents in the study regarding the benefits of education for individual development. This is based largely on the participants' recognition of the importance of education for employment and economic participation. This view is in line with the argument common globally that recognises education as being critical for the development of individuals and societies. Various studies have demonstrated that societies with well-educated labour forces tend to have higher levels of economic and social development (World Bank, 1999; Coleman, 1988 and Becker, 1975). The young participants' experiences in seeking employment and the labour market's response supports the view that highly educated people are generally well skilled, and that skilled workers are generally productive. This finding amounts to an extension of the human capital paradigm and furthers the thought that recognises the benefits of higher levels of education.



7.3.2. Linking the study to the rational decision-making perspective

All of the youths in the study, after dropping out, experienced the real drawbacks associated with the outcomes of being ‘unqualified’. The youth labour market’s demand for workers with skills and qualifications put them at a disadvantage, and they were unable to find employment. As they looked for employment and encountered only rejection, they became dependent on their siblings. After contemplating the sterile state of their lives they reconsidered the benefits that derive from schooling or further education, and desired to drop back into school.

Oreopoulos *et al* (2003) link academic performance, expectations about the benefits that derive from completing school, and local work opportunities in their model. The young participants in the study were mainly concerned with the benefits they might receive after completing their studies, and were motivated to re-enter the system by the demands of the local employers. The young drop in or yearn to drop in mainly so that they can be employable.

7.3.3. Contribution of the study

There have been many studies investigating the reasons for dropping out, and policies have thereafter been drawn up to attempt to prevent learners from dropping out. The South African government recently piloted the Learner Tracking System, which is aimed at tracking learners within the school system. While this tracking system is in its early stages, its potential to make a great contribution should be recognised. However, the system is not designed to stop dropping out, but to track the extent to which dropping out occurs. Dropping out will still happen despite the tracking. This necessitates the facilitation of re-entry.

The study also challenges the various education directorates to consider the implications of its findings for their policies and programmes addressing the challenge. It is envisaged that the study will play a role in highlighting the experiences of the challenges facing youth as they try to access the education and training system after dropping out of school and the development of youth at risk before they are out of school.

As suggested earlier, scholars in the field tend to focus on the reasons why learners drop out, and to compare the chances of matriculants and tertiary education graduates in entering the labour market or higher education. None or very few of them focus on the experiences of pre-grade 12 out-of-school youth in their endeavours to re-enter the ETD system or to enter the labour market. This is the major gap in the literature that this dissertation has sought to address.

The study thus:

- challenges the disjuncture between SASA and compulsory education in relation to how dropping out is addressed
- advocates for the development of a stronger strategy or policy aimed at second-chance education in South Africa, which could eventually lead these youth into the labour market;
- brings together the relevant theoretical perspectives associated with dropping out and dropping in; and finally
- asks for further national research into the dilemma, advocating for clearer re-entry alternatives in the ETD system and the labour market.

7.3.4. Further research

While there are studies on the school-to-work transitions, these tend to look at the reasons and factors leading to youth drop-out and the relationships between educational attainment and employability. None or very few of these focus on the experiences and pathways of pre-grade twelve out-of-school youth as they seek positive destinations. This area of concern needs further research. This study

addresses the experiences of some young people in transition between school and the workplace and proposes the establishment of an appropriate second-chance education and training system, but this is a case study and it is therefore not possible to generalise from its findings in such a manner as to be able to apply it to the whole of South Africa. Further research on the experiences of young drop-outs and their transition between school and work is necessary.

Secondly, while there is academic research arguing for the relationship between the quality of education and dropping out in South Africa, the research does not address this issue directly. The young participants in the study alluded to the change in the curriculum as contributing to the challenges they face after dropping back in, leading to their dropping out yet again, but this evidence is not enough to categorically argue that curriculum change is a cause of repeated dropping out.

Thirdly, if research is to inform policy and strategies, there is a need for research into alternatives in the provision of second-chance education designed to accommodate the cohort of young people who have dropped out of school and have no work experience. This research would assist with the development or co-ordination of models for such education and training on a national scale.

Fourthly, for comparative purposes, further research on the views of managers in the labour market, to get their opinions on school-to-work transitions, would be beneficial. The purpose of that study would be to investigate their experiences, as managers who employ workers who have dropped out of school.

It is clear that families with little education capital are likely to experience a higher incidence of youth drop-out. This study suggests that these families and their children should understand the value and benefits of investing in education.

7.4. CONCLUSION

The study was informed by the high drop-out rate of learners between Grades 1 and 11 in South African schools. While the social, structural and economic reasons for dropping out were explored, the study concerned itself mainly with re-entry into to the ETD system and entry into the labour market. As stated in Chapter One, many out-of-school youth want to re-enter the ETD system and to enter the labour market. Their experience as they attempt entry is rarely documented and less understood. This study therefore, sought to explore the push and pull factors in the pathways of these representative youths, giving them the opportunity to articulate their experiences.

The study examines some of the models and theories applicable to this theme. Those are the human capital theory, rational decision-making theory, the social environment model and the congruence model. The study is positioned within the congruence model, which provides the researcher with an holistic paradigm which integrates the human capital theory, the rational-decision making theory and the social environment model. It further suggests that people have agency and that there are various explanations for why youth drop out of and re-enter school. This model is accommodative of what was shared by the participants in terms of their reasons for dropping out of school and the decisions to re-enter.

It is notable that the consequences for dropping out are similar all over the globe. Young people who drop out of school are more likely to be unemployable or underemployed than those who complete their schooling. When they realise that this phenomenon occurs as a result of their lower levels of education, they either re-enter or attempt to re-enter schooling. The study notes that there is a disjuncture between the policies and programmes aimed at supporting school drop-in in South Africa and the implementation thereof.

The study concludes that reasons for the youth's dropping out of school are complex and intertwined. They include social and structural reasons, the nature of the

individual's family background, his/her financial status and his/her academic self esteem or lack of esteem. After dropping out, the individuals are inclined to recognise the value of education by associating education with accessing employment. They thus drop-in again or attempt to drop-in to school or to enter the labour market.

While attempting to re-enter the system, these individuals experience challenges associated with information poverty including a lack of knowledge of the pathways available to them. These include skills development initiatives, entrepreneur support initiatives, and FET options.

The study also suggests that there are psychological effects associated with prolonged absence from the ETD system, the labour market and inexperienced transitions. Lastly the study tables second-chance education as a strategy which should be central to policy making and implementation in South Africa.

School-to-work transitions remain complex matters both in developing and in developed countries. Policy and change within the context of education and labour need to operate inside the assumption that it is necessary to enhance the quality of individual involvement in education so as to maximise eventual economic participation for the majority. The ageing of the labour force threatens the government's financial resources. It is against this backdrop that policy makers and implementers need to recognise that the decreased participation of the young in the political economy of the nation is a socioeconomic crisis, and to provide strategies that maximise their participation. This would enhance skills levels and economic self-sufficiency in South Africa.

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Appendix 1: Interview Schedule for the Youth – Focus & Individual

Interviews

The Themes

1. Demography and Family Background
2. Reasons for dropping out
3. Reasons for dropping in
4. Experiences in pathways and destinations
5. Policy roles in their pathways
6. Supporting structure
7. General destinations for these youth
8. Policy implications

Appendix 2: Interview Schedule for the Principal

The Themes

- General destinations for these youth
- Policy Role and Implications
- Possible advice they give to these youth in re-entrance
- Perceived pathways and experiences for the youth
- Role of Education Policy and System

The Semi-Structured Questions

1. The rate of dropping out in your school, is it as the other schools in the area (high or low). Has it improved or become worse over the years? And how do you define dropping out?
2. The rate of dropping out in the surrounding area: is it high or low? Has it improved over the years?
3. What do the South African Schools Act (1996) and other policies say about the learners who drop out of school?
4. How does your school enforce the policy?
5. What is your view on the implementation of SASA?
6. What indicators (how do you determine) do you use to determine whether or not there is a high rate of dropping out in the area?

7. What do these youth do after dropping out? Have there been incidences where these youth have tried to get back to the school? Do you accept all the youth back into the system? What does the policy say regarding that? What have been your responses?
8. What are the challenges faced and best practices in dropping in behavior for the youth? What have been the adv/disadvantages of these youth getting back to the schooling?
9. What possible pathways do the youth who drop out of school taken take within ETD and labour market?
10. How do you encourage learners to stay at school?

Appendix 3: Consent Letter

19 Jacaranda Street
Noordwyk
1659
Date:

Dear Participant

Research Consent Letter - Pathways of out-of-school Youth and their re-entrance into Education and the Labour Market

I am conducting research as part fulfilling my Doctoral Studies as per the title above. Noting that participation on the research is voluntary, this letter serves as consent for your participation or the participation of youth in your guardianship.

The interviews will be conducted to gain knowledge or insight. The interview will take less than two hours. The following are the details of the research:

- **Purpose:** The purpose is to traces the pathways of out-of-school youth who dropped out of school between grades 1 to 11 as they seek re-entrance to the education, training and development (ETD) system, or entrance into the labour market. I plan to investigate the factors that determine the choices that dropouts make either in re-entering the ETD system or entering the labour market. Your contribution in this research will be highly appreciated.
- **Procedures:** An interview will be held with you in Folweni (details of the venue will be communicated on finalisation of the date and time).
- **Benefits:** There are no financial or other benefits to be received. The research is strictly for knowledge gain for the purpose of my studies.
- **Process:** After the interview, I will send you the transcript as soon as the transcription is finished. You will then evaluate it, for what is in there represents your responses. After your have indicated whether or not there are changes, I will analyse the data.
- **Your Rights as a participant:**
 - The research is strictly confidential.
 - Pseudonyms will be used.
 - Data from this interview will be used for the purposes of my PhD research. (Should there be any other person wishing to use your data, you will be contacted and you will give consent for the use thereof. Without the consent, the data cannot be transferred to another researcher)
 - There are no financial benefits – strictly for information sharing.
 - Participation is voluntary.

Regards
Andile Dube
0828360115

Consent for Participation

Research Title

Pathways of out-of-school youth and the re-entrance into education and the labour market

Consent:

I _____ (name and surname) agree to participate in the research as per above. I understand my rights as a participant.

Guardian's Consent (for participants who are minors):

I _____ (name and surname) agree to participate in the research as per above. I understand my rights as a participant.

Signature: _____

Contact Details: _____

Appendix 4: Data

Pathways of Out of School Youth and their Re-entrance into Education System and the Labour Market

ARMANI DUDE

Andile: I will start by placing on record that whatever we do with this information I won't use your name, and I know that if I use your name you can sue me. If there is someone that wants to use this data about Folweni I will start by clearing it with you and you will have to give them written consent to use this information. What is your name and surname?

Armani Dude: I'm ARMANI DUDE.

Andile: How old are you?

Armani Dude: 27.

Andile: For the record, are you male or female?

Armani Dude: Male.

Andile: Male. Oh. Ok, are you married? You are not yet married?

Armani Dude: I'm not yet married.

Andile: What do you do? Are you working or are you at school?

Armani Dude: I'm working.

Andile: When did you start working?

Armani Dude: In July.

Andile: I would like to know about your monthly income but you don't need to give me the exact figure, you can tell me if it's more than R300-00, it's less than R300-00, it's between R400- and R499-00 or between R500-00 and R599-00. Ok, when did you start working?

Armani Dude: Towards the end of June.

Andile: Towards the end of June? Before June what was your monthly income?

Armani Dude: It was not a specific income.

Andile: It was not specific, but it was fluctuating between how much?

Armani Dude: Maybe R1000-00 and R1500-00; R1000-00 around there.

Andile: Between R1000-00 and R1500-00. What about now?

Armani Dude: R5000-00 and R6000-00.

Andile: Between R5000-00 and R6000-00. Where were you working then, and where do you work now?

Armani Dude: I was working at a salon then. I have my own salon. I am now working at Toyota. My mother helped me find a Job there.

Andile: Ok, who do you stay with at home? Can you tell me about your family, who you stay with and how old they are?

Armani Dude: I'm not sure about the years. My grandmother.

Andile: Is she working?

Armani Dude: She is a pensioner.

Andile: Does she earn a pension?

Armani Dude: Yes, she does.

Andile: Ok, who else do you stay with?

Armani Dude: With my mother.

Andile: Is your mother working and how old is she?

Armani Dude: I'm not sure (of the age), but she is working.

Andile: Where is she working?

Armani Dude: At Toyota.

Andile: At Toyota. What does she do at Toyota?

Armani Dude: She is a team member.

Andile: She is a team member, what does a team member do?

Armani Dude: I think a team member is the entry level for newcomers.

Andile: Ok, when did she start working there?

Armani Dude: I think she's been there two years now.

Andile: Ok, what does she do exactly?

Armani Dude: She works at the entrance shop sewing car seats.

Andile: They sew seats?

Armani Dude: They assemble the seats for the cars.

Andile: Did she do any training for sewing?

Armani Dude: Yes.

Andile: Formally?

Armani Dude: Yes.

Andile: When did she do training?

Armani Dude: Long before she started working.

Andile: Ok.

Armani Dude: She stayed (not employed) for quite some time after that. She once worked for another company sewing car seats for Mercedes, and then it was shut down. I don't know how but they were transferred to Toyota.

Andile: What is your mother's highest qualification?

Armani Dude: Matric.

Andile: When did she complete Matric? Can you remember?

Armani Dude: I don't remember.

Andile: Were you already born?

Armani Dude: Yes.

Andile: You were born in 19?

Armani Dude: In 1978. Are you surprised?

Andile: No, not surprised....

Andile: Do you have a child?

Armani Dude: Yes.

Andile: Ok, how old is your child?

Armani Dude: 3.

Andile: Where is her mother?

Armani Dude: She is around.

Andile: If you say she is around, then where is she? Is she working?

Armani Dude: She is still at school.

Andile: How old is she?

Armani Dude: 19.

Andile: 19. Where does she study?

Armani Dude: At Sphephelo.

Andile: So you had a baby with her and she also dropped out of school?

Armani Dude: Yes.

Andile: And then she went back?

Armani Dude: She then continued.

Andile: Up to what standard did you complete?

Armani Dude: Matric. Are you asking about school?

Andile: Yes. Ok, after that what did you do?

Armani Dude: I worked at the salon for one year.

Andile: You worked at the salon?

Armani Dude: Yes, for one year.

Andile: Where is this salon?

Armani Dude: At isiSipingo

Andile: How much were you earning?

Armani Dude: R30-00 per day.

Andile: R30-00 per day? Why did you stop working there?

Armani Dude: The money was not enough and I started with my studies.

Andile: Where?

Armani Dude: At Sultan.

Andile: What were you doing?

Armani Dude: I was doing Cost and Management Accounting.

Andile: Cost and what?

Armani Dude: Management Accounting.

Andile: Why then don't you do things related to Cost and Management Accounting?

Armani Dude: I didn't finish studying and my results... There is no proof that I once studied because I owe money.

Andile: How much do you owe?

Armani Dude: R21 000-00.

Andile: You only did one year?

Armani Dude: Two years.

Andile: Two years.

Armani Dude: I was short of money in the third year.

Andile: Did you complete your second year?

Armani Dude: I am left with a few things. There is something outstanding. I still need to finish the few courses and do my third year. But I owe the technikon too much money.

Andile: Tell me about your schooling and going to tertiary education, what happened?

Armani Dude: I got the bursary from the Department of Education and Culture. I was not going to be able to study because there was no money to study towards the end of the year. I heard about the bursaries and applied and I got one, hence I started studying in the following year, which was 1998. It was around March and it was already late.

Andile: 1999?

Armani Dude: 1998.

Andile: Ok, why did the department not pay in full for your course?

Armani Dude: Something is not right. When I look at it, I see a lot of fraud took place. The department is under the impression that everything has been paid for. But the people in charge of transferring the money to the schools seem not to do it. I studied for a year and at the end when I went to check for the results I was told that the results have been withheld because I was in arrears with my account and it was already the end of the year. In January I went back to the person in charge regarding my issue and he said there was a mistake from their side and that he was sorry and he made me a note immediately to take to school wherein they committed themselves to paying the debt for the previous year. They registered me and phoned and found that the letter was correct. I studied and the very same thing happened again at the end of the second year and I was not able to see the person who assisted me, he was no longer where I had found him previously...

Andile: And there has not been any follow ups after that?

Armani Dude: No there has not been follow ups. The technikon want their money and the department of education has never paid and I don't know who to talk to.

Andile: And your other siblings...? How many brothers and sisters do you have?

Armani Dude: Two sisters and one brother.

Andile: Are your two sisters and your brother still at school? Is

Armani Dude: Yes.

Andile: In high school?

Armani Dude: In primary school. My brother is in primary school.

Andile: In primary school. And your sisters?

Armani Dude: The one is at tertiary school and the other is just at home, unemployed.

Andile: Why?

Armani Dude: She does not have a job.

Andile: Did she complete Matric?

Armani Dude: She didn't complete it, she didn't pass. She is thinking about Technical Colleges.

Andile: How long have you stayed here at Folweni?

Armani Dude: Since 1987 ...

Andile: That's about 10 years.

Armani Dude: More than 10 years.

Andile: 1997?

Armani Dude: 1988.

Andile: 1988. Ok, it's close to twenty years. It means you were still running around as a child. What are some of your best memories? Things that make you laugh when you think about them?

Armani Dude: You making me think. There aren't that many.

Andile: I want you to think. Aren't there many?

Armani Dude: There was once a time when there were many people here at Folweni. There were many good people with money. There were those that had money, and there were certain businesses where you could get fresh items and most of the time their prices were reasonable in all areas.

Andile: Yes.

Armani Dude: It shows that life goes on.

Andile: Yes.

Armani Dude: Up until there was violence; then many people left and never came back. There was a time when living here was fun.

Andile: Now? Is it not fun anymore?

Armani Dude: Now, there is no progress like there was in the olden days because many people do not have trust in this area and do not want to invest their money anymore. There is no progress and when you want something that is proper, you have to get out of Folweni.

Andile: You have to do what?

Armani Dude: You have to get out and get them somewhere else. In comparison, you do not have to leave uMlazi to get things.

Andile: Which things would those be?

Armani Dude: Restaurants, shops and just supermarkets and other community facilities like libraries. People who want to study for exams have to go to town or to iSipingo. Many facilities are found in other areas, but they are not available here. And going to uMlazi or Isipingo is expensive.

Andile: And what is your worst memory?

Armani Dude: Oh! The violence here at Folweni.

Andile: Yes.

Armani Dude: Sleeping in the bush.

Andile: Sleeping in the bush?

Armani Dude: I once slept in the bush.

Andile: Which bush?

Armani Dude: At my place. At Golokodo section..... We had to go home at night because they were going door to door looking for boys.

Andile: To go where?

Armani Dude: They were sought by the people who kill here.

Andile: They killed them?

Armani Dude: People were really shot at if they had bad luck and were found in the house, so people were forced to leave.

Andile: Yes.

Armani Dude: It is something that was happening at that time. If you were a boy and you were not found to be involved in the activities of the area, you were already in trouble with the people in the neighbourhood.

Andile: Things like what?

Armani Dude: Like camping.

Andile: Ok.

Armani Dude: Guarding against the people who shot at us, this was a problem and it led to many people leaving.

Andile: Since 1988, what things have physically happened as far as development is concerned?

Armani Dude: It was really dark because at night you would walk into someone and only realise when you had bumped into each other's chests.

Andile: Ok.

Armani Dude: Streetlights were not available, it was bad, and things were bad. The toilet system was still that of buckets but it has since improved. The buckets were left in the streets waiting to be picked up by the truck; at least things are better now.

Andile: Ok, with regard to human development, what has happened since then?

Armani Dude: Yes, there is development.

Andile: Old people in general and so on? You may differentiate but I want to know about development of the old and that of the young people, the youth. Youth specifically would be people between the ages of 14 and 35

Armani Dude: With regard to elderly people, there is nothing visible that I see showing help to the elderly. There is an old age home though at uMlazi and another one at kwaMakhutha.

Andile: There is what?

Armani Dude: An old age home. There are none here. I don't know of anything that is of help to the elderly. At least there are youth initiatives from Works that were brought about by the government. People are learning bricklaying and becoming qualified to work. There, people became qualified and then work here at Folweni building RDP houses. They were built by people around here who were taught and know Folweni.

Andile: How many people are already qualified?

Armani Dude: I cannot tell you the exact figure but they are many. But there were people from here at Folweni who were working, but for a few months. The problem is that most of the things are managed by certain people and the people who benefit are people who are around them, a few people. The information about meetings or things that are available for the youth are not displayed the way they are supposed to be displayed. There are some things that you end up not hearing about, and only see people doing and then you know what is happening. Even those meetings are not announced the way they are supposed to be announced. Things are limited to certain people; you are only lucky to see information that is fairly displayed in order to be available to all people. If you hear by luck, you only find that you are already late, it is full! People who are dealing with it are not doing it the way they are supposed to do it. Most of the time I hear about things happening in the area, from people who come to the salon. By that time it is too late.

Andile: Have you attended one of these meetings?

Armani Dude: I attended once but found out that there is something that is being done at Umbumbulu College for co-operatives and I got all this information from a friend who came to the salon to do his hair. He told me that they are looking for a group of ten to do co-operatives at UmbumbuluUmbumbulu College where students are provided with money for transport.

Andile: What qualifications were they looking for?

Armani Dude: There were no qualifications needed. I don't even remember them asking about you're highest qualification at school. They wanted people from the community, people that were not working.

Andile: And how did the course assist?

Armani Dude: The problem with these courses is that they are not very useful. Bricklaying helped a few people because they worked for a few months and can be employed someday. But courses like cooperatives if you are looking for a job and say you did the course, they still want your matric certificate. You can only volunteer but they can't employ you. You still need to know how to read and write English and to think.

Andile: So you think people who do not have a matric qualification can't think.

Armani Dude: Yes I think so. You must listen to people who come to the salon. You can't even have a chat about current affairs and they don't even know what is going on around them. But you can hear a person with matric or people who are at school. The thinking level is higher. Very high. Even me, the way I reasoned before finishing matric changed when I did matric. People without matric [a person completing his/her grade 12 level education] can't think...just listen to them...I often listen to them when they come to my Salon business. You can't even have a chat about current affairs; they don't know what is going on around them, compared to a person in school or one with matric.

Andile: When you were at school, and left and went back, what made you go back?

Armani Dude: I left because there was no money. It becomes tough when you don't have a bursary and yet you are studying and there is no one working. I had to stay at the

res for example, because staying here (at home in Folweni) would have resulted in a lack of funds for transport. While staying at the res, the bursary provides for food, now I will get hungry while I am at school, and I had no money to buy clothes to wear, or school necessities like textbooks. I had to depend on others and I could not study in my own time and the way I wanted to. So that is why I dropped out. When another opportunity came I was no longer interested in studying...It was easy because they provided me with transport fees. My friends helped a lot; they encouraged me and supported my...we formed a team and studied as a group. When I passed my Matric, I was overjoyed; maybe it was because I put so much of my energy into studying.

Andile: How long did you run the salon for?

Armani Dude: From 2002 until now.

Andile: So between 2000 and which year? You left school in 1999 or 2000?

Armani Dude: 98, 99, and 2000.

Andile: 98, 99, and 2000?

Armani Dude: After school I worked at the salon again.

Andile: So between 2000 and 2001 you were working at the salon?

Armani Dude: In 2002, because... in October.... Oh! Yes, I opened the doors (to my salon) on November 1.

Andile: Yes, you were still explaining that you worked at the salon and then you went back to school in 2000. What I am interested in most is the reason why you went back to school the second time. You had already studied for one and half years, is it this time that made you still want to go back...ok, there are other thing that I still wanted to know. What makes people, or someone who left school realise the importance of going back?

Armani Dude: When you leave school it is because it has become so difficult for you to continue.

Andile: In what way?

Armani Dude: The main reason is the shortage of money; there would be insufficient money to finish.

Andile:

Armani Dude: That is the main reason, when an opportunity presents itself, then you realise that you have to study; say for instance there is money for you to study a certain course and you would be able to afford it and you realise that you can study when the money is available. Yes, that is what happened there because I decided to go back due to the fact that I like it and I also know that studying gives you opportunities. Then you fail to study even if there is a way or someone who is willing to assist you to live a better life.

Andile: What opportunities?

Armani Dude: To find the employment you want. To earn the money you want. To drive the car you want. To have a great house. Start a good business. My business is currently not making enough money.

Andile: Now, at the time that you were trying to go back and study or to start your own company, whatever you tried, there were programmes available from the government. What I would like to know is if you know about certain programmes and policies. For example, do you know about SETAS?

Armani Dude: Yes, I know but I don't know exactly how to contact them and how to get assistance. I sometimes hear a little bit but I never get the full information. Even if it appears in the newspaper it is without the full details, even on the radio the information is not easily accessible and you are forced to go and look for it and things like that. I am certain that not many people in the area know about those.

Andile: How did you know because.... you know I'm so embarrassed because I work for SETAS. You do my hair each time I am here, but you do not ask about SETAS, you only ask about R Kelly. Anyway, how did you get to know about SETAS?

Armani Dude: You can even go to the taxi rank tomorrow morning, you will find people together in long queues, and maybe there is not even a single person who knows about it.

Andile: About SETA?

Armani Dude: Maybe they will hear the word for the first time.

Andile: How did you get to know about SETAS?

Armani Dude: I like reading things, you see. I take things and read. There are certain things in the hair salon workshops that I usually attend, they include it also and you find that they don't focus on a specific area, there is a lot.

Andile: That they are dealing with? About learnerships, have you heard about learnerships?

Armani Dude: I heard a little about these learnerships from my sister because she stays in the RDP houses and she only told me late on Thursday night. The last day was on that coming Friday on the website where I got the application form, but I could not even do it because it was closing that Friday. I heard about it when I was coming from work so I had to sleep and wake up and go to work at six o'clock, therefore I could not do it.

Andile: But why did you not try and finish.

Armani Dude: They wanted a lot of things I did not have at that time. They needed you to submit proofs and qualification. It was late and I was in town. I needed to come back home. Asking for time at work is also not easy. So I couldn't do it.

Andile: And then you starting your own business, do you know about Umsobomvu?

Armani Dude: Yes.

Andile: How do you know about it?

Armani Dude: I once went to Thekwini business centre, is it not that place? I think that is the place next to DIT. What is that street? Yes, I once went there but the problem is that they said because I'm coming with the salon issue, they are still working on it. They have not finalised it; they will contact me after finalising it. But that category was not amongst the categories that they were dealing with, but because there are people who are interested they are working on it. They told me, but I forgot

Andile: When was that?

Armani Dude: Oh! Oh! Oh! Three years back, maybe I was unaware of being involved in this thing.

Andile: Going to?

Armani Dude: I ended up writing to a certain place, with my telephone number and my name, and they said they would come back to me when the time has arrived for that thing, but...

Andile: Three years back and it has never arrived for the salons?

Armani Dude: I don't know because I never tried to go back and check whether that was implemented or if they ended up not going ahead with it. I think you need to know people in order to benefit on these things. I do not know anyone who has benefited from these programmes.

Andile: The youth that drop-out here at Folweni, other than you, what do you think are their options? That's about the Youth Commission, have you ever heard of it?

Armani Dude: Can I turn things around and be the one asking questions... Just explain a little, what is it? I have only heard a little.

Andile: No feel free to ask questions....

Armani Dude: I once heard my brother talk about the name "National Youth Commission", but truly I don't have... I don't know everything but I do know that it works much the same way as Umsobomvu with regard to empowering the youth, but in what way I am not sure.

Andile: Ok, then what about skills programmes?

Armani Dude: I think the skills programmes are the ones that took me to Umbumbulu College, training people to be co-operatives.

Andile: The time you were going back to school or getting a job or starting your own business – let's start at the time you were going back to school. What were your experiences exactly? Can you remember the experiences during the time you were trying to go back there?

Armani Dude: It was so difficult. Very difficult. I felt like everything I tried was not going well. So when I was able to go back, it felt great. It was nice because it gave me a new hope to say now "ok, here is something to study and prepare for to try and get better things".

Andile: New hope about what?

Armani Dude: About life, about making a living. Finding a job and getting all the things I hope for. The simple thought that I can buy myself a CD when I need to.

Andile: Making a living ok. At the time you were trying, when you were not yet in school, trying to get money and so on, what were your experiences? Did you see or find excitement in what you were doing?

Armani Dude: That is disappointing, because it's very difficult to get someone or to get financial assistance now because if you talk to people and they promise you things they end up disappointing you. Sometimes you feel like dropping it and forgetting about everything because you get disappointed when you are trying to get money from the institutions that provide financial assistance, they just turn you down and you see yourself not standing a chance of getting it.

Andile: They turned you down on what grounds?

Armani Dude: In my case the first thing is that I am listed (credit bureau), and that puts me aside. They also check if your parents can be a guarantor and my mother was not making enough money. They actually loaned money to people who already had the money.

Andile: You became Blacklisted before you went to study?

Armani Dude: No, I'm talking about now when I wanted to go back.

Andile: After the second year?

Armani Dude: After I studied, after second year.

Andile: You were Blacklisted because of this R21000-00.

Armani Dude: Because of that, I stayed at a residence and the account of the residence led to my Blacklisting.

Andile: What did you ultimately hear about the bursary from the Department of Education?

Armani Dude: I heard of it at the salon where I worked at iSipingo after Matric.

Andile: All right, what were your experiences when you were seeking a job?

Armani Dude: Hawu! Hawu! Hawu! (Exclaiming) I thought of opening up a salon because I would be able to do things for myself without asking anybody. There are no jobs.

Andile: Why?

Armani Dude: Most of the time they just do not respond. My brother and I faxed things and I went to places. You see I first went for a bursary interview and then a job interview but I have never been called anywhere for an interview.

Andile: Why do you think they haven't called you?

Armani Dude: I would not say that I was under-qualified because I tried to complete where I qualified, like they would say they want Matric. I don't know what to say.

Andile: So do you think being under-qualified makes people not get jobs here at Folweni?

Armani Dude: Yes, it is prevalent here in Folweni because many people do not complete Matric. If they do complete it, it is usually at the end because many people are studying.

Because I knew the difficulties of the [Folweni] community, I had to work very hard when I got readmitted at school. It was a struggle for me. I had to read a lot; I dedicated myself to my books, and worked late nights because I had a lot of catching up work to do; that helped me

Andile: What do you think stops people from completing Matric?

Armani Dude: Mostly girls fall pregnant, boys engage in drugs because most of them smoke dagga. These people end up not studying, and alcohol, you see here when people are supposed to be at school they are busy with these things and at the end they fail and loose hope of ever trying again. Sometimes it's stupidity; people fail until they are helpless and end up throwing the towel in when it's time to write exams.

Andile: All right, you were still explaining that the reason is that people fail repeatedly and others use drugs and so on and so on – and I will follow up on this question, but for now I want to ask about you. I want to know how the youth that is involved in all these things can be assisted. Starting your own business, what was that experience like? I think you did mention it but I would like it for the record.

Armani Dude: I would say people had a positive response; they were elated to have a salon, especially because if you wanted something that was serious one had to go to iSingo or to town. I also heard from people that it is better now that there is a salon close by, but now the problem with Folweni is that it is a small place and as a result my target market is small. It's not like being in a central place like iSipingo catering for people of Folweni and uMlazi, now I can only go to a certain extent. I can't say much because here I am dealing with a few people, and waiting for the same people for a long time so sometimes it becomes quiet.

Andile: Ok. Where did you get help when you were looking for help to start up a salon?

Armani Dude: I worked at a salon and I saved that money, no one assisted me.

Andile: As you went along trying at those various places, were there any government policies or government programmes that assisted you?

Armani Dude: No, nothing. Nothing because things like that requires you to be a qualified hairdresser. You are first a stylist and then become a hairdresser.

Andile: Really!

Armani Dude: The places that can offer help require a qualification of some sort.

Andile: You were still explaining to me the difference between a hairdresser and a stylist?

Armani Dude: The places that offer assistance want you to show that.

Andile: Show that you are a hairdresser?

Armani Dude: Yes. You have to at least have a trade test or you must have studied at a certain hairdressing school.

Andile: If you are a hairstylist?

Armani Dude: The proof you have that you once studied. You do not have anything but if you have qualifications, then they believe in your abilities.

Andile: How has leaving school affected your future?

Armani Dude: It made me lose focus and not be sure of what I want, because when I was still at school I set myself targets that in such a year I would have achieved this. I don't know, now I am trying. We will see as time goes by, I can't even plan my life properly. You end up giving up and concluding that you will see along the way.

Andile: Ok, I want to know how the social life has affected you in comparison to the financial life.

Armani Dude: People around you, as well as family members, trust you when you are studying, rather than people in general. They believe in you but once you leave school they do not believe in you anymore, they regard you as someone who is crazy. The way they look at you when you are studying is much better than the way they look at you when you are not studying.

They think if you don't know where you are going, how should they know.

Andile: I think this is the last question - I promised that this interview would be short. What about here at Folweni?

Armani Dude: It is better to do what is expected of you perfectly.

Andile: Meaning?

Armani Dude: Meaning that if people stick to what they want to do and is expected of them then things are easier. If parents help their kids financially. I always think if I had a rich mother I would be very far with my life. Now we all struggle....

Andile: What are the common destinations for people who drop out of school here in Folweni?

Armani Dude: Ok, they end up at salons like this one of mine, also they end up with taxis here in the road or at the tuck shops.

Armani Dude: It's little, but most of the time they do not succeed in life unless one is lucky and finds a job like in the firms, but only through someone who already works there.

Andile: What is it that should have happened for one to get the job?

Armani Dude: There are jobs like in the case of Toyota, because there is someone in the family who works there and then you gets the job.

Andile: Ok, so if there is no one at your home working then you will remain like that?

Armani Dude: You will then have to give... a thousand bucks (bribe) for them to fit you in where they work. Like If you have any immediate family that works it will come with that price, if you don't have that you will sit without a job.

Andile: Some end up at the firms and others end up where?

Armani Dude: Others end up being nothing, but only a small number live a grand life and perhaps end up getting into the taxi business which does not require education, you see, but the colour of money is the same and they end up getting what they want. Others end up having their own sideline businesses that do not demand a lot of school qualifications but these are not a lot of people, only a few. But most end up being useless.

Armani Dude: Thanks. After I have transcribed this interview I will send it to you to read and if there are things that I wrote incorrectly you may change them. Will you be able to help me with follow-up questions if there are any gaps later?

Armani Dude: Well, if I am available there shouldn't be any problem.

Andile: Thank you for taking you time in assisting me. This was valuable and it will assist a lot in my studies. I am committing myself to confidentiality as far as using your name is concerned. .

Armani Dude: Thank you and good luck...

6.1.1. Principal School A

The purpose is to trace the pathways of out-of-school youth, who dropped out of school between grades 1 and 11, as they either seek re-entrance to the education, training and development (ETD) system or entrance into the labour market. I plan to investigate the factors that determine the choices that drop-outs make, either when re-entering the ETD system or when entering the labour market. Your contribution in this research will be highly appreciated.

Andile: Before we start, I need to put it on record that the data from this interview will be used for the purposes of my PhD research. Should there be any other person wishing to use your data, you will be contacted and you will need to give consent for the use thereof. Without your consent, the data may not be transferred to another researcher. I also have to put it on record that there will be no financial benefits for whatever data I use in my research. As a process, I will send you the transcript as soon as the transcription is completed. You will then need to evaluate that its content consistently represents your responses. I will probably e-mail you the transcript.

Principal A: I do not have an e-mail address.

Andile: Do you have a fax number? Can I fax it to you?

Principal A: We also do not have a fax machine.

Andile: I will arrange make arrangements to bring you a copy when I am in Johannesburg and you can look at it, and send it back to me.

Principal A: That will be fine...

Andile: As I was saying before, your name or the name of the school will not be used in my report, my thesis or any other presentation. High School 1 is one of the oldest schools in the area and has seen many changes.

I have explained the purpose of this study before, however in a nutshell, the study is located within the education policy law and I am specifically looking at the youth labour market and the notion of dropping out. I am however, not necessarily looking at the reasons youth drop out, but rather focusing on their experiences and pathways as they try to get back into the education and training system, the ETD system as defined in the study.

In the case of the study, Education refers to General Education and Training, Further Education and Training, and Higher Education. Most of the information in the study and this interview is around the youth dropouts - referred to as 'out-of-school youth' in the study. I am trying to establish your views, thoughts and recommendations around their experiences, your school strategies and the youth destinations. The data will consist of your school experiences and the context will look at the neighbouring schools.

Andile: Before we start, do you have any questions?

Principal A: No, just maybe want to check that what you need is my view?

Andile: Yes, your view.

Principal A: But I will never be a policy maker.

Andile: Well only time will tell

Principal A: (He laughs....)

Andile: What is the dropout rate like in your school?

Principal A: The rate of dropping out of school is quite high. The main issue in the area is of the context. For example, some youth use the school as a hiding place, hiding from the cops and anything wrong they have done. Once that cloud blows over they go back to where they belong. Youth enrol at the beginning of the year not because they want to be educated, but because they are hiding from the police. You see they commit crimes, then enrol at school just so that when their cases are heard or they are arrested, the school can give them letters to say that they are high school students. In most cases, those learners are disruptive and they leave the school within three months.

Most of the students in the school are from broken families and do not get much support from their families. Of course some of them drop out because they are pregnant – these learners are not even scared. Some die. The HIV/Aids prevalence is very high. Some learners die from HIV/Aids. Some drop out because they are poor or orphans....

Andile: What has been the pattern over the past few years?

Principal A: I will probably refer to the years from 2001 until now since that is when I joined this school. The rate has improved from about 200 to maybe about 100.

Andile: Is this the number per year?

Principal A: Yes, it is per year.

Andile: POLICY: According to SASA, if a learner drops out before the age of fifteen or Grade 9, what does your school do?

Principal A: Not much is said by the South African Schools Act, but all that is in Black and white is that every South African child who is fifteen years or younger must be at school, but I don't think that much has been done to make sure that every child is at school. There are still those parents who employ children. Child labour is still playing a major role in keeping children away from school. But again, as I mentioned, parents are a cause sometimes.

Andile: So what you are saying is the reason SASA is probably not implemented is because of the parents' side?

Principal A: Yes, it is the parents. Most probably because most parents are not even aware of what is expected of them.

Andile: And the implementation from the Education Department?

Principal A: The Education Department too, I cannot say that they have done enough. It's their role to give the parents knowledge. Well some individual schools are doing it (referring to the advocacy).

Andile: In the area in general (back to whether the rate is high enough to make us worry if it is as bad), what do you think of the neighbouring high schools? Is this the case of high school 1 in general or the case with other schools?

Principal A: Well it's a general problem because I checked with other principals in the area. They are also experiencing the problem. It is a common phenomenon, I must say.

Andile: What indicators do you use to determine whether or not there is a high rate of dropping out in the area?

Principal A: Just the numbers! We look at the numbers at enrollment and compare these with the numbers at the end of the year. We use the attendance register and things like that. It helps us in indicating that this particular learner has gone or has left the schooling system. We calculate the number of learners at the beginning of the year and compare this to those who are still in the school; then we can see the difference.

Andile: Do these indicators or your analysis help you determine whether the learner has dropped and joined another school or an FET college? Do you track where they land up?

Principal A: Sometimes you get that information by seeing learners themselves and asking where they are. Sometimes they give you the wrong information about where they are. Sometimes they have been in jail and they tell you that they have been attending another school.

Andile: What is the dropout rate like in the surrounding schools?

As we were talking, about 6 vans of the SAPS parked outside and police officers walked into the school. I inquired if they were looking for him (the principal) and they suggested that we should go on, they didn't need him. The officers do random inspections since there was an incident of a learner stabbing an educator in the neighbouring high school.

The officers on their random inspections search for drugs, dangerous weapons and other criminal related issues.

Andile: What do the youth do after dropping out? Do you know where most of the learners end up after dropping out?

Principal A: With some of them we never get to find out. But most of them are in the taxi industry.

Andile: Have there been incidences where these youths have tried to get back into school?

Principal A: Yes, some of them leave for about two years and then you see them come back. You ask them where they have been, sometimes they give you the right information and sometimes they give you the wrong information. But we let them come back. We accept that!

Andile: Is it a POLICY: What does the policy state? Or is it a general given that you accept them back?

Principal A: No, there is no policy, we just take them back. The policy of the school allows them to come back.

Andile: Can you give me a copy of the school's policy?

Principal A: Yes, I will.

Andile: What are some of the challenges that you face as they are re-enrolled and what are the best practices?

Principal A: Some of them come with outside influences and are not as cooperative as they are supposed to be. Some of them come with a revived vigour, willing to work hard because they have some experience of the outside world. But some of them come with the same attitude and we just hope that they are going to change and change and change. They never change. Sometimes they drop out again.

Andile: So you would have the best practices from those who came back?

Principal A: Yes, I do have examples. For example whilst I was teaching in High school Zz, there was a boy who dropped out.

When I joined high school 1, I met the boy and advised him to go back to school. He accepted and worked really hard. He completed his Matric in 2005. There are other examples.

Andile: In your view, what have been the advantages or disadvantages of the youth re-entering the schooling system?

Principal A: These learners are different. Some of them really work hard when they come back. But some of them come here, are disruptive and even sell drugs as you just saw the police searching.

I think people who made up their own minds (...about coming back to school) I am happy if they are happy. Most of them work really hard.

I think the youth of today is under too much stress. They are still doing things for their friends. I think peer pressure is still a major issue.... and the level of poverty in the area is the issue pushing them.

Andile: When you refer to the level of poverty you mean it pushes them out of the system?

Principal A: This has an effect in two ways. It is the reason they leave and sometimes the reason they come back. I think it pushes them back and sometimes it pushes them in. For example there is this girl from a poor family. She meets this man who gives her money because her parents cannot provide for her. She sees that life is better with this man. The man makes some demands. She looks at the money that he has. If this young girl is not strong enough she will definitely choose the man with those demands.

If this boyfriend drops this girl, she might be adopted by another relative who gives her new demands and conditions. Saying "look if you want me to support you, you have to go back to school". That would make her go back to school. So that would push her back....

Andile: Earlier on you referred to the issue of dropping out because of poverty. In your view, how do you relate the issue of youth to the backgrounds of parents and their level of education?

Principal A: Most of the youth in the area already have parents who are not educated and most of them are not even working. This affects us as a school since the parents are

not part of their education. Sometimes when these learners are in trouble we call the parents. But some parents do not come.

You see parents who have education support their kids. They attend parents' meetings and really assist with disciplining their kids.

Andile: You also mentioned the issue of orphans in the school. How do you, as a school, assist them?

Principal A: Some do get assistance from the department and some keep it a secret until it is too late. They hide their status and as a result we can't assist them. Some learners who communicate that they are orphans are exempted from the school's fees; but those that keep quiet are reminded by us that they have to pay.

As a school we try and communicate to them that they should avail themselves. But the peer pressure also plays a role. They are sometimes scared that other learners are going to laugh at them.

Andile: So being an orphan is associated with a stigma?

Principal A: Not necessarily. It's just that with students you can never determine how they will treat a matter. They will turn the most critical issue into a joke.

Andile: Those who are orphans and do not declare it when filling in their forms, what do they normally say?

Principal A: Well they give you the details of the relative they are staying with. Sometimes it's because they don't identify themselves as orphans.

Andile: And learners who are generally poor (with parents), how are they assisted?

Principal A: We hardly deal with that since most youth in the school, learners do not report these issues. As a school, we try and assist emotionally and the school fees are very low. Learners think being poor is embarrassing and hide it.

Andile: What possible pathways do the youths who drop out of school take in the ETD in this school and in general as you discuss this with other principals?

Principal A: What is taking them out of school?

Andile: No, where do they end up after dropping out, With the exception of going back to school. For example, have there been incidences where they drop out and go to FET colleges or enrol in skills programmes? Some of them do go to FET; but there have been minor incidents of that.

Principal A: Most of them end up in the taxi industry.

Andile: So the labour market. They end up in the taxi industry?

Principal A: Yes, and they are not taxi drivers either. Not even as drivers but as....what is the new name they use?

Andile: Conductors.

Principal A: No, no, no, sliding door operators (laughter). I think they are called something like that. I can't remember the name.

Andile: Why not drivers. Doesn't it pay better?

Principal A: To be a driver you need a driver's licence and some experience. For these youth, they have to be conductors for a very long time in order to afford a driver's licence. Some of them don't get there. And even when they have the licence, they have to find a taxi owner who is willing to employ them. Drivers earn better than conductors, but it is not enough to take the person out of poverty and you can be fired anytime.

Andile: In this school, how do you encourage learners to stay in school?

Principal A: The school has the best teachers. We encourage the learners to use their teachers. Sometimes we talk and the learners do not want to listen. That is why sometimes we call people like yourself [referring to me] to come and motivate the learners at assembly and talk to our learners, so that they get to tell our young people that it's also possible to do better and move away from poverty. So that is how we do it.

Andile: It's good to know that you believe in your team. So what do the teachers do to encourage the learners to stay in the school?

Principal A: They teach. And they have all the information. If the learners make use of their teachers then they get enough information. My team, I believe that as a principal you need to concentrate on the good and minimise the bad. You can't keep on saying people are bad and not do anything to help them.

Principal A: What does the policy say?

Andile: The next issue is the effect of dropping out on the individual, the community, the county, and the labour market. I would like to know your views on these. As a broad question, feel free to expand on all of them.

Principal A: You know, sometimes I tell the teachers that we might never retire. The retirement age might come but there might be no skills to substitute us. We might find ourselves having to continue teaching even when we are walking on walking sticks.... So the individual first of all is unable to be independent. He ends up being dependent all the time on people he knows and sometimes on strangers and on the government. And you are forced into that kind of life even if you do not want to because of the tendency (...dependency). When we talk of the country, the economy of the country is continuously affected; it is dropping because of these kinds of people. They resort to a criminal element. This emanates from these kinds of people that drop out and have no vision, and they end up being a burden to their families and to the government.

I should think that the Department of Social Welfare is given an extra burden as well because it needs to fund these kinds of people that are irresponsible. Because nala mali yeqolo (child grant) - that was uncalled for. But because of the irresponsible people, the government has to structure something for these people. The money is taken from our taxes which makes the responsible people suffer as well. I do not approve of it. I don't think it is a good idea.

Andile: It's policy.... Laughing.

Principal A: Yes, it is policy but most policies are not good enough. They are not addressing the issues that they are supposed to be addressing. I do not know whether it is because of the skills or what. But these policies are not addressing the issues.

Andile: You are touching mostly on the grants. Is there a relationship between dropping out and grants?

Principal A: Most of the learners, one way or another, depend on these grants. Even learners who do not drop out of school in the area depend on these grants. You know the mindset of the children is so bad because I do not think someone might involve themselves in unprotected sex because of the R200 at the end of the month. This amount is very minimal. I don't think so, but the situation is so bad that some of these people are doing it.

Andile: You have mentioned the impact on the individual and on the community. What are the impacts on the country and the youth labour market? I think that this, in a way, is related to the grant structures and issues that you talked about.

Principal A: In the labour market we end up having these foreigners in positions. That is because of the skills issues. We end up complaining and saying that these people are stealing our jobs and yet we are not ready for these jobs....

Andile: How does dropping out of school affect the: individual, community, country, employment/unemployment, the youth labour market?

Principal A: Eish, that is a huge question. Dropping out limits the number of skills or high level of education. In this area, youth are already from poor families. Education assists them in finding employment and better paying jobs. I always tell my learners that education might be their only way out. When they drop out they do not get the skills and cannot be employed. Some of them end up in drugs and crime. It becomes very complicated. I always try to use the case of South African liberation. Do you think if Mandela was not educated he would have understood the theoretical and practical impact of apartheid? No he would not have. Compare him with uneducated people who were fighting apartheid. The educated fought in the courts of law and made the whole world know. The uneducated got instructions from the educated and were given guns to fight physically. There is no need for physical fighting and guns now so all learners have to try to be educated so that they give instructions and liberate themselves. Otherwise they will be poor all their lives. Learners seem to think selling fruits at a corner of a street will make them rich. You also need to be educated to manage your own business. You need to at least be able to have a system otherwise you will never make enough money.

Andile: In your view, what is the relationship between education level and employability?

Principal A: A person that is not educated is not employable and stands a bad chance of getting a job. Look, even if you go for a new job you have to be trained and if you are not educated you are not easily trainable.

High School 1 is the pseudonym for the first High school

Establishing the destinations

Another high school about 2 km from High School 1

6.1.2. MAZ

Andile: I mentioned at the beginning that the information we get from you will not include your name during report writing. I have already explained to you what the purpose of the research is and why we are recording the interviews. What will happen hereafter is that I will write down the information you give me and then give it to you to check. I will write it in isiZulu because the interview is in isiZulu. After you have checked it, you will then need to indicate whether it is accurate regarding the things you have said. For the record, what is your name?

Maz: I'm Maz.

Andile: How old are you?

Maz: I'm 24.

Andile: Are you female or male?

Maz: I'm female.

Andile: I see you are wearing a ring. When did you get married?

Maz: I'm not married. Just wearing my mother's ring.

Andile: Do you have a child?

Maz: I do, but she died.

Andile: I am sorry about that... What is your current occupation?

Maz: Right now?

Andile: Yes.

Maz: I'm not doing anything.

Andile: Are you at school? Are you working?

Maz: I do piece jobs on the road.

Andile: What do you do on the road?

Maz: We are working for a company which was contracted by works to do plumbing. We dig trenches for plumbing.

Andile: Are you doing piece jobs at the moment?

Maz: Yes, in road construction for 3 weeks.

Andile: For 3 weeks; when did you start?

Maz: I started last week Wednesday.

Andile: Do you get your income monthly or weekly?

Maz: They said fortnightly.

Andile: Fortnightly. Could you tell me how much you earn? But just give an estimate between R300-00 and R399-00, R400-00 and R499-00, or R500- 00 and R599-00. And so on.

Maz: I think it's going to be between R500-00 and R899-00?

Andile: It's R899-00 per fortnight.

Maz: Yes.

Andile: Who do you stay with?

Maz: With my mother, my sister and my sister's child.

Andile: Who is the bread winner at your house?

Maz: We all try. We are all unemployed and we try.

Andile: How old is your mother?

Maz: She is 66.

Andile: Is she married?

Maz: Yes, she is married.

Andile: Is your father working?

Maz: Yes he is but he stays with another woman since 1997.

Andile: Her husband is... Does he support your mother?

Maz: Not always. Maybe once or twice per year he gives us money.

Andile: Where does your father stay?

Maz: He stays at Mlazi in Q Section.

Andile: Ok! How old is your father?

Maz: I think he is now 70.

Andile: What does your mother do?

Maz: She stays at home.

Andile: Does she get a pension?

Maz: Yes, she does.

Andile: Your father?

Maz: I don't know because I don't stay with him.

Andile: How many children does your mother have ... and what are their age groups?

Maz: There are eight of us. Three passed away. My older sister is married. We stay with my other sister who is between, who is I think 33.

Andile: Is she working?

Maz: Yes, she is also a temporary worker.

Andile: Where is she working at the moment?

Maz: She is also cleaning the roads.

Andile: Is your sister a contract worker?

Maz: Yes, she is.

Andile: When did she start?

Maz: Yes around there, 1996, around there.

Andile: She has been a temp for the past ten years?

Maz: Yes she has been. She is a clearer and they did not make them permanent.

Andile: Does she have a child?

Maz: Yes.

Andile: Can you estimate her income?

Maz: It's R900.

Andile: How often does she get paid this salary?

Maz: Monthly.

Andile: Your brother?

Maz: He is not working.

Andile: How old is he?

Maz: He's 27.

Andile: 27...is he studying?

Maz: No, he is not at school.

Andile: When did he leave school? And what standard/grade?

Maz: He was in standard 7 (Grade 9), I think in 1999.

Andile: Why did he leave school?

Maz: He was going to attend the initiation school.

Andile: How long does initiation school take?

Maz: It took him about two months.

Andile: When he came back, why did he not go back to school?

Maz: I don't know

Andile: Does he have children?

Maz: No, he doesn't have children.

Andile: Where does he get income from every month?

Maz: He gets money when my mother receives her pension. She gives him some money.

Andile: Ok, when did you leave school?

Maz: In 2000.

Andile: Why?

Maz: It's.... I got a baby.

Andile: Were you pregnant?

Maz: Yes. I dropped out of school in 2000. It's...I got a baby. I was pregnant.

Andile: Okay, what Standard were you in when you stopped going to school?

Maz: I stopped at 9.

Andile: Standard 9?

Maz: Yes.

Andile: What did you do in after that?

Maz: I raised my child.

Andile: And when did your child pass away?

Maz: In 2001.

Andile: So from 2002, what were you doing? (occupation)

Maz: I was not doing anything. In 2005 I went to study to learn how to compile a business plan.

Andile: In 2005 you went to study how to compile a business plan, where did you study?

Maz: At Umbumbulu College.

Andile: For how long? And did you get a qualification?

Maz: 10 days. They gave us a certificate.

Andile: 10 days? Was it a qualification or certificate of attendance?

Maz: Certificate of attendance. After dropping out of secondary school, I did not try to go back. I made one attempt instead to do a short (10 days) course at one college to learn how to compile a business plan

Andile: How did you get to the programme? Where did you hear about it?

Maz: At Works.

Andile: It was... What is Works?

Maz: It's a public office. (Works is a public works office in the area)

Andile: Ok, after that how did you hear about this business plan course?

Maz: About the business plan?

Andile: Yes.

Maz: The community was called together and we were told that those of us that didn't work had to come and indicate what we would like to study. I indicated that I wanted to be a clearer. They took people in groups of ten and I wasn't sure about what I wanted to do; so I then went to that group.

Andile: How many people benefited went for the course? And how many people ended up getting posts for which they had studied for.

Maz: All of us did succeed; the only problem was that there were no jobs but we did get the money.

Andile: How much did you get?

Maz: R30 000-00.

Andile: Per person?

Maz: No all of us.

Andile: You got R30 000-00 all together?

Maz: All of us as a group.

Andile: For 10 people?

Maz: For 10 people in our group, I don't know about the others.

Andile: Did you manage with that? Was it for you to spend?

Maz: No, we bought the materials we needed for our work.

Andile: Was this money for starting a business? What kind of business

Maz: Yes it was. We started a business for cleaning.

Andile: For cleaning?

Maz: Yes. Things like soap, mops and vacuum cleaners.

Maz: For vacuuming as well as chemicals for cleaning. We also bought overalls for 10 people. Actually we did not buy 10 we bought 15, thinking that with time others would want to join us and they would then use those extra overalls.

Andile: Where are all these things?

Maz: They are stored at Works; we keep them there because there is security.

Andile: So you had R30 000-00 to buy material with?

Maz: Yes. While at home I heard about a 10 day course at Umbumbulu College. The community was called together and we were told that those of us who didn't work had to come and indicate what we would like to study. It was free so I went and learned how to compile a business plan. I succeeded in the course...we all passed. After finishing, we managed to form a Cleaning Company business...but we had difficulty finding work.

Andile: Subsequent to that you have never received business. Did you try to get any business?

Maz: We tried; we are even registered on the computer. When they do a search we appear, but our problem is the certificate.

Andile: For what?

Maz: For us to get the work. A certificate (company registration) was sent to us. You see when things are sent in your name and you are working, full of jealous, you don't want to tell others that you are working until the certificate is returned.

Andile: Who was jealous and where was the certificate returned?

Maz: We used someone else's name and address and the certificate was returned back to the department.

Andile: Ok, what did you do to get it again?

Maz: We were called to places to do work but we told them that we had problems with our certificate. They then wanted to know how, because the certificate had been sent to us. They advised us to ask about it, even if we only got a certificate number. We asked for the certificate number. We wanted to go into town and one gentleman stopped us and asked why we were being so secretive.

Andile: Really?

Maz: We went back to drop off the tender documents and the same gentleman told us we were late because the documents had already left. He told us they left at 14:00 meaning he could no longer take any documents.

Andile: Meaning the registration time had expired?

Maz: Yes.

Andile: But have you tried to get the certificate again?

Maz: No

Andile: So you tried to find a job, and you learned how to write a business plan?

Maz: Yes.

Andile: And all did not succeed.

Maz: Yes.

Andile: Have you tried to go study at an FET college?

Maz: No I have never tried. I did not pass Matric.

Andile: Do you...have you heard of the SETAS?

Maz: No.

Andile: Have you heard of the learnerships and Skills programmes?

Maz: No?

Andile: Have you heard of Umsobomvu?

Maz: Yes.

Andile: Have you tried to get assistance from Umsobomvu for starting a business?

Maz: No. But I know people who have tried like the guy who has a salon and he did not get money.

Andile: The National Youth Commission?

Maz: No. Is that difference to the ANC Youth League?

Andile: Yes it is.

Andile: The SETAS are structures that should assist people without skills in getting those skills whether they are employed or not. There are conditions and procedures for that.

Maz: Ok. Are you saying people who are employed and those that are unemployed have to be assisted in getting skills?

Andile: Yes and I think the business plan course that you did at Umbumbulu is part of the Skills Development and it is probably part of the SETA programme. Umsobomvu is an organisation that has funds to assist the youth of SA to start their businesses.

Maz: Ok! I know about Umsobomvu.

Andile: And then the Youth Commission is a branch of government that deals with different issues that affect young people between the ages of 14 and 35. So, for me the issue is to at least get an idea of whether people know what they need to do to be assisted. During the time that you still wanted to, did you try to go back to school?

Maz: No, I've never tried

Andile: Why?

Maz: I didn't have money.

Andile: Ok, did you try to get a job?

Maz: I did try.

Andile: And then did you get one?

Maz: I didn't succeed.

Andile: What is the problem?

Maz: The problem is that every time you go and market yourself, they want certificates. You see now I don't have one.

Andile: And were there any people assisting you when you were out looking for a job?

Maz: No, there was no one.

Andile: Starting a business, I think we touched on that earlier about the business plan and so on. Is there anything else that you tried doing to get money?

Maz: Yes, I was selling drinks. (alcoholic drinks – beer)

Andile: You sold drinks and then why did you stop selling these?

Maz: Sometimes I would come home from where I had been and I would find that they (family) had drunk the drinks and there would be no money coming in.

Andile: So you stopped selling?

Maz: No, sometimes I would arrive and my mother had taken the money to buy paraffin, and when I asked about it she would ask me what we should eat for supper. I then decided to stop selling.

Andile: Where do you think most people who drop-out of school end up?

Maz: Some become lucky and fine a job, and others are just without luck and they stay at home. Most are without a job.

Andile: Are there any other people you know that dropped out of school in Folweni?

Maz: There are quite a few, I wouldn't be able to count them.

Andile: Why did they drop-out?

Maz: Difference reason, pregnant, failed, some were arrested.

Andile: If you were to be assisted by someone, what do you think you would want them to assist you with?

Maz: With studying or with employment?

Andile: Studying what?

Maz: I would want them to find me a job.

Andile: Why don't you go back to school? Or go to FET...college?

Maz: It has been a long time and I think that my brain would fail me. I might not grasp things like I used to.

Andile: How do you think the government has assisted youth to get into FET, higher education or employment?

Maz: In cases where there has been help, it ends too quickly. For an example I got a job but it's ending in three weeks. I have been lucky but not everyone. Also people who have children get money, grants.

Andile: Ok, thank you Maz. I will write down this information and then show it to you so you can tell me if there are things you didn't say or if I left some things out. You can then show me and if there is a follow up I will call you. The other thing is that I will only use this information for this research and nothing else. If there is someone who wants to use this information, he or she will have to contact you and you can give him or her consent to use this information.

Maz: Ok.

Andile: What is your number?

Maz: My...home number?

Andile: Your home number. So if I call you I'll use 031 90011** ...thank you.

6.1.3. MOON LADY

Andile: As I start recording what I would like you to know is that I will not use your name. I will not use the data for any other reason other than my school work. So you won't find that I took this information and gave it to someone else for his or her studies. After the interview, I will transcribe the interview and let you read it before translation. As said before, the research is for my studies. It concentrates on youth and their experiences.

Moon Lady: Ok, when you start I will check?

Andile: No, I will ask you the questions and then you will answer. Is that fine? You can also ask me questions if you do not understand or if you want more information. What is your name and surname?

Moon Lady: Moon Lady.

Andile: How old are you?

Moon Lady: 22.

Andile: For the Record, are you male or female?

Moon Lady: Female.

Andile: Are you married?

Moon Lady: No. I am single.

Andile: Do you have children?

Moon Lady: Yes. I have two children.

Andile: How old and do they go to school at the moment?

Moon Lady: The one is at school and the other one is not.

Andile: What Standard is the one at school busy with?

Moon Lady: Grade 1.

Andile: How old is the child that is not in school?

Moon Lady: She is 5 years old.

Andile: How old is the child that is in school?

Moon Lady: She is 7.

Andile: Where is she attending school?

Moon Lady: At Hlengisizwe local primary school

Andile: You said before that you were single, where is the father of your children?

Moon Lady: In Greytown. Greytown is at least 250-300 km from where the participant stays.

Andile: What is he doing in Greytown? Occupation

Moon Lady: He is working.

Andile: What does he do?

Moon Lady: Anything.

Andile: Is he supporting the children?

Moon Lady: With the little that he gets – if he gets it.

Andile: What do you mean when you say “if he gets it”?

Moon Lady: Like when he has done a lousy job.

Andile: What job is a lousy one?

Moon Lady: Like painting at places, like contractors.

Andile: Ok, he is not always working.

Moon Lady: Yes.

Andile: Who tells him if there is a piece job available?

Moon Lady: There are people working with him; they tell him if they are called somewhere.

Andile: So if they don't call him, it means there is no work.

Moon Lady: Yes.

Andile: What is your occupation?

Moon Lady: I am unemployed

Andile: What is your source of income?

Moon Lady: I am not working. I get money for the children. (grants)

Andile: Ok, how much do you get per month?

Moon Lady: It's only the money I get for them, R580-00. I get a grant for both of them.

Andile: The children?

Moon Lady: Yes.

Andile: How much per child?

Moon Lady: R180-00.

Andile: Why is it R580-00?

Moon Lady: I'm getting it for my brother's child as well.

Andile: Where is that child?

Moon Lady: At the farm.

Andile: What do you do with that money after getting it?

Moon Lady: I give it to my mother.

Andile: So for your children you get R360-00?

Moon Lady: Yes.

Andile: What do you do with the R360-00?

Moon Lady: I...I buy food and clothes.

Andile: For who?

Moon Lady: For the children.

Andile: And you?

Moon Lady: I use my own money to buy my clothes.

Andile: Where do you get that money from? (source of income)

Moon Lady: They give me the money.

Andile: Who gives you the money?

Moon Lady: Silent... Giggles...

Andile: Ok, how much do they give you per month?

Moon Lady: Ok, they give me R200-00.

Andile: It is your mother, your father, your boyfriend, and the father of your children.

Moon Lady: Boyfriend...

Andile: What does your boyfriend do? What kind of job does he have?

Moon Lady: He is a conductor.

Andile: Ok, who do you stay with?

Moon Lady: With my mother, my father, my two children, my two brothers and Gugu.

Andile: Your mother, your father, your two brothers and your two children?

Moon Lady: And with my cousin.

Andile: What does your mother and father doing for a living?

Moon Lady: They stay at home and are earning a pension.

Andile: Both of them?

Moon Lady: Yes.

Andile: How much is the pension each month?

Moon Lady: It is R820-00.

Andile: Per person?

Moon Lady: Yes.

Andile: Your brothers?

Moon Lady: One is working.

Andile: Where is he working?

Moon Lady: He is a security guard.

Andile: The other one?

Moon Lady: The other one stays at home.

Andile: How old are they?

Moon Lady: Younger Brother* is 30.

Andile: The one who is a security guard?

Moon Lady: Yes, the one who stays at home is 34.

Andile: You told me earlier your children's ages; one is 7 and the other is how old?

Moon Lady: She is 5.

Andile: She is 5, Ok. There is also a cousin. How old is your cousin?

Moon Lady: Gugu? She is 21 years old.

Andile: What is she doing now? (Occupation)

Moon Lady: She is attending school.

Andile: Where?

Moon Lady: At Folweni High.

Andile: What Standard is she in?

Moon Lady: She is in Standard 9.

Andile: Standard 9 is Grade 11?

Moon Lady: Yes.

Andile: Ok, at Folweni High. Why did your brothers leave school?

Moon Lady: OLDER BROTHER* ended in Standard 8, and YOUNGER BROTHER* in...

Andile: Ok, OLDER BROTHER* is the one who is 34?

Moon Lady: Yes.

Andile: Ok, YOUNGER BROTHER* completed it. What did YOUNGER BROTHER* do after finishing school?

Moon Lady: He just stayed and continued to seek piece jobs. He also received security certificates for the job he is doing presently.

Andile: So, the monthly income in your household is your mother's and your father's money from their pension. What about Younger Brother* and the children's grant?

Moon Lady: It includes the children's grant.

Andile: How many are you in the house? I mean how big is your house?

Moon Lady: It is an RDP house.

Andile: How many bedrooms do you have?

Moon Lady: No, RDP houses are not partitioned, there is only one room.

Andile: Ok, it has one room that is partitioned?

Moon Lady: It is partitioned.

Andile: How is it partitioned? With furniture?

Moon Lady: With sheets and furniture.

Andile: Where do the boys sleep?

Moon Lady: The boys sleep in the two rooms outside.

Andile: Ok, how long have you stayed here at Folweni?

Moon Lady: It is about a year.

Andile: Before that, where were you staying?

Moon Lady: I was staying at Greystown.

Andile: In which Standard did you leave school?

Moon Lady: I left in Standard 7.

Andile: Why did you leave school?

Moon Lady: I left school in Grade 9...I dropped out because I was pregnant (in 2000); I was also sick; I had an eye problem; when I exercise or read, my eyes became red and tears just kept running out. I still have that problem today but it is not like before. The doctors told me that I developed some allergy with a type of tree.

Moon Lady: I was sick.

Andile: What made you sick?

Moon Lady: I had an eye problem. When I exercised or read my eyes became red, with tears just running out.

Andile: Do you still have the eye problem?

Moon Lady: Yes I do, but not like before.

Andile: Did you go to the doctor?

Moon Lady: I went to a doctor and he just told me I was speaking nonsense, and that I had looked at a tree that did not go well with my eyes.

Andile: Really! Where did you have a look at this tree?

Moon Lady: In the rural areas.

Andile: And how did the problem get solved?

Moon Lady: I don't know, but he ended up giving me tablets.

Andile: What are you doing right now? (Occupation)

Moon Lady: I'm not doing anything right now.

Andile: What is the reason for you not doing anything?

Moon Lady: I have been trying; I was still going to try I just had to go somewhere first. In town, I was going to try and study for a certificate or go to Shoprite to look for a job. At Cambridge they said they wanted a certificate for being a teller. I am now trying to get that.

Andile: When did you try or when are you going to try?

Moon Lady: I will try at the beginning of the new month because there is too much business in December.

Andile: Ok, in which year did you leave school?

Moon Lady: I left school in 2000.

Andile: In 2000?

Moon Lady: Yes.

Andile: So tell me about your activities since then. What were you doing in 2001?

Moon Lady: I was working at the Mini Cash next to my home.

Andile: What were you doing at Mini Cash?

Moon Lady: It was just a shop, we just worked, even at the bakery, we also packed the goods in the store.

Andile: And in the following years?

Moon Lady: In 2002, 2003, 2004 I continued working there. In 2004 I did a piece job in a bottle store, I was selling things.

Andile: In Greytown?

Moon Lady: Yes, in Greytown.

Andile: In 2005?

Moon Lady: In 2005 I was working at my uncle's house in town.

Andile: All right, and in 2006?

Moon Lady: I was not doing anything. Unemployed.

Andile: Why did you stop working at these places?

Moon Lady: I was not registered at Mini Cash. They used to tell us that the owner wanted as many people as possible to work because sometimes we would be sitting

doing nothing. I ended up leaving the jobs at these places and I had to come and stay with my mother here at Folweni, and previously at Greytown we rented a place.

Andile: Why didn't you try to go back to school?

Moon Lady: I don't know, I tried at Greytown where we used to live, hey I tried, but I discovered that it was difficult.

Andile: Was it difficult at school?

Moon Lady: I can't imagine studying with younger children.

Andile: What is it that was difficult at school?

Moon Lady: What was difficult at school? There was nothing difficult; I only had a problem with my eyes.

Andile: I mean the time you were trying to go back to school.

Moon Lady: I was embarrassed to go back. I thought that going back and starting afresh with my sister's child, who was already ahead of me, would give me stress. But I know school is important.

Andile: Ok. Why was it important to you to go to school?

Moon Lady: It was important because I can see that nowadays you don't get anything easily if you aren't educated.

Andile: What made you see that?

Moon Lady: I see a lot of people being independent, sometimes in the families, problems are eradicated and they get assisted by people as young as myself. Had I also continued, I would have been of great help at home.

Andile: Are you not at this stage?

Moon Lady: No, it's just small help.

Andile: Does it ever happen that you think about going back to school again?

Moon Lady: I sometimes really think about it.

Andile: What stops you?

Moon Lady: Let me say it's only that I am older.

Andile: For going back to school?

Moon Lady: For going back to school.

Andile: How old are you?

Moon Lady: I'm 22.

Andile: How old is your cousin.

Moon Lady: My parents?

Andile: Your cousin?

Moon Lady: Ok. She is 21.

Andile: But where is she? What does she do?

Moon Lady: I think she is better because she is now doing Standard 9 and I have to start in Standard 7.

Andile: What do you think was the problem during the time you were trying to get a job?

Moon Lady: Most of the time the problem was that they wanted someone with Matric. I don't have it, most of the time they said they wanted a Matric certificate and then find that I really don't have it. When you seek a job, you are asked for qualification...everything you do you are asked to produce Matric certificate. You can see from this that education means a lot.

Andile: Did you try to start your own business?

Moon Lady: I have never tried.

Andile: Why?

Moon Lady: I don't have money at the moment.

Andile: Did you try to get some assistance from anyone regarding money?

Moon Lady: No one has money in my family.

Andile: Did you try Umsobomvu?

Moon Lady: No what I can say is that I don't know anyone who can assist.

Andile: If you were given the opportunity to start up a business, what kind of business would you start?

Moon Lady: I might start a business, but selling drinks because that seems to be the only business that works easily.

Andile: What kind of drinks?

Moon Lady: Oh, cool drinks and beer.

Andile: Ok, have you heard of SETAS?

Moon Lady: Of what?

Andile: SETAS, have you heard of SETAS?

Moon Lady: No, I have never heard of it.

Andile: Haven't you heard that the government is assisting people to improve their skills? Those people that have been working and have experience and people who are not employed. Something like that?

Moon Lady: I have never heard about it because the problem is that we don't even have a radio.

Andile: You never even hear the neighbours talking about it?

Moon Lady: No, I have never heard about it.

Andile: You have never even heard it on the neighbours' TV?

Moon Lady: No.

Andile: Ok, what about learnerships?

Moon Lady: Could you please elaborate a little on that one?

Andile: You have also never heard about these?

Moon Lady: I have never heard about them.

Andile: Ok, the Youth Commission?

Moon Lady: Maybe, is it a get-together for the youth?

Andile: No, there is a structure called the Youth Commission, which deals with youth issues in South Africa.

Moon Lady: Oh! I used to hear that there are people who assist the youth with problems.

Andile: Where did you hear about it?

Moon Lady: I heard about it on the radio.

Andile: Really! You just said there was no radio at home?

Moon Lady: At MaMkhize's house, she is our neighbour.

Andile: Oh, at your neighbour's.

Moon Lady: Yes, my neighbour.

Andile: That means that you have just heard about it recently because MaMkhize just started staying here last month.

Moon Lady: Yes.

Andile: Did you ever try to contact them?

Moon Lady: No, I never tried.

Andile: You tried to go back to school and in the process you thought you were too old?

Moon Lady: Yes I have tried.

Andile: What happened?

Moon Lady: I did think about it because I even bought the uniform.

Andile: Which uniform did you buy before being admitted to school?

Moon Lady: I went to Greytown.

Andile: Had they already accepted you?

Moon Lady: Yes, they had no problem.

Andile: So they did not have a problem with you going back to school?

Moon Lady: They didn't have a problem because they said I must try and get the remove.

Andile: Ok.

Moon Lady: I went twice I think and I thought the children were teasing me, and I then stopped going because it was difficult.

Andile: How did they tease you?

Moon Lady: They laughed at me because in class there were those that were way younger than me. I was too old.

Andile: How did you know that they were laughing at you?

Moon Lady: Hey! Kids like mocking each other.

Andile: What did they say when they were teasing you?

Moon Lady: That they saw themselves studying with their granny, some even said, "Wow, Sipho (pseudo)'s mom" and I saw it was necessary to put the pen down. It was at that moment that I realised it was necessary to put the pen down. I couldn't imagine myself studying with younger children. My sister's child, who was much younger than I was, was already ahead of me in school. Studying in this environment gave me stress.

Andile: Did they know you?

Moon Lady: Yes, these children knew me very well.

Andile: So what did the teachers say at school?

Moon Lady: They didn't say anything.

Andile: So those that knew you had a child at school, what did they say when you did not come back?

Moon Lady: No, they did not say anything.

Andile: Oh! What did they say at home when you were not going back to school?

Moon Lady: They were disturbed but they said that I might as well stay at home rather than being made a laughing stock by children. The teachers didn't say anything when other learners teased us. It was a bad experience for me. When I decided not to go back to the school, my family was disturbed but after a while they said that I might as well stay at home rather than being made a laughing stock by children.

Andile: Why was it important for you to go back to school at that time?

Moon Lady: It was important because when I decided to look for a job they wanted a Matric certificate. In most jobs they want a Matric certificate and then they find out that I don't have one.

Andile: Was there anyone assisting you to get a job?

Moon Lady: There was someone who once assisted me; even here at Folweni there is someone.

Andile: Who assisted you?

Moon Lady: It was my brother-in-law who is working at Pick & Win; she has been working there for very long.

Andile: Now, what happened?

Moon Lady: They said I must first get a certificate for operating a till and bring it to them. I tried to go back to secondary school but I discovered it was difficult. So now, in town, I was going to try and study for a certificate. At one Shoprite store they said they wanted a certificate for being a teller so I am trying to get that.

Andile: Oh! So you said you never tried to start your own business?

Moon Lady: I have never tried.

Andile: Since you are staying at home what is happening? What are your experiences?

Moon Lady: I need a job because now I am staying at home unwillingly until the sun goes down (all day).

Andile: What is it that you think can help you right now?

Moon Lady: What will help me right now is to go and get the certificate.

Andile: The certificate you are talking about, how much is the certificate?

Moon Lady: It is R150-00.

Andile: R150-00. How much do you earn per month?

Moon Lady: R580-00, R200

Andile: Is that from the children grant?

Moon Lady: Yes it is from the grant and some money from my boyfriend.

Andile: So is that not enough for paying for the certificate? Or what is the challenge right now?

Moon Lady: The problem is that since my brother passed away we have accumulated too much debt. We are using all the money to pay it back.

Andile: When you think about it, where do many people end up when they leave school before completing Matric? Where do they end up?

Moon Lady: They end up being nothing, just loitering the streets drunk, not even knowing what time it is.

Andile: Here at Folweni?

Moon Lady: Even here at Folweni I see it is that way too people too.

Andile: What do you think the government is doing to assist the youth?

Moon Lady: Sometimes the government creates job opportunities. But we never get in, not everyone gets in. Except people who clean the road and some who have building certificates. Others have their friends at Public Works and they get tenders.

Andile: Here at Folweni?

Moon Lady: Yes, even here, sometimes when the roads need to be cleaned the government creates those opportunities.

Andile: How many people does the government employ?

Moon Lady: I don't know how many people. Not many though.

Andile: Are there many of those whom you know?

Moon Lady: There are those that got employed today.

Andile: Why were you not employed?

Moon Lady: It's just that they don't know me well here at Folweni.

Andile: You get hired if you are known?

Moon Lady: Yes, I think so.

Andile: You think the hiring...

Moon Lady: The way I see it, is that they only employ people that they know. People who have lived in Folweni for a long time are luckier. When they hire, they call people by names.

Andile: When did they register their names?

Moon Lady: I don't know but they just shout 'so and so come', and my neighbour also got the job.

Andile: Who was calling the names?

Moon Lady: I don't know that guy but I am familiar with his face, he is also from this area.

Andile: How much has dropping out of school affected your future?

Moon Lady: It has affected my future very much because there are many things that I can't get because I quit school.

Andile: Many things like what?

Moon Lady: Like jobs.

Andile: So, what do you think the youth here at Folweni end up doing after dropping out of school?

Moon Lady: Yes, it's only cleaning.

Andile: Are there any who go back to school?

Moon Lady: No. I don't know. But I have not seen many people go back to school. They just drink isiqatha.

Andile: How do you think government is assisting the youth, except with these cleaning jobs?

Moon Lady: The government is assisting by giving them a little money so that they are able to buy clothes and cosmetics. They get it so that they can produce something at

home because at home they are expecting you to give even the little that you get.

Andile: Who gets the money?

Moon Lady: People who have children.

Andile: Where do the unemployed parents in the area get the income to support their unemployed youth?

Moon Lady: Most of the time there are no jobs, the parents are earning a pension and child grants.

Andile: Thank you Moon Lady. As I said before, I will transcribe the interview and be in touch. Thank you for your time. If I have follow-up questions I will contact you. What is your phone number? May I have your number?

Moon Lady: XXXXXXXX

Andile: What I will do is write down this interview and I will show it to you so that you can read it before I submit it at school. I promised you before that I would not include your name.

Moon Lady: Yes.

Andile: I'm the only one who will know your name.

Moon Lady: Ok.

Notes:

- A conductor is the person who assists the taxi driver in the township. His job is to identify passengers, alert the driver to stop, and he opens and closes the door for these passengers. They generally earn R30 – R50 per day working from about 4am (earliest) to 8pm (latest).
- A remove is a stamped note from the former school to the new school confirming that you were their learner and that you are moving to the next grade. This is in addition to the report card.
- Sipho - Her child's pseudonym.
- Isiqatha is a very cheap drink with very high alcohol level.
- The father to the children lives in Greytown which is about 200km from Folweni (where the mother and the children live). He is a casual worker as and when there is a job to be done.
- Income dependent of child grants and it takes care of her needs (mum's).
- Conditions for a grant – no father.
- The 3 (mum, 3 children) survive on R580 per month.
- She and her family stay in the RDP houses. These houses are one bedroom houses separated into the living room, and the....
- Retirement grant as the second household income.
- She has two youth brothers. Both dropped out of school as well. One is working as a security guard and the second one is unemployed.

6.1.4. Shorty

Andile: I need to put on record that, as explained, the interview is for my studies. It covers the youth experiences in the area. I need to record the interview. I will not use your name for whatever reasons in the study or presentations. After the interview, I will write everything down (transcribe) and you will have to check whether what I have written is in accordance with what you have said, and I will take it from there. If you discover that the information that I promised would be used for my research has been used for purposes other than the research that would be bridge of our agreement. You have the right to deal with me in any way you may see fit, report me to the University of Pretoria. If we write a report we will not write your name, we will only refer to you as a 'participant' or we will give a 'pseudonym'.

Basically the research looks at the youth and the youth labour market concerning the issues of employment. It investigates problems experienced by the youth when they seek employment or when they want to go back to school. Our aim is also to find out why the youth drop out in the first place, and to evaluate ways that work and those that do not work. Could you please tell me your name and surname?

Shorty: I'm Shorty K.

Andile: How old are you?

Shorty: I'm 26.

Andile: Male or female? For the record.

Shorty: Female.

Andile: Are you married? Or have been married before?

Shorty: No.

Andile: What is your current occupation?

Shorty: I'm not doing anything. Unemployed.

Andile: What is your source of income?

Shorty: I do not get any money per month. Except...

Andile: Except what?

Shorty: 190 (R190-00).

Andile: Where do you get this money from?

Shorty: It is the grant.

Andile: Oh! What grant?

Shorty: For my child.

Andile: Who do you stay with?

Shorty: I'm staying with my mother and my child.

Andile: How old is your mother? And father?

Shorty: I think she is 40-something. I don't know my father. My mother was married to someone else who passed away.

Andile: I am sorry to hear that. What is your mother's occupation and roughly how much does she get a month?

Shorty: R390-00.

Andile: Where does she get it?

Shorty: She also gets the grant.

Andile: What for?

Shorty: For children.

Andile: How old is your child? Is she attending school?

Shorty: Eight. Yes, the child is attending school.

Andile: Where?

Shorty: At Hlengisizwe (local school).

Andile: So, you have one child?

Shorty: Yes.

Andile: What is your highest qualification?

Shorty: In Standard 9.

Andile: In Standard 9 (Grade 11). Where did you go to school?

Shorty: At Folweni High.

Andile: Why did you leave school?

Shorty: I could not manage. ...I mean, I don't know why I left school; I got pregnant and I didn't have money for me and my child. I dropped out of school as I could not manage.

Andile: You did not manage, why?

Shorty: I don't know why I left.

Andile: Did you fail?

Shorty: Yes, I failed but...

Andile: But?

Shorty: But that was not the reason. I did not have money for me and my child

Andile: But your child has a grant

Shorty: The money is not enough for us.

Andile: Is it enough for the child

Shorty: Sometimes.

Andile: When did you have your child?

Shorty: She was born in 1998.

Andile: So, you had the baby and you carried on with school?

Shorty: Yes.

Andile: So, at the time you were not at school you had a child, and you went back to school and then what happened? How long after did you go back?

Shorty: I gave birth and I went to school after a year.

Andile: Why did you go back then?

Shorty: I needed to finish and find a good job. And take care of my family.

Andile: So you associated finishing school and getting a good job.

Shorty: Yes. Educated people have good jobs. Looks at you, you have a new car every year and you take care of your whole family. I think all educated people get good jobs. Even if they do not drive good cars, they still make enough money to get everything they want.

Andile: Thanks for the complement. Now the reason you went back was the prospect of the future. You only stayed at home for a year, and when you went back you did not have any problems?

Shorty: Yes. I did not. The principal did not have a problem. They just wanted my report.

Andile: What made you leave then?

Shorty: I failed twice. Other teachers were saying nasty things about me at the time and I left. The principal only wanted my report [the previous year's report card to prove that she had passed]. My problems started when I encountered the school community. The teachers started saying nasty things about me. They mocked me... Said that is the reason I left school before... And that I will get another baby soon. They labelled me a whore and prostitute....This hurt me and I left. I failed twice.

Andile: Grade 11. Ok. Have you ever tried studying at the again?

Shorty: No.

Andile: Have you tried FET colleges like Coastal College?

Shorty: No. I have not passed Matric. It's been a long time out of school and I think my brain would fail me...I might not grasp things [academic work] like I used to. I have seen other people failing.

Andile: They do enrol students with Grade 10?

Shorty: I never thought about it. I didn't know that. And I do not have the money.

Andile: In which year did you leave school, in 1998? And what have you been doing since then?

Shorty: No in 2001. I was just staying home for all these years.

Andile: What are your plans for 2007?

Shorty: I have no plans. I hope I get a job. That is why I do short [non-formal] courses instead ...I have never tried to go back to the secondary school or to a [FET] College

Andile: Are you looking for a job?

Shorty: Not anymore. I have been looking all these years and have not found any. Please need Matric and I have Standard 9.

Andile: So after you dropped out in 2002 you never tried studying; you have never tried again? You have never even tried finding a job, not even starting your own company?

Shorty: Mmm! I have tried finding a job. But there are too many people who have even stopped looking. There are no jobs for people who are not educated. Guys are lucky; they can drive taxis or be conductors.

Andile: Why can't girls drive taxis?

Shorty: Eish! Have you ever seen a girl drive a taxi in this area? They will not employ a girl. No one will.

Andile: Maybe we should give you options that you have never tried...You said you have never tried to go back to school?

Shorty: (Giggling)

Andile: You have never even tried to go to college? You have also given up finding a job.

Andile: You have also never tried to start your own business?

Shorty: I tried, but things did not go well.

Andile: What business did you start?

Shorty: Selling Clothes? Second-hand items?

Andile: Ok! What went wrong?

Shorty: The capital; people were not paying their credit and I lacked the funds so I just decided to leave it.

Andile: Have you heard about SETAS?

Shorty: No.

Andile: Have you heard about Learnerships?

Shorty: No.

Andile: Have you heard of Umsobomvu?

Shorty: No.

Andile: Have you heard of skills programmes?

Shorty: No.

Andile: The National Youth Commission?

Shorty: No.

Andile: So you have not worked in your whole life?

Shorty: Yes. What I did find was just something I would not categorise as a job.

Andile: What kind of job would you not categorise as a job? Did you not earn money?

Shorty: I was earning money, but a minor salary.

Andile: What is that? What were you doing?

Shorty: I was just working in a house.

Andile: Cleaning?

Shorty: Yes.

Andile: Who found you the job?

Shorty: Another lady from area 14.

Andile: Ok. Then you decided to leave?

Shorty: No. I was just standing in for one lady who was sick.

Andile: For how long?

Shorty: Six months.

Andile: How much did you earn? About how much?

Shorty: I was earning R1500-00.

Andile: Monthly?

Shorty: Yes, monthly.

Andile: Ok. When you think about it, what is it that young people here at Folweni do after dropping out of school?

Shorty: They just sit and make babies, others use drugs.

Andile: How many people do you know that dropped out and are doing nothing?

Shorty: Mhh Lots. My age group there are lots and lots.

Andile: Ok. Those that get jobs, how do they get them?

Shorty: Eish!

Andile: What do you think helps people to get jobs here at Folweni? Those that work, what could have assisted them?

Shorty: Some get help from their relatives. Most people volunteer in order to get jobs.

Andile: Where do they volunteer?

Shorty: Like at...Works (Public Works).

Andile: Why don't you then volunteer?

Shorty: At the time they were volunteering I was not around, I was temporarily working but other girls were there.

Andile: How do you think leaving school has affected your life?

Shorty: It has affected me very much because I want to go back but now it's too late. Look at me now, I am not working, I'm not doing anything and I have no money, nothing.

Andile: So, it affected you financially?

Shorty: Yes.

Andile: Why is it too late?

Shorty: I am too old to go back to high school. I do not have money to pay for other courses.

Andile: How would you explain to another person the importance of studying? How would you explain to your child if your child needed help?

Shorty: It is important to study because you can't do most things if you are not educated. You can do most things if you are educated. You can afford a better life if you are educated.

Andile: Most things like what?

Shorty: There is nothing else except having money.

Andile: Having money?

Shorty: You are able to live well if you have money; you do what you want when you want.

Andile: If you were given an opportunity to ask someone for help, or even the government, what kind of help would you ask for your future?

Shorty: I would like to go back to school.

Andile: But you mentioned that it might be too late? How would going back to school assist you? What would you do at school?

Shorty: I would finish my schooling, even if it is too late. If I can get money and go on studying. That would be great.

Andile: Shorty, we have reached the end of the interview. Thank you.

I will write (transcribe) this interview down and I will call you when I am in Johannesburg for any follow-up or outstanding questions about going back to school or related issues.

Shorty: Oh!

Andile: Thanks.



6.1.5. WESTY

Andile: I am putting on record that I will not use your name for whatever information I use from this interview. If someone wants to use this information, they will first need to get written consent from you. If I ask you questions that you are uncomfortable with, you have a right not to answer. After transcribing and recording (writing down) this information, I will give it to you to read and make sure that these are all things you have said. Are you more comfortable if I use isiZulu or both English and isiZulu?

Westy: I would like to use isiZulu.

Andile: What is your name?

Westy: I'm Westy.

Andile: How old are you Westy?

Westy: I'm 23.

Andile: I would like to record your gender as male for the record. Are you married?

Westy: No.

Andile: What is your occupation?

Westy: I only play soccer.

Andile: Is it professional soccer? Meaning, does it pay?

Westy: No.

Andile: What else do you do?

Westy: Nothing.

Andile: Who do you stay with?

Westy: My mother.

Andile: How old is she?

Westy: In years?

Andile: Yes.

Westy: She was born in 1960.

Andile: What is your mother's occupation? Is she working?

Westy: No, she is not working.

Andile: How many children does your mother have?

Westy: Four.

Andile: And you, do you have a child?

Westy: No.

Andile: What is your mother's highest level of education? In which standard did your mother stop school?

Westy: In Standard eight.

Andile: Is she married?

Westy: Yes, she is married.

Andile: And how old is your father?

Westy: I don't know because he passed away.

Andile: How much money is your mother making per month?

Westy: Eish! I won't know because she sells vegetables.

Andile: Where does she sell them, at home?

Westy: Yes.

Andile: How many siblings - sisters and brothers do you have?

Westy: One sister.

Andile: Brothers?

Westy: Two brothers.

Andile: What is your sister doing as an occupation?

Westy: Sorry?

Andile: What does your sister do?

Westy: She's still at school.

Andile: Where does she go to school?

Westy: She is doing a welding course in town.

Andile: At an FET College?

Westy: No, not there. There is this new company that has just started.

Andile: So is the company going to employ her after her studies?

Westy: I don't know.

Andile: Does she have any children?

Westy: Yes, she does.

Andile: One?

Westy: Yes one.

Andile: So you have brothers as well?

Westy: Yes. Three brothers.

Andile: What do they do?

Westy: The one is working. I said two because one of them has recently passed away.

Andile: Your brother?

Westy: Yes, the one passed away.

Andile: One is working and one passed away?

Westy: Yes.

Andile: I am sorry to hear that. Where does your brother work?

Westy: Here in iSiphingo

Andile: What does he do?

Westy: He is working at a tuck shop, and he is selling things.

Andile: What is the highest standard that he completed in school?

Westy: Standard 9.

Andile: Does he have a child?

Westy: Yes.

Andile: Is there anyone else you stay with? At the moment it's you, your mother, your sister and your brother?

Westy: Yes.

Andile: What standard did you finish at school?

Westy: Grade 11. And I did not finish it here (in the local school).

Andile: Grade 11. Ok. What subjects were you taking? Can you remember?

Westy: I remember - Commerce.

Andile: Why did you leave school?

Westy: We were influencing each other as friends, and the love of money. There was peer pressure.

Andile: So your friends said you must leave school and you did?

Westy: I can say so.

Andile: What else can you say?

Westy: It wasn't just my friends. I was the one who decided because I thought we would make money.

Andile: Make money doing what?

Westy: We were doing some bad things, criminal and then I went to jail.

Andile: So why don't you continue with school? Go back to school?

Westy: The reason I'm not continuing with school is that there is no one working at home. There is no one who can pay for my schooling.

Andile: In what year did you leave school?

Westy: '99.

Andile: What were you doing between 2000 and now?

Westy: In 2000 I was arrested, then I continued with schooling at Westville prison.

Andile: At Westville you continued with Grade 11?

Westy: Yes, I did continue with it.

Andile: Did you finish it?

Westy: No, I didn't complete it.

Andile: Why not?

Westy: I was about to be released.

Andile: Why don't you continue now that you are outside prison?

Westy: I explained that I didn't have money to continue with school.

Andile: In 2001, where were you?

Westy: In Westville.

Andile: Up to 2006? In other words you were released this year?

Westy: Yes, in 2006.

Andile: Ok. Which grade did you do during your time in jail?

Westy: At Westville?

Andile: Yes, at Westville, did you leave school before doing grade 11?

Westy: Here at Folweni I left before doing it.

Andile: So did you finish grade 11 in Westville Prison?

Westy: I did study it there. We were all tested because when you arrive there you get tested. We were then told that all of us would start at level one because of the tests.

Andile: You did some tests?

Westy: I then started, I studied there. But before that I was studying at school B.

Andile: Before you went, you studied at school B? What were the fees at school B?

Westy: I am not sure if it was R95-00.

Andile: How much is it now?

Westy: I don't know now.

Andile: Even here at school C, do you know how much it is?

Westy: No, I don't know.

Andile: Ok. What other options do you think are available for you?

Westy: I hope to find a job or get into professional soccer. That is very difficult.

Andile: Have you heard of the SETAS?

Westy: SETAS?

Andile: Yes.

Westy: No, I've never heard of it. I heard about FET on TV and in the papers. But I did not know you could enrol there with Grade 10 pass. I never thought about it. As such, I never tried to enter into FET as I thought they wanted Matric and I have not passed Matric.

Andile: About learnerships?

Westy: Yes, I once heard about them.

Andile: Where did you hear about learnerships?

Westy: At prison, from the Social Worker.

Andile: What did she say about them?

Westy: I still remember the word learnership but nothing else.

Andile: But you don't know what she was saying?

Westy: I don't remember what she said because there were many things before I went out. The whole year we learned a lot of things for the day we get out.

Andile: So you had a social worker? What was she dealing with?

Westy: The people who are about to go out, with less problems.

Andile: Have you heard about the National Youth Commission?

Westy: No, is the National Youth Commission in isiZulu?

Andile: It is a commission dealing with issues for young people and policies in the country.

Westy: Yes, I heard about it in Westville.

Andile: Do you remember what was said about it?

Westy: When we were about to be released we were taught about life skills, and the parole officers told us about many things that we could do once we were released.

Andile: Like what?

Westy: Sports, they told us about jobs we could get there.

Andile: Where did they say you could get jobs?

Westy: For example, I have a lot of access to different things which they explained, like table tennis and soccer.

Andile: Have you tried all of that?

Westy: I have never tried table tennis. I never saw it where I was. I did try sports.

Andile: What did they say about sport?

Westy: I did play sport here at Folweni because there is a gentleman that I got acquainted with who works at Amanzimtoti and he is within the circles of Supersport. He told me to wait a while and that he would find me a place in a certain team because Supersport was cheating on finances (underpaying players). Pitso also indicated that I should wait a little while.

Andile: Where is he? Are you still waiting?

Westy: Yes, he made me wait.

Andile: What is his phone number?

Westy: He doesn't have a phone. I used to phone him at work.

Andile: So, you never tried to go to school because of money?

Westy: Yes.

Andile: Have you tried to get a job?

Westy: Yes, I've tried to get a job.

Andile: What happened?

Westy: I went to work but it looks like there was not enough work. I think it was for about a week and then there was no more work to do. I have tried to find a job. I am not luck to find anything. But there are too many people who have even stopped looking. There are no jobs for people who are not educated.

Andile: What were you doing?

Westy: Working at the harbour where ships are manufactured.

Andile: What were you doing?

Westy: We were cleaning the ships because boy, isn't work scarce?

Andile: You've never tried to get another job?

Westy: The other one that I tried was in town, but I still have to learn for it once again. It is welding.

Andile: Don't you have a welding certificate?

Westy: I do.

Andile: Why do you want to do it again?

Westy: I want to refresh my memory

Andile: How would you do that?

Westy: What I know is that I have forgotten because where I studied was free. Is it free?

Andile: Ok. How long does it take?

Westy: It takes about 3 months.

Andile: Now if it's free, why didn't you go there in the first place?

Westy: I heard they were only taking 10 people, there were 10 that went with us and we were made to wait.

Andile: Who made you wait?

Westy: One Indian that works there.

A

ndile: How do you know about that Indian?

Westy: From the newspaper. My sister showed me the advert.

Andile: Did your sister also find work there?

Westy: Yes.

Andile: Who's assisting you to get a job?

Westy: It's my friend who's like me in the project; we've tried to get jobs.

Andile: You are the same in which way?

Westy: A friend of mine, we are assisting each other. He is the one we went to prison with.

Andile: Have you tried to start your own business?

Westy: No, I've never tried.

Andile: Why?

Westy: It's only money.

Andile: Oh. You said you had never heard about Umsobomvu? It's supposed to assist the youth that want to start up businesses. You are supposed to contact them if you want to start up a business and I think they are also available here in Durban.

Westy: Yes, now I remember about Umsobomvu.

Andile: When you think about it, where do many people end up if they leave school before completing Matric?

Westy: If they leave school before they finish Matric?

Andile: Yes.

Westy: It's only crime that they do.

Andile: You say they end up committing crimes?

Westy: Yes, they end up in crime.



Andile: Anything else?

Westy: In jail.

Andile: Where do most people end up here at Folweni?

Westy: Some are just at home and others end up in jail.

Andile: What is the government doing to help them?

Westy: Through opening small companies. But most businesses are still a dream.

Andile: Where do you get the information that helps you?

Westy: I got it from Westville. While I'm here outside I get it from a friend of mine. My friend helps me a lot.

Andile: What does your friend do?

Westy: He is a mechanic; we were detained together at Westville.

Andile: What is he doing right now?

Westy: He is a car mechanic. When I need something I just speak to him.

Andile: Ok. Why don't you work with him?

Westy: I sometimes get a temporary job from him.

Andile: Where does he stay?

Westy: He stays here at Folweni, but he's away most of the time.

Andile: You say the guy you were detained with is the one you are working with.

Westy: Yes.

Andile: And who else?

Westy: My parent.

Andile: Your mother?

Westy: Yes.

Andile: Ok. If you had a chance to speak to the government, what would you tell them to do to improve where you ended up?

Westy: I would tell them to open small companies so that we could get jobs.

Andile: How important is education to you?

Westy: Education is very important in order to be able to communicate with other people.

Andile: Ok. How many years have you stayed here at Folweni?

Westy: I still stay here even now!

Andile: (Laugh)

Westy: I left when I was 18.

Andile: Even when you were in jail you resided here at Folweni; the only thing was that you were away for a while. How many years have you stayed here, you arrived in 19,,,?

Westy: I was born here. I'm 23 now.

Andile: What is it that makes you laugh a little bit when you think of Folweni?

What is it that you can remember and you say, "Yes! Folweni".

Westy: Nothing. Only those that make me feel bad when I think of them.

Andile: Which ones are those?

Westy: The old matters – when there was fighting.

Andile: Violence?

Westy: Violence.

Andile: Thank you. If there are follow up questions I will phone you. I will write down the information and give it to you to check that everything is correct or if I have added things you did not say.

6.1.6. LK

LK has been out of school for a period of 5 years. He dropped out of school at grade 11.

The main reason for dropping out:

Andile: Why did you drop-out of school?

LK: I had no uniform and no school fee. The principal was giving me problems and my parents were not paying. So I stayed at home. My father was saying he will pay next week. He didn't. So I could not go back to school.

Andile: What is your father's occupation? Is he employed?

LK: Yes he is employed.

Andile: Where and what does he do

LK: He is employed at **** and drives one of their machines.

Andile: How long has he worked there?

LK: For many years. Since I was a baby.

Andile: why is he not paying your school fees?

LK: he says he does not have enough money. But he drinks (alcohol) and he can afford buying it.

Andile: And your mother?

LK: My mother is unemployed and she sometimes sells drinks (non alcoholic fizzy drinks) and makes no money.

Andile: How much was your school fee?

LK: At that time it was about R55. I don't know now.

Andile: In the past few years, you said 5, what have you been busy with?

LK: Nothing. I sometimes work as a conductor.

Andile: How much do you earn as a conductor?

LK: R30 or R50 a day.

Andile: So why didn't you pay your own school fee?

LK: Because my father said he will pay. And it is his role as a father.

Andile: He says he does not have money?

LK: He does have.

Andile: So if he gave R100 today, you would go back to school?

LK: Yes I would.

Andile: Why would you go back now?

LK: Because school is important and I was very clever at school. And now, I drink because I am bored.

Andile: What if you saved your own money?

LK: Sometimes I do that and then I use the money and then I have nothing.

Andile: Where do you see yourself in three years?

LK: I don't know. I hope I can get money and go back to school and study engineering.

Andile: Is there someone else in the family who can assist you?

LK: No. There is no one.

Andile: In the community?

LK: No one.

Andile: Do you know anyone else who dropped out of school?

LK: A lot of people. My cousins and some friends.

Andile: Why did they drop-out?

LK: Some it was money. Some were expelled from school. The other guys went to jail and came back.

The love of money caused me to drop-out...I got caught up with the wrong people.... I thought I would make a lot of money stealing, me and my friend...we influenced each other. At my home, there was no one working to pay for my schooling.

Andile: What do most of them do for a living?

LK: They.... I don't know. They... my other cousin drive taxis. The other guys are conductors...

Andile: Have you tried founding a job other than in the taxi industry?

LK: Yes. I did?

Andile: What job? And how did that go?

LK: I was trying to found job at Toyota and Ferodo. We wait at the gate and lucky call few people by name. In other places they want people with Matric. And sometimes at Toyota they want you to bribe them and I didn't have the money.

It's not easy [getting jobs]...the problem is that every time you go and market yourself, they [employers] want certificates. You see now, I don't have one

Andile: Anywhere else?

LK: The other time there were forms for prison warders and also they did not take me because I don't have Matric.

Andile: Have you tried starting your own business?

LK: No.

Andile: Have you tried Learnerships?

LK: No. What is that?



Andile: Do you know SETAs?

LK: No.

Andile: Learnerships are structured learning experiences. One can study whilst working.

LK: No. I have not tried them.

Andile: Where do you go from here?

LK: I will think about it.

The Pilot

The questionnaire was piloted with the LK in Folweni.

6.1.7. PRINCIPAL – School B

The purpose is to trace the pathways of out-of-school youth who dropped out of school between grades 1 to 11 as they seek re-entrance to the education, training and development (ETD) system, or entrance into the labour market. I plan to investigate the factors that determine the choices that drop-outs make either in re-entering the ETD system or entering the labour market. Your contribution in this research will be highly appreciated.

Andile: Before we start, I need to put it on record that, the data from this interview will be used for the purposes of my PhD research. Should there be any other person wishing to use your data, you will be contacted and you will need to give consent for the use thereof. Without the consent, the data cannot be transferred to another researcher.

I also have to put it on record that there will be no financial benefits for whatever data is used for my research. As a process, I will send you the transcript as soon as the transcription is finished. You will then evaluate whether what is in there represents your responses. I will probably email you the transcript....

The rate of dropping out in your school, is it as the other schools in the area (high or low)? Has it improved or gotten worse over the years?

Principal: The rate of drop-outs from schools has been topping up the challenges of our Government. I have been following this trend with a sheer sadness, considering the fact that the future of this country lies in the hands of its youth and it what they make of it. Between 1998 and 2000 academic years, I observed an escalating rate of learner drop-out in my school. The contingency plan (Plan B) of the Stakeholders of my school saw a satisfactory decrease in learner drop-outs from my school. The drop-outs were largely attributed to poor tuition rendered to learners; since the very educators were not as committed as they should have been.

I worked very hard in building the positive character of my school hence learners that were enrolled in my school for the first time in the year 2000 realized that they had a responsibility to take the school to greater heights.

Frankly speaking, the school does not have a serious problem of drop-outs. Comparatively speaking then, the rate of learner drop-out from my school is minimal as compared to neighbouring schools.

The majority of learners who do leave my school having not accomplished their educational ambitions are girls who experience pregnancy during the year and a handful of both, boys and girls who are unable to rise to the high standards that we have set as a school.

Some of the learners that we lose from my school are attracted by job opportunities made available to them by the corporate sector such as Toyota SA, the biggest employment agency in my area.

I would want to believe that my neighbouring schools do experience the problems relating to drop-outs. This feeling is informed by a number of learners that are admitted from my school with progress reports reflecting the names of my neighbouring schools.

Our communities are gradually seeing the need to educate their children hence there has been huge improvement due to commitment from parents and communities at large.

Policy: What do the South African Schools Act (1996) and other policies say about the learners who drop out of school? According to the Schools Act, a public school must admit learners and serve their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating in any way. The Act encourages public schools to admit learners regardless of their age or a tag of being referred to as 'drop-outs'.

The Act does not explicitly state what should be done with the learners deemed fit to be called drop-outs. I would want to believe that the introduction of the Further Education and Training Act of 1998 sought to accommodate learners who must have progressed beyond Grade 9 to enter into technical institutions in order to be equipped with sorely needed skills. The silence of the Schools Act in regulating on the matter of drop-outs fairly leaves individual school with an opportunity to use their discretion in allowing these learners back to formal schooling. If it is deemed suitable, the schools must take these learners back in formal education.

• How does your school enforce the policy?

My school follows the act to the letter. In my school I try to minimize the drop-outs by liaising closely with tertiary institutions to provide career awareness programmes. This has yielded positive fruits because the majority of our learners do pass grade 12 with exemptions. There are rare cases that we admit at grade 11 who according to my conclusion, they are a way beyond school going age. We do admit such learners since the Act is silent on the issue of drop-outs.

We are working extremely hard to prevent ageing learners from getting lost to the system by encouraging them to take skills-based courses with the nearby technical institutions. We are at present trying to pilot a computer literacy programme with which we seek to address challenges facing learners who are unable to be absorbed by the job market or to further their studies due to the poverty stricken background from which they hailed.

• What is your view on the implementation of SASA?

I am deeply moved by the endeavour of our government to transform our education system. It pleases me to acknowledge that the premise for the South African Schools Act (1996) was broader consultative process. For the first time in this country, the different races worked together towards addressing common educational challenges. My view on

SASA is such that every citizen of this country needs to see education as a cornerstone of our society. I am also pleased by the fact that SASA creates one education system for one nation. That SASA seeks to embrace our learners with skills is marvellous to observe. That SASA seeks to redress the past educational pathways is mouth-watering. It worth noting and commenting on the fact that today's learners stand better chances of obtaining financial assistance to further their studies. The only challenge regarding SASA is that it seeks to raise awareness of learner's rights and yet it is very quiet on the responsibilities that are inherent in education rights.

I do believe that much should have been done in workshopping educational managers regarding the implementation of SASA. It is sad fact that there are countless numbers of educational managers who are quite lazy in running the schools in the manner that is in harmony with the South African Schools Act. In the end that SASA was implemented, it leaves me with no choice but to work towards accomplishing sought objectives, educationally. This is however not the case with most neighbouring schools. There are no traces of the policy and the governing bodies are not knowledgeable.

- **What indicators (how do you determine) do you use to determine whether or not there is a high rate of dropping out in the area?**

I have utilized the number of learners that my school enrolls in grade 11 of each academic year against the number of those who progress to grade 12. In the past the majority of learners who failed grade 11 would eventually decide to leave the school. That was observed in the figures of learners who against the odds decided to repeat the same grade. Between 2002 and 2007 there has been a steady increase in the number of learners registered to write grade 12 in KwaZulu-Natal Province.

These realistic and informed indicators demonstrated to me that there is a drastic drop in the so called drop-outs (Lost generation) and in our schools.

However I have observed the number of learners in the area, who are of school going age but have not finished Matric and who are not progressing with any form of training. This is also the case in my neighbourhood.

- **The rate of dropping out in the surrounding: Is it high or low? Has it improved over the years?**

There are two neighbouring schools in my area. In the past, the school that I would refer to as X used to have quality results in grade 12. Comparatively speaking, this school posed a serious threat to my school because some of the learners left my school to study in the stated school. The recent decline in results saw that school experiencing a problem of drop-outs. Through circuit programmes such as Matric intervention, we saw school X beginning to redeem themselves. Speaking from the position of information, I would want to state that the situation has improved a great deal. The common factor that leads to drop-outs emanates from teenage pregnancy. This is the common social challenge with a direct negative bearing on our education. The other factor that makes us experience the problem of drop-outs has been the economic boom from the industrial area of Prospecton. This is a place where Toyota South Africa has established itself as a major employment agency.

Most of our learners are attracted by job opportunities availed to them by this corporate sector. There has also been a steady rise of drop-outs due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It is a sad state of affairs to see young teenagers having to leave school and look for jobs in order to support their siblings. I want to believe that individual schools need to work very closely with the Department of Social Development in order to advance social grants to help these destitute learners.

- **What do these youth do after dropping out?**

The majority of girls deemed drop-outs are adding to social burdens. They have become young mothers who found it very difficult to support their children. These trends have created a heavy challenge and corruptive mentality to the Department of Social Welfare.

Some of these girls found themselves in the streets of Durban at night trying to make ends meet. Their economic background forces them to operate as prostitutes. On the negative, the spreading of the HIV/Aids pandemic is escalated.

Most of the boys who are deemed drop-outs are engaging in criminal activities. There have been some cases wherein some of our drop-outs are spotted in the acts of confiscating cell-phones from our learners.

The taxi industry has also seen itself as employment agency to these youth. The majority of our drop-outs are unsuccessfully searching for job opportunities but lack of skills made them unattractive to employers.

It is sad to note that some of the drop-outs are drowning in alcohol. This is a serious social problem that we are faced with. These youth are facing future doom and are adding to existing social woes. There are only a very few youth who pursue their plight at technical schools.

- **Have there been incidences where these youth have tried to get back to the school?**

Yes, there have been incidences where these youth did try to come back to school. The majority of these youth cite the fact that life is extremely hard outside if one is without education on his or her side. After careful analysis of the situation some of these youth have been given a life line. I must praise the attitude of those who make a come-back to school because they seem the complete opposite of what they were initially, and they make our lives at school quite enjoyable.

- **Do you accept all the youth back into the system?**

NO. Much as we all view education as a right, allowing the drop-outs back to school is quite circumstantial. We do visit our records to establish as to factors that led to their leaving of the school prematurely. If our records reflect unbecoming behaviour from such youth, we deny them entry; in fact we encourage them to pursue their education at technical schools. We do not allow learners with criminal records back to the system.

- **POLICY: What does the policy say regarding that?**

Admission to public schools 5. (3) states, 'No learner may be refused admission to a public school on the grounds that (b) does not subscribe to the mission statement of the school. The policy clearly states that nobody has the right to refuse any learner entry to school but this relates to children wishing to do grade 1. The policy is silent on the matter regarding drop-outs. To my understanding, the Governing Body reserves the right to grant or deny entry to a public school to learners. Schools need to treat individual case(s) as completely different from other cases.

A second chance must be given to the most deserving learners after a careful analysis of the situation. We need to be mindful of the fact that the right to education is an inherent one. Refusing our learners entry to school might lead to a gross violation of an inalienable right (education).

- **What have been your responses?**

As an Educational Manager, I have made a positive manipulation of the admission committee. This implies that our school as a social agency needs to welcome those (youth) members of the community with a potential to reshape their future. We trace records of these youth and if deemed necessary, we do afford a second chance to the most deserving. In some instances, I personally recommended that some of these youth needed to focus on trade in order to enhance their chances to secure employment.

I am voluntarily participating in Adult Basic and Training programmes and it is amazing to see such enthusiasm being shown by the drop-outs. My response to technical drop-outs (those who could not fit on NCS) has been that they need to enrol with ABET Centres in order to redirect their future plight. I have advised some of the drop-outs to seek employment with the help of their immediate families.

- **Challenges faced and best practices**

The challenges that are very common are presented by drop-out drop-outs. The worst challenge is the age of these learners. They do not fit age-wise to their colleagues in class hence there is always a room for conflict informed by age gap. Most of the drop-outs who are readmitted to school are beyond school going age. They found it difficult to cope in class and to submerge to their youthful educators. They refuse to accept corrective measure.

The other challenge that these drop-outs come across is the Curriculum change.

The learning field of NCS is largely different from the interim core-syllabi. This makes it difficult for these youth to work tirelessly in order to cope.

The other challenge is discipline, because the majority of the learners we have these days are a rude and crude phenomenon.

The best practice is to move beyond the call of age. We need to open the doors of learning and to afford each and every learner the right to education. We need not give exaggerated respect to drop-outs but we need to be mindful of creating a positive learning climate for our learners without unfairly discriminating against individual learner(s). We need to uphold the Schools Act and provisions thereinto. The individual learner regardless of his/ her age needs the preservation of educational rights as a best practice

- **What have been the adv/disadvantages of these youth getting back to the schooling?**

Advantages are social, cognitive and economic for the school and the individual. The repatriation of drop-outs to school plays a pivotal role. It creates a positive atmosphere that links the school and the community in which the school is situated. The majority of the youth returning to school comprise a group of mature learners, cognitively. They are focused and demonstrate their will to achieve educationally.

The added advantage is that the youth returning to school sustain the post provisioning norm to educators in a school. In some cases new posts are created fix teachers posted at the school.

Socially, the school is in a position to invest skills and impart knowledge to the members of the society. 'A learning nation is a winning nation.' This implies that the more the community becomes cognitively advanced, the wiser they will become.

The increase in enrolment for the school also implies that there is bound to be an increase in the norms and standards given to the school. The school also enjoys a massive boost to its financial muscle through school fees contributed by learners. The individual learner benefits by being a meaningful member of the society who is in a position to participate in the political and economic matters of the community.

The individual also stands a better chance of securing employment thus improving the social condition of his people.

The youth that are welcomed back to school seemed more real and have suffered the tragedies of life hence they want to grab the opportunity at their disposal with both hands.

It has to be noted that there are disadvantages presented by these youth returning to school. The majority of them do not have age on their side. Some of these youth have parenting responsibilities. From time to time, they ask to leave the school early or absent themselves on the grounds that they have to honour dates for social grants.

Some of these learners have been disowned by their parents and as a result experience a serious problem in getting school material.

Some of the disadvantages are curriculum driven. These youth found it difficult to understand the new system of education. Some experience financial problems and cannot finance their education, hence the school struggles to make ends meet. Another disadvantage is that some of these learners are permanently latecomers due to the chores they need to perform for their children. This tendency disrupts the harmony that should prevail in schooling

- **What possible pathways do the youth who drop-out school taken take within**
 - **ETD.**

The Further Education and Training Act (1998) made it possible for the youth that may have passed Grade 9 to enter - these institutions. Such youth are having a clear

educational pathway to redeem their plight (educationally). They stand a better chance to be equipped with sorely needed skills.

Sadly though, those who left school having not gone beyond Grade 9, found life extremely difficult. They have absolutely no chance to advance their educational plight. Their possible pathway is in criminal activities which grossly taints the image of our country. There is also a serious component of affordability which becomes an even greater challenge to their progress.

- **Labour market.**

Our country is moving in the direction of skills. The fact is that the youth that went through technical institutions are beaming with confidence in the world of skills. Our labour market is flooded with labourers that lack skills and expertise. The youth from technical schools are marketable in the labour world. Drop-outs who may have gone to these institutions secure themselves lucrative jobs because their knowledge is practical and skills driven.

These are the cornerstones of our ailing economy and people behind social engineering of our upliftment. These youth also stand a better chance in the SMME (Small Micro Medium Enterprise) for their expertise is trade driven. They are the major role players in the reconstruction of our country amenities availability).

It is disturbing that the drop-outs that did not pass Grade 9 stand too little chance to be absorbed by the labour market. These are the people who leaned quite heavily on our economy, yet they have nothing to provide to address the woes of the ageing citizens of our country.

These are the people crowding our jails because they resort to crime in order to make a living.