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Masters of Education Thesis

Grade 10 dropout predisposition and resilience in one rural and one urban secondary school in the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia

by

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Abstract

The study investigated school dropout predisposition and resilience at Grade 10 level in one rural and one urban secondary school in the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia. Part of the study was by means of a literature review of studies on school dropout in different parts of the world. The review also related to theoretical explanations of school dropout predisposition and resilience, together with preceding studies about the two phenomena.

The qualitative research approach was used to obtain information about participants' experiences, beliefs, and perceptions about the school dropout and resilience phenomena.

The study was framed by the interpretive research paradigm. The case study method, along with semi-structured, one-on-one and focus group interviews and document analysis were used to gather data. In addition, the study was also framed by grounded theory for the purposes of identifying alignments between the study's findings and existing theories whilst also enabling the identification of theoretical gaps regarding some the study's findings which subsequent studies should address. In addition, grounded theory also helped to present a theoretical discussion of the two studied phenomena.

Factors found to be associated with school dropout predisposition in the rural school included over-age and alcohol and drug abuse (in boys), long walking distances to school and teenage pregnancy (in girls), poor academic performance, curriculum, poverty, peer pressure and lack of parental involvement and support in the education of children(in both sexes). Factors that were found to be associated with school dropout resilience at the school included availability of role models, good academic performance, parental involvement and support in education and the teaching of the Life Skills subject.

Factors found to be associated with school dropout predisposition in the urban school included curriculum, poor academic performance, over-age, poverty and peer pressure (in both sexes), alcohol and drug abuse, bullying and lack of hostel accommodation (in boys), teenage pregnancy and early marriages or involvement in sexual activities (in girls). Factors that were found to be associated with school dropout resilience at the school included good academic performance, learning from siblings and friends' dropout experiences, self-determination and self-motivation, and valuing education and motivation from parents and

relatives, counselling, praising learners and inviting renowned individuals to speak to children.

Factors which were found to be linked to existing dropout predisposition theories were curriculum, poor academic performance and poverty, whilst teenage pregnancy was found not to be linked to existing theories.

A factor which was found to be linked to existing dropout resilience theories was good academic performance whilst no factor was found not to be linked to existing theories.

Recommendations in this study include calls for exploration by further studies in generating new theories to better explain findings in this study. The recommendations to schools and the Regional Education Directorate to help in enhancing dropout resilience include counselling and academic performance enhancing strategies.

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Declaration

I declare that the thesis titled '**Grade 10 dropout predisposition and resilience in one rural and one urban secondary school in the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia'** is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Full Name: Israel Lubinda Maswahu   Date: December 2012

Signed: …………………………..

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Acknowledgements

I wish to express my heartfelt indebtedness to:

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Chapter One

Introduction to the study

Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to research carried out in two secondary school case studies regarding Grade 10 dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena. The research was conducted in the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia. One of the schools is located in an urban area whilst the other is located in a rural area. The decision to include both urban and rural schools in the study was to try and find out the differences between the two settings in relation to school dropout predisposition and resilience factors. This introductory chapter includes sections on the background to the study, the main purpose of and rationale for the study, the key research questions, the conceptualisation of key concepts and theoretical frameworks in the study, the reviewed literature and the research methodology.

Background to the study

The World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) which was agreed upon in the Jomtien, Thailand Conference in 1990 states that:

> Every person - child, youth or adult - should benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet people's basic learning needs. These needs comprise both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem-solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions and to continue learning

> (UNESCO, 1990: 3)

Similar to the countries that participated in the conference, Namibia undertook to take up the course of providing basic education for all children, youth and adult to realise the UNESCO EFA goals (UNESCO, 1990).

In addition, basic education that is equally accessed and equitably provided to all the citizenry allows for girls and women and disabled persons to have active and equal

participation in the economic activities of the country and places them at the same competing level as that of men and the abled people (UNESCO, 1990). These convictions are in line with those of educationists such as Freire's, who says that education is the key to the attainment of knowledge and practical life skills concerning food production, family health and ecological protection in developing countries (Makwinja-Morara, 2007). Research also suggests that for an individual to participate and be a productive member of society one needs certain fundamental skills that, in present times, are mainly acquired in schools (Tanori, Henderson, & Mumford, 2002). In developing countries such as Namibia, education is further regarded as a necessity for the provision of crucial skills that are needed for a country's economic development (Fobih, 1987) and individual economic independence (Tanori *et al.*, 2002).

The above considerations make it crucial for research to continuously generate knowledge that contributes to the development of a better understanding of factors associated with school dropout predisposition and resilience. It was hoped that the development of such knowledge in this study would contribute to an understanding that would help inform the generation of educational strategies that would help contribute to increased learner retention in the Namibian schools. The perceived need for such research takes into consideration the country's educational legacy which found formal education before the country's independence in 1990 to be compulsory only up to the Grade 3 level of schooling. This legacy included the fact that only about thirty per cent (30%) of black Namibian children proceeding to Grade 4, compared with about ninety per cent (90%) of their white counterparts. In addition, only about 0, 4 per cent of African pupils made it through matriculation, while the corresponding number of white pupils was forty per cent (40%) (Amukugo, 1993). A large number of black Namibian children of school-going age lived in the reserves where few schools existed. Since schooling was not compulsory, many learners either did not attend or dropped out of school because of obstacles linked to school attendance, such as walking long distances to get to school (*Ibid*).

Thus, one of the aims of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) led government of Namibia at independence in 1990 was to provide formal schooling for all of the country's citizens. This included dealing with problems in the Namibian education system such as school dropout. As a signatory of the "World Declaration on Education for All", it also included the provision of compulsory and free education (Amukugo, 1993). According to Namibia's Constitution, all children should be in school until they complete Grade 7 or

reach the age of 16. In line with this, the total number of schools in Namibia increased from 1545 in 2001 to 1661 in 2007 (Ministry of Education, 2010).

Despite the increased number of schools and legislation making education free and compulsory, the enrolment rate in Namibian schools was in 2004 only about 82%, with some regional and gender differences (EMIS, 2005; SACMEQ, 2004). One of the contributions to the low school enrolments relates to high school dropout rates which, in 2007, varied between 0.6 in Grade 3 to 38.2 percent in Grade 10 (Ministry of Education, 2010). The dropout rates were especially high in transition grades, i.e. Grades 4, 7 and 10 (EMIS, 2007 in Ministry of Education, 2010). The decision to focus on Grade 10 in this study was, therefore, linked to these findings, together with my teaching experience at the secondary level which exposes me to this problem.

The school dropout problem is still prevalent in Namibian schools and the government is trying to deal with the problem. At the core of the government's efforts is the fulfilment of its obligation towards the 'Education for All' (EFA) goal which involves making education free and compulsory for all children, including the provision of learning and teaching facilities in schools. In an attempt to fulfil this goal the Ministry of Education in Namibia made the following promises:

> We must address the barriers that keep our children from going to school. For some children, that may mean persuading their parents that they will have a more comfortable and more secure future if their children attend school than if they remain at cattle posts to look after the herds. For other children, it may require overcoming the view that girls do not need to continue their education since their roles in life are to bear children and care for their families. For still others, it may require expansion of special education programs, for example for children with limited sight or hearing. Low as they are, our school fund fees may be beyond the means of some of our families. For them, we shall have to be sure that we have adequate fee reduction or remission schemes and that school fund fees are not used to discourage some children and their families from applying for admission. Most important, we must be able to show the parents of Namibia the value of education. They must see for themselves that both they and the country will benefit from universal basic education. If that is not clear, some parents, perhaps many parents, will be unwilling to support our schools and to send their children.

(Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993: 33)

Albeit the Namibian government, through the Ministry of Education, was trying to do its best to achieve its "Education for All" goal, there still appeared to be a problem of school dropout among Namibian children, especially in Grade 10, the focus grade in this study.

Rationale for the study

I have worked as an educator in secondary schools in the Caprivi Education Region of Namibia for about 12 years. This has given me some awareness of the high rates of school dropouts in schools located in this region. It was this exposure that influenced me to engage in a study that contributed towards the generation of a better understanding of this problem. It was thus hoped that the knowledge generated in this study would, in addition to contributing to the generation of a better understanding of the dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena, also inform my own teaching practice.

The literature that was reviewed as part of this study suggested that not much was known about the school dropout phenomenon in Namibia, especially regarding factors that contribute to resilience as opposed to dropping out of school amongst rural and urban schools in the Caprivi region. Thus, it was thought that the combination of both the school dropout predisposition and resilience would help generate a fuller and deeper understanding of the school dropout problem and how it could be alleviated in our schools.

In addition, most of the studies on school dropout were conducted in countries other than Namibia such as South Africa (see, for example, Hellmann, 1940), the United Kingdom (for example, see Kahn, Nursten and Carroll, 1981; and Galloway, 1985) and the United States of America (for example, Fine and Foster, 1988, Weis, Farrar and Petrie, 1989; and Flores-Gonzalez, 2002). Furthermore, indications are that most studies about the school dropout phenomenon were also carried out some time ago under circumstances which might have changed. This suggested the need for continuing studies on the school dropout phenomenon, particularly in previously colonized or developing countries, as is the case of Namibia.

Pervin, Reik and Dalrymple (1966) maintain that there is a possibility of losing some potentially creative minds, not only through academic failure but also through those who drop out from school despite the fact that they are doing well in their academic work. Findings suggest that dropout rates vary from school to school, and with regard to the year of withdrawal and the reasons for dropping out. This is one of the reasons that part of this study

is about the differences between school dropout predisposition and resilience between urban and rural settings.

The main purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study was to generate a better understanding of the school dropout predisposition and reliance in Namibia. The focus was mainly on learners at the Grade 10 level in the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia.

Research questions

The main question in this study is: What factors are associated with dropout predisposition and resilience amongst Grade 10 learners in an urban and a rural secondary school in the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia? An exploration in relation to the main question was guided by the following key questions:

- What are the main causes for dropping out of school at Grade 10 level in the selected rural and urban secondary schools in the study?

- How do learners in these schools who face similar challenges at Grade 10 level but do not drop out of school deal with the challenges?

- How do parents of learners who drop out of school in these schools deal with these challenges?

- How do parents of learners who do not drop out of school in these schools deal with these challenges?

- What strategies are used by each of the schools in the study to prevent the dropping out of school amongst at risk learners?

- What theoretical implications emerge from the findings about the above question?

Theoretical framework

The study was framed by grounded theory which was chosen as it was considered to be of particular importance because the study related to both predisposing factors and preventative measures of school dropout, the combination of which did not appear to have been the focus in previous studies on the school dropout concept. The purpose was to link and/or compare

the study's findings from the two different schools with existing theories (Punch, 2009 and Creswell, 2005) about school dropout predisposition and resilience. The grounded theoretical framework also provided a better explanation of the topics studied than might have been the case with a borrowed theory that might not have fitted with or been relevant to the gathered data (Creswell, 2005). This was taking into consideration that most studies on school dropout appeared to have focussed only on causes or on resilience, not on both at the same time, whilst their focus also appeared to have been either on urban or rural contexts, not both. However, the grounded theoretical framework did not involve generating a new theory or theories due to time factor.

Literature review

This section provides a brief discussion about the conceptualisations of key concepts in this study and also provides a brief discussion of the theoretical frameworks that have been identified to frame different studies on the school dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena. The purpose of the review of such theories was to compare the findings of the study to existing findings and theories. A more detailed account of all these aspects is provided in the next chapter. It also provides a summary of the reviewed studies about the school dropout phenomenon.

Conceptualisation of key concepts in this study

In this section I present conceptualisations of the key concepts in this study.

School dropout

Pervin, Reik and Dalrymple (1966) define the school dropout concept as referring to any learner who left college (school in this case), regardless of reason, and thus did not obtain his/her degree or certificate at the same time as the class with which he/she originally enrolled. Contrary to the above authors, Flores-Gonzalez (2002) describes a school dropout as a learner who enrolled at the school but left school before graduating, and had not enrolled in any educational program elsewhere. These authors differentiate between a school dropout and a returner. In addition, George Morrow, cited in Weis, Farrar and Petrie (1989), is of the opinion that the concept 'dropout' can be applied to a variety of cases. These include pushouts (undesirable students), educational mortalities (those who failed), capable dropouts

(those whose background socialization does not correlate with school demands) and stopouts (those who dropped out and returned to school within the same year or after some time).

Despite the seeming conceptual differences, there appears to be an agreement that a school dropout refers to a child who enrolled at a school but left school before graduating. Similarly, the school dropout concept in this study simply refers to a child who was enrolled at a school but left school at the Grade 10 level for whatever reason and had not enrolled in any educational program elsewhere at the time of the study.

School dropout predisposition

Aluede and Ikechukwu (2002) describe school dropout predisposition as a situation which influences some learners to drop out of school due to factors such as finance, personal characteristics, and societal and home factors.

School dropout resilience

Benard (1995) in Strand & Peacock (2010) describes resilience as a number of qualities that nurture a course of effective adaptation against an action (school dropout in this case) regardless of the risks and difficulties encountered in the process. Similarly, Masten, Best, and Garmezy (1990) as cited in Chen and Kaufman (2010) further describe the concept "resilience" as a process or result of positive adaptation to challenging conditions regardless of the hardships or dangers prevailing in the environment in which one lives. The conceptualisation of school dropout resilience in this study incorporates both of the above and refers to learners who are able to withstand and overcome schooling challenges and threats (Masten, 2001, as cited in Chen and Kaufman, 2010).

Theories about school dropout

The discussion below presents theories commonly framing studies on school dropout predisposition and school dropout resilience. As already indicated above, this study was framed by grounded theory. However, activities in the study also included a review of theories that frame various studies on the school dropout and resilience phenomena. The purpose was to gain familiarisation with these theories to enable me to compare and contrast the study's findings with issues associated with these theories and generate a new theory if no similarities were found to exist between the findings and the theories.

School dropout predisposition theories

Flores-Gonzalez (2002:4-9) identified the following theories that different researchers and authors use to explain or frame studies about the causes of school dropout among learners. These theories are discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

Deficit theory

Claims in this theory are that learners who are at risk of dropping out of school are low achievers who lack motivation and involvement in school activities, and thus frequently absent themselves from school and finally drop out of school.

Structural theory

Subscribers to this theory maintain that certain school structural traits cause low achievement, particularly among racial/ethnic minorities and low-income backgrounds, which result in school dropouts. These theorists claim that large schools, for example, usually have many disciplinary problems that result from few structural opportunities, such as the limited capacity of the school's physical facilities and the teaching staff, for involving all learners in school programs that relate to their interests and talents. Those learners who do not get involved in such school programmes consequently choose to drop out of school.

Reproduction theory

According to this theory schools are instruments of the dominant group designed to foster low achievement among racial/ethnic minority and low-income students and, in this way, replicate and re-create existing social relations. Proponents of this theory are of the opinion that schools replicate and recreate class relations in two ways: firstly, by rewarding the knowledge of the dominant culture and, secondly, by providing different kinds of education based on class, race and gender. Both of these are said to result in an alienation amongst learners belonging to the less dominant groups that pushes them out of school.

Resistance or oppositional theory

Proponents of this theory are of the belief that learners who drop out of school, particularly those from low-income groups, develop identities that are in opposition to school culture when they believe that school completion will not improve their socio-economic status, or that the behaviour required for academic achievement are not compatible with their racial/ethnic or class identity.

School dropout resilience theories

Dweck, *et al.* (1999), cited in Dwyer (2011:7), identified the following theories as being the main ones from which different researchers and authors draw to explain or frame their studies about the causes of resilience against school dropout:

Entity theory of self-intervention

The entity theory of self-intervention states that when learners have the belief that intelligence is alterable (called the "entity theory" of self); this will lead them to exertion of effort and facing of challenges. Learners with an entity theory of self-intervention are, therefore, more likely to exhibit academic exertion and receive approval from their teachers. They also display increased commitment in learning and ultimately perform well in their school work.

Incremental theory of self

This theory states that learners with an incremental theory of self believe that intelligence can be increased through their own hard work. They usually have the aspirations to overcome schooling challenges or other challenges in their lives and at home. In addition, they also have high self-esteem and are highly motivated to work towards success in school or life in general.

There appears to be a similarity between the two theories, i.e. the entity theory of self-intervention and the incremental theory of self, in that learners with an entity theory of self-intervention believe that intelligence can be altered through exerting more effort on school work with the help of others like teachers and their parents. Similarly, learners with an entity theory of self-intervention believe that they themselves are responsible for increasing their academic performance through hard work and self-motivation.

Research methodology

This section provides a summary about the research paradigm, approach, method and theoretical framework, together with the data gathering tools, analysis strategies and the sample that were part of the study. It also provides a summary about the possible limitations of the study and how ethical issues were considered. A more detailed discussion of these aspects is provided in Chapter Three.

Research paradigm

The study was underpinned by an interpretive research paradigm. This approach enabled me to understand the phenomena of focus through the meanings that the study participants assigned to the phenomena in relation to the context in which the phenomena were happening (Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit, 2004; Yin, 1986). The studied phenomena were thus "understood through the mental processes of interpretation which were influenced by and interacted with the social contexts" (Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit, 2004:20).

Research approach

The approach to the study was qualitative. As a qualitative researcher I defined and examined study participants' single and collective actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions about school dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena. What this means is that, as a qualitative researcher, I was "seeking for insight rather than statistical analysis" (Bell, 1999:7).

Qualitative research tools were, therefore, used to gather data to enable me to obtain information about participants' experiences, beliefs, and perceptions about the school dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena in extensive detail in their own words and voices. This approach also allowed me to vary the weight and tone of the questions with different participants and modify the questions to suit their different comprehension levels. This also means that I was not confined by the interview protocol but had the flexibility to ask probing questions when clarification was required (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001). This helped provide rich data that helped contribute to a deeper understanding of the school dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena in the selected two secondary schools (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001).

Research method

The study was conducted by means of a case study research method. The method provided me with an opportunity to develop an in-depth understanding of the school dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena in the two secondary schools (Bell, 1999) of different circumstances (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001 and Hitchcock & Hughes as cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). As already indicated, the differences related to the rural and urban locations of the sample schools.

Sample selection

All the study participants were selected purposively. They comprised individuals and groups of individuals who were assumed to have rich experiences and information about the school dropout and resilience phenomena (Johnson, 2007 as cited in Johnson and Christensen, 2008). The inclusion of the principals, for example, was based on the understanding that, by virtue of them being experienced educators and school heads, they were knowledgeable about the key study phenomena at their schools. Only teachers who had been at the school for a period of about 5 years or more were selected as they were more likely to be experienced and knowledgeable about the phenomena relevant to this research (Creswell, 2005 & Johnson and Christensen, 2008). As already indicated, the decision to focus on Grade 10 dropouts related to the 2010 Ministry of Education Report that Grade 10 had the highest dropout rate in Namibian secondary schools.

It was hoped that the inclusion of non-dropouts in the study would enable the development of an in-depth understanding of dropout resilience, that is, by exploring why these learners were still at school when their friends and/or siblings from similar socio-economic and school experiences had dropped out of school. These learners were in Grade 11 at the time the study was carried out. The explorations also included gathering data from parents of dropouts and non-dropouts regarding strategies the parents used to help keep their children in school under trying circumstances.

Data gathering tools

Data was gathered by means of the following tools:

Document analysis

Part of the data was gathered by means of documentary analysis. This data orientated me to the school aspects studied (Tuckman, 1994) which, in this case, refers to school dropout predisposition and resilience. Educational documents studied included attendance and admission registers with figures showing learners who were admitted and left school in the five years preceding the data gathering (2006 to 2010) with the aim of ascertaining the dropout pattern over this period in the selected schools. The documents also provided background information about the learner sample such as their age, sex, parental occupation and home addresses (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001).

Semi-structured interviews

Data was also gathered by means of one-on-one and focus group semi-structured interviews (see Appendices A, B, C, D, E and F). The semi-structured interviews provided access to in-depth information that would not have been accessed through structured interviews and document analysis only. Examples of information gained through the interviews included participants' feelings, intentions, thoughts, knowledge and reasoning about school dropout predisposition and resilience factors in the two school settings (Christensen and Johnson, 2008 & Yin, 1986). Semi-structured interviews enabled me entry into the 'inner worlds' of the participants and also assisted me to gain an understanding of their perspectives (Patton in Christen and Johnson, 2008) about the school dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena. Various strategies were used to enter the 'inner worlds' of the interviewees. For example, close relationships were established with the interviewees through the use of an informal tone. These strategies helped develop participant trust and good rapport between the participants and myself and enabled participants to respond fully and honestly to questions presented to them (Christensen and Johnson, 2008 and Creswell, 2005). Though the tone of the interviews was informal, I used an interview guide in order to keep the interviews on track (Christensen and Johnson, 2008). The guide was relatively unstructured in order to allow probing and free expressions of opinions by respondents (Christensen and Johnson, 2008).

One-on-one interviews were conducted with five school dropouts and their parents because I found it difficult to interview them in groups as they had sensitive issues to disclose (Creswell, 2005). One-on-one interviews were also conducted with the principals of the studied schools.

Focus group interviews were conducted with five selected teachers, five Grade 11 learners, five school dropouts and the parents of these children in each of the two schools. Group discussions in these interviews helped provide shared understanding of the school dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena amongst interviewed participants and helped highlight shared experiences, circumstances and feelings (Christensen and Johnson, 2008 & Creswell, 2005) about the phenomena.

The interviews were audio-taped to ensure complete capture of the verbal interaction and provide material for reliability checks (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001). The recording also ensured that important information was not lost (Christensen and Johnson, 2008).

Data analysis

I used descriptive statistics to analyse quantitative data collected from attendance and admission registers (Bell, 1999; and Gay, Mills and Airasian, 2009). This form of analysis helped in describing the information regarding averages in relation to the sex and age groups of the learners who were enrolled and those who dropped out in the two study schools during the preceding period of five years, i.e. from 2006 to 2010.

Qualitative data analysis was conducted through a process in which findings were "inductively generated from robust data patterns" (Haig in Ngcobo and Tikly, 2010). This meant focusing on identifying what the study participants valued and felt was important when articulating their views, opinions and experiences (Ngcobo and Tikly, 2010) about the school dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena in the two study locations. A fuller account of the analysis is presented in Chapter 3.

Study limitations

The study was confined to Grade 10 classes in two secondary schools because of time and financial constraints. There is, therefore, a need for future studies to explore all school grades, particularly those that were identified as being at high risk for dropping out, in order to develop a fuller and deeper understanding of the problem at all grade levels. In addition, the findings are not generalizable to other areas in Namibia that were not part of the population study since the study was of a qualitative nature (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001). There is, thus, a need for future studies to explore this problem quantitatively.

Ethical considerations

The data in this study included intimate details of the participants. This made it crucial to keep the information as confidential and anonymous as possible by, for example, using codes or pseudonyms in place of participants' real names. The use of participants' real names might have been damaging to the participants by exposing their problems and experiences about the school dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena to the rest of the world (Creswell, 2005 and Lichtman, 2006).

Informed consent from the research participants was sought before data gathering (Johnson and Christensen, 2008). In addition, parental/guardian consent was sought in the case of minor school learners and dropouts (see Appendix Q) as they were too young and

incompetent to make consensual decisions on their own (Johnson and Christensen, 2008). After gaining parental/guardian consent, I asked for assent from the minors (*ibid)*. The purpose of the study was explained to them so that they would make an informed decision about whether to participate in the study or not. A personal consent form (see Appendix R) was designed for completion by research participants to serve as proof of their consent and for reference purposes in case adverse happenings occurred in future in relation to the study (Bell, 1999). Guarantees of privacy and confidentiality were part of the consent forms, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage if they felt unwilling to continue participating (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2008).

Ethical clearance (see Appendix G) was acquired from the university whilst permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Caprivi Regional Education Directorate and the schools' principals (see Appendices I, K and M) (Creswell, 2005). Both the permission and ethical clearance ensured that I protected the rights of participants in the study (Creswell, 2005).

Thesis structure

Chapter One serves as an introduction of the study.

An analysis of the literature reviewed in the study is presented in Chapter Two.

The focus of discussion in Chapter Three is on the study methodology and design.

Discussion in Chapter Four is on findings in School A of the study.

Chapter Five provides the findings in School B of the study.

Chapter Six relates to conclusions and recommendations regarding findings in this study.
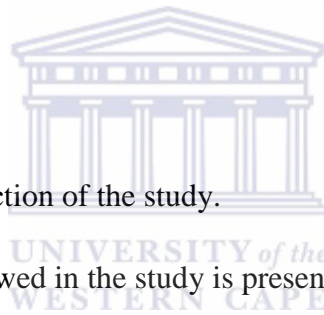
Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

Part of the literature review in this study is about how different authors conceptualize the "school dropout", "school dropout predisposition" and "school dropout resilience" concepts for the purpose of generating conceptualisations to inform explorations with regard to these concepts in this study. The review also explores theoretical explanations of school dropout predisposition and resilience, together with findings in preceding studies about these two phenomena. The information that emerged from the literature helped inform the design of my data gathering instruments and the analysis of the gathered data.

The conceptualisation of key concepts

This section is informed by an appreciation that different researchers/scholars understand and interpret the school dropout, school dropout predisposition and school dropout resilience concepts differently (Weis, Farrar and Petrie, 1989). It is for this reason that part of the literature review relates to the generation of an underpinning conceptualisation of these key concepts in the study.

School dropout conceptualisation

Pervin, Reik and Dalrymple (1966) and Flores-Gonzalez (2002) view the dropout concept as referring to any student/learner who leaves college (school in this case), regardless of reason, without having obtained his/her degree or certificate. However, Pervin, Reik and Dalrymple (*ibid*) differentiate between a school dropout and a returner. The latter refers to a child who enrolled at a school, dropped out at some point, but re-entered/returned to school at a later stage. In addition, George Morrow, (1985) in Weis, Farrar and Petrie (1989) is of the opinion that the concept 'dropout' can be applied to a variety of cases. These include pushouts (undesirable students), educational mortalities (those who failed), capable dropouts (those whose background socialization does not correlate with school demands) and stopouts (those who dropped out and returned to school within the same year or after some time).

Despite the seeming conceptual differences, there appears to be an agreement that a school dropout refers to a child who enrolled at a school but left school before graduating. Similar to this seeming consensus, a school dropout in this study refers to a child who was enrolled at a school but who left school at the Grade 10 level, for whatever reason, and has not enrolled in any educational program elsewhere at the time of the study.

School dropout predisposition

School dropout predisposition is a situation or factors which influence some learners to drop out of school (Aluede and Ikechukwu, 2002). In her study of the variables that predispose adolescents to drop out of school, Ikechukwu (2000) as cited in Aluede and Ikechukwu (2002) found that learners are predisposed to school dropout mostly because of reasons such as personal characteristics, and home, peer, finance, school and societal factors. Similarly, in this study, school dropout predisposing factors include individual attributes, peer pressure, school-related issues, and socio-economic and cultural factors.

School dropout resilience

Hupfeld's (2007:1) conceptualisation of this concept starts with the following question: "Why do some people experiencing challenging circumstances succeed in important aspects of their lives, while others with similar circumstances fail?" Most researchers use the term "resilience" to describe a set of self-protective characteristics possessed or experienced by those who are able to adapt to hardship and succeed. Benard (in Strand and Peacock, 2010) describes resilience as a number of qualities that nurture a course of effective adaptation against challenging actions regardless of risks and difficulties encountered in the process. In terms of schooling, learners who are resilient have the ability to withstand and overcome schooling challenges and threats (Masten, 1994, as cited in Chen and Kaufman, 2010).

Thus, the concept 'resilience' generally refers to the factors and processes that limit negative behaviours which are associated with stress and result in adaptive outcomes even in the presence of adversity. In learners, these adaptive characteristics include certain personality traits and individual behaviours, features of the school and classroom environment, and the home and family environment (Masten, 1994, as cited in Chen and Kaufman, 2010).

Despite the seeming different conceptualizations of the resilience concept, it appears that all the authors are in agreement that resilience refers to a number of qualities that nurture a

course of effective adaptation against challenges regardless of risks and difficulties encountered in the process. In terms of the school dropout phenomenon, learners who are resilient have the ability to withstand and overcome schooling challenges and threats. Similar to the above conceptualisations, a resilient learner in this study refers to a learner who is able to withstand and overcome schooling challenges and threats and continues with his/her studies beyond the Grade 10 level at the time of this study.

SCHOOL DROPOUT PREDISPOSITION

This section provides reviewed theories in relation to school dropout predisposition.

Theories about school dropout predisposition

This section comprises theories on school dropout predisposition. Though the study was framed by grounded theory, I undertook a literature review on theories that related to the two key concepts in this study. The review enabled familiarisation with existing theories and, in so doing, also enabled me to make a comparison and/or find links between the findings and the existing theories about school dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena. Flores-Gonzalez (2002) identified the following theories as ones used by different researchers and scholars to frame studies about the school dropout predisposition concept:

Deficit theory

According to this theory predisposing factors to school dropout relate to low achievers who lack motivation and involvement in school activities. The subscribers of this theory are of the view that low achievers lack motivation and involvement in school activities and frequently absent themselves from school and consequently end up dropping out of school. This theory (deficit), therefore, implies that when learners are not academically doing well in school they tend to dislike schooling as they see no purpose in going to school. That is because children who perform poorly in their academic work are less self-motivated to continue with education and do, in most cases, prefer dropping out of school to go and do something worthwhile at home rather than going through all the hardships involved with schooling.

Structural theory

This theory argues that certain school structural traits such as the size of the school cause low achievement, particularly among racial/ethnic minorities from low-income backgrounds. For

example, large schools usually have many disciplinary problems as a result of few opportunities existing for learner involvement in school programmes of interest to them or those which relate to their talents. Consequently some learners choose to drop out of school because, on the one hand, they find schooling discriminatory and unrewarding while, on the other hand, it is more demanding and exerts pressure on them that they are unable to deal with it successfully.

Reproduction theory

According to this theory schools are instruments of the dominant group designed to foster low achievement among racial/ethnic minority and low-income students and in this way they replicate and re-create social relations. Schools are said to replicate the structure of class relations in two ways: firstly, by rewarding knowledge of the dominant culture and, secondly, by providing different kinds of education on the basis of class, race and gender. Scholars like Bourdieu (in Galloway 1985) argue that schools hide the advantage of schooling for upper-class students through the guise of meritocracy. This practice does not acknowledge that upper-class students possess the cultural capital valued at school. Schools further transform the cultural capital into economic capital as knowledge of the dominant culture leads to better performance, which, in turn, results in access to better schools and universities. Eventually these upper-class children end up in well-paid jobs reserved for individuals who completed schooling.

Resistance or oppositional theory

Proponents of this theory are of the belief that students, particularly those from low-income groups, develop identities in opposition to school culture when they believe that high school completion will not improve their socio-economic status, or that the behaviour required for academic achievement is not compatible with their racial/ethnic or class identity.

In summary, an examination of all the four theories suggested that learners who are at risk of dropping out of school are those who belong to low societal classes. This calls for on-going studies into the school dropout problem to generate a better understanding of how best these individuals are to escape from dilemmas associated with dropping out of school. This need for further research is particularly important since the problem continues to persist in developing countries such as Namibia, even though the government is making schooling accessible and free.

Factors associated with school dropout predisposition

The following factors were found by different researchers and scholars to be the ones which predispose some learners to drop out of school.

Cultural factors

The following factors were found by some scholars and authors to be prompted by culture in predisposing learners to drop out of school:

Cultural beliefs

Some societies in Africa have been found not to value education or to view it as important. As a result, some of their children are more likely to dislike schooling (Aluede, 1995; Ikechukwu, 2000, in Aluede and Ikechukwu, 2002) and ultimately drop out of school. Similarly, when the society does not reward hard work and talent in education by not giving the educated a well-paid job and societal recognition upon school completion or graduation, some children may see schooling as unimportant (Adedeji, 2000 in Aluede and Ikechukwu, 2002) and consequently drop out of school.

Parental expectations

In many African societies the expectations of parents for their daughters are not as high as those for their sons (Egbo, 2000; Njeuma, 1998; and Nyathi-Ramahobo, 1999). In most cases education is not considered to be crucial for girls. If school attendance interferes with the significant contribution they make to the household economy, girls would be encouraged to drop out of school. Similarly, when a choice has to be made for economic reasons between educating a son or a daughter, preference would be given to the male child. This is a very substantial factor for poor families and is an important cause of some children not being enrolled in schools (Egbo, 2000; Njeuma, 1998; and Nyathi-Ramahobo, 1999, as cited in Makwinja-Morara, 2007).

It has been found by several scholars that, though African societies have gone through a series of historical, sociological and cultural processes of change, they still tend to disregard women (Bray, Clarke & Stephen, 1998). Makwinja-Morara (2007)'s study found that in African society from birth children are taught to accept different gender roles. A young girl is expected to take care of the younger ones whereas the boy child would be left to attend

school and consequently get a job. Gender inequalities are, therefore, allowed to pass on into the education system (*ibid*).

Socio-economic factors

The following factors were found by different researchers and scholars as socio-economic related ones which predispose some learners to drop out of school.

Poverty

Many learners drop out because of the compounded effects of poverty, coming from broken homes, having been held back or being slothful (Sutherland, 1999, in Makwinja-Morara, 2007). Learners from poor families have shown to have higher dropout rates than those from rich families (Makwinja-Morara, 2007). For example, findings in Makwinja-Morara (2007)'s research about female dropouts in Botswana indicate that home conditions, such as a large family that parents cannot afford to feed, clothe and pay school fees for, and poor homes make it difficult for parents to cater for their children's schooling. Other factors linked to poverty include coming from a single parent home and living in a large city.

IRIN (2008) also found that hunger; food shortages and poor diet among some children have always been and still continue to be key reasons for truancy or the cause of children in many remote villages in west Nepal for not being able to attend school regularly and subsequently dropping out of school. Akyeampong and Ananga (2010) also maintain that researchers from the Consortium for Research on Education Access, Equity and Transitions (CREATE) in Ghana found that irregular school attendance in Southern Ghana is usually associated with learners who come from very low-income households and therefore drop out of school for economic reasons.

Hellmann (1940)'s study found that the high cost of schooling is one of the predisposing factors for school dropout amongst learners from poor family backgrounds. This often occurs even when these children are exempted from paying school fees as they would still not want to go to school as they would be shy of their peers who jeer at them whenever they come to school in torn and ragged clothing (*ibid*).

In addition, schools usually require children to wear uniforms which might not be affordable by poor children. Not only do they need children to wear school uniforms, but they also require them to have sports wears and other clothing for certain school occasions. All these

place a burden on poor children. Even when the schools would make exceptions for poor children to come to school without school uniforms, the children's psychological reactions, their feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem cannot easily be discounted (Hellmann, 1940).

The above conditions may cause children to develop school phobia and finally decide to drop out of school as they cannot, in most cases, get the necessary school materials (*ibid*). Fine and Foster (1988), who conducted a study on female dropouts in the USA, also found that certain factors such as poverty induce girls to get into love affairs with adult men with the hope that they would provide for their needs, and consequently fall pregnant and thus drop out of school either temporarily or permanently.

Care of sick relatives or babies

This category of school dropouts is almost entirely composed of girls. Regarding the caring for sick relatives, girls are sometimes taken away from school in the belief that the domestic exigency would only be temporary, but the task might continue for years, by which time the child could have lost her initial desire to continue schooling (Hellmann, 1940). Weis, Farrar and Petrie (1989) also maintain that when the girl is the oldest in a family she sometimes has many responsibilities. For example, when the mother is out working, the daughter would have to take care of the house and be a mother to the siblings. Galloway (1985), who conducted a study in the UK on why students persist to absent themselves from school, also discovered that parents contribute to their children dropping out of school by withholding them from school unlawfully for reasons such as needing the child to look after younger siblings or to do the shopping when the parent is ill.

Teenage pregnancies

This is one reason that makes the school dropout rate of girls higher than that of their male counterparts, especially in secondary schools where the majority of girls have reached puberty (Hellmann, 1940 and Weis, Farrar and Petrie, 1989). Once a girl is pregnant, she can no longer continue with schooling, because the school rules and regulations do not allow pregnant girls to be in school or, where they do, the girl may feel insecure and ashamed to continue with classes because she is afraid and shy that her friends will laugh at her. In addition, for some teenage mothers coming back to school after having given birth and

staying at home with the child for a year or more may be difficult. This means that these girls would permanently drop out of school because of teenage pregnancy.

Propounding the pregnancy factor is that in some African societies discussion between parents and their children about issues of sex is considered a taboo (Makwinja-Morara, 2007). Though there is a widespread agreement for parents to play a role in educating their children on the subject of sex and sexuality, both parents and their children, particularly those who have reached puberty, find parent-child discussion about sex and sexuality difficult (Rosenthal, Feldman, & Edwards, 1999, cited in Makwinja-Morara, 2007). The only time the parents would talk about sexual issues with their children is when they have been suspected of being in a relationship or pregnant, and this would mostly take the form of scolding and disclaiming them (*ibid*). Parents usually feel uncomfortable and embarrassed to discuss matters related to sex with their children (Rosenthal et al., 1999, cited in Makwinja-Morara, 2007). Similarly, adolescents also feel unhappy and uncomfortable about it and feel that their parents are interfering into their private lives. They therefore would not like their parents to discuss such subjects with them (Nolin and Petersen, 1992).

School-related factors

The following are the school-related factors that may predispose some learners to drop out of school:

Schools located in rural areas

Most learners in the country are forced to walk long distances to get to schools. This consequently makes the children start absenting themselves from school as they find it difficult to walk such long distances. Finally, these children are either dismissed or drop out of school. This situation also occurs in some African societies when parents send children, especially girls, to rural areas because they consider them to be vulnerable and exposed to the contagion and danger of the urban environment. This precaution is commonly taken when girls are nearing the age of puberty, often with the express intention of guarding them against premarital pregnancies (Hellmann, 1940). The problem encountered by these children who are sent to rural areas is that, in most cases, schools are situated further away from their homes than they are in urban settings.

School policies and practices

Makwinja-Morara (2007:29) asserts that "Research confirms that schools seem to continue with those practices that produce dropouts." Fine (1987), Rumberger (1983), Natriello (1987) and Wehlage (1989) in Makwinja-Morara (2007) argue as follows:

> Schools do little to disrupt and much to reproduce existing social structures. Even with the same level of education, the high school diploma whites, men, and upper-middle class students perform better in education than do blacks, women, working class and low-income students.

(2007: 30)

Akyeampong and Ananga's (2010) study about findings by researchers from the Consortium for Research on Education Access, Equity and Transitions (CREATE) in Ghana states that school dropout in southern Ghana is, amongst other things, attributable to some school policies and practices such as the following:

- Schools lack approaches to deal with the learning needs of irregular school attenders and to decrease their vulnerability to dropping out.

- Over-aged learners are predominantly vulnerable to dropping out. They are mostly given little attention when they are in classes and, therefore, end up feeling unwanted and consequently choose to drop out of school.

Similarly, Tidwell (1988) also found that some learners who usually experience problems with some teachers end up dropping out of school. Learners who, for example, have poor relations with their teachers often see them as heartless people and, as a result, develop hatred towards schooling.

Sutherland (1999, as cited in Makwinja-Morara, 2007) also says that teachers who see learners' failure as being due to a lack of determination and laziness tend to punish the learners by giving them less educational support. When learners realize that they are not being supported or helped by their teachers, they will consequently opt to drop out of school as they will have no sense of belonging to the school. In this way, a large number of learners are scared away from school (Gallegos, 1998, and Okey and Cuisik, 1987, as cited in Makwinja-Morara, 2007). In addition, Makwinja-Morara (2007) also found that there are certain teachers who label some of their learners as useless and nothing in life. This group of learners will then develop an internalized sense of social belief that they are useless and then they often choose to drop out of school.

Teachers' expectations towards male and female learners

Even though education systems throughout the world offer equal opportunities to both male and female children to advance, the school dropout problem seems to affect girls more than their male counterparts (Makwinja-Morara, 2007). This is because female children seem to have more schooling challenges preventing them from advancing through the schooling system than their male counterparts (*ibid*). Nambala (2000), reporting on research in Namibia, for example, asserts that teachers often have different expectations of male and female pupils in terms of aptitudes and abilities, which may lead them to treat these groups differently in the classroom. Consequently, the disliked group may develop school phobia and later drop out of school.

Similarly, AAUW (1995), Grossman (1991), Riordan (1990) and Sadker and Sadker's (1995) studies cited in Makwinja-Morara (2007) also say that female learners tend to get less attention and have fewer chances of educational access than their male counterparts. This is usually a continuation of the societal trend where the girl often faces discrimination from an early age of life through childhood and into adulthood (Nyathi-Ramahobo, 1999; and Egbo, 2000, in Makwinja-Morara, 2007).
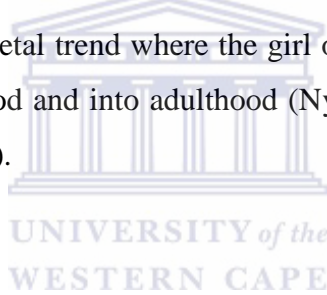
Individual attributes

The following discussion provides some factors attributable to individuals as reasons for them dropping out of school:

Learners' attitudes towards schooling

Usually children have opinions about school and, if the opinion is negative, it makes them develop school phobia that later leads them to drop out of school. Elliot and Voss (1974) as cited in Aluede and Ikechukwu (2002) found that other individual attributes that may cause negative attitudes about schooling include accidents or physical disabilities, sickness and other external conditions over which they have no control.

Banks and Finlayson (1993) also say that learners who have few positive attitudes towards school are more likely to absent themselves or even drop out of school at a later stage. **A learner's scholastic ability**

Children who experience some difficulties with their academic work are likely to absent themselves and finally drop out of school (Kahn, Nurstern and Carroll, 1981; and Weis,

Farrar and Petrie, 1989). This is because learners whose academic achievement is not good may feel demotivated and consequently choose to drop out from school.

Role-identity

According to the role-identity theory learners are normally faced with two main conflicting role-identities while at school. These are the school-kid identity and the street-kid identity. Flores-Gonzalez (2002) who conducted a study of high school dropouts with Latino students in one of the high schools in the United States identified street kid role-identity as a factor causing high school dropout among Latino students in the USA. A learner who finds schooling boring and unchallenging will have the street-kid identity dominant over the school-kid identity and consequently choose to drop out of school. Conversely, a learner who finds school life more challenging and interesting will have the school-kid identity dominant over the street-kid identity and be able to stay in school.

For Flores-Gonzalez (2002), a learner may develop the street-kid identity because of the inability of the school to provide enough educational opportunities and experiences for the learner that would enable or make him/her like to stay in school. A learner who, for example, is not having a close relationship with teachers and does not partake in extracurricular activities, and does not also experience schooling as challenging, is more likely to develop such an identity and drop out of school than the one who finds schooling exciting and challenging.

Poor school attendance

Redmond (2011) asserts that usually poor school attendance is the beginning of a slippery gradient to school dropout. Once a learner begins to lag behind in his/her schoolwork, he/she will find it problematic to catch up. The low self-confidence that develops from not being able to catch up may mean that the learner will be tempted to drop out from school completely.

SCHOOL DROPOUT RESILIENCE

This section provides information on school dropout resilience theories.

Theories about school dropout resilience

Dweck, et al. (1999) cited in Dwyer (2011:7) identified the following theories as having been framing studies on school dropout resilience, or which different researchers have been using to explain causes of resilience against dropping out of school among some learners:

Entity theory of self-intervention

The entity theory of self-intervention states that when learners have the belief that intelligence is alterable (called the "entity theory" of self), this will lead them to exertion of effort and facing of challenges. Learners who have an entity theory of self-intervention are more likely to exhibit academic improvement and inclination. They also display complete commitment in learning and ultimately perform well in their school work.

These learners are of the belief that school dropout predisposing factors are alterable and easily modified through support from their parents and teachers. Consequently, their opportunity for succeeding in education is intensified (Chen and Kaufman, 2010). Examples of alterable predisposing factors consist of missing school or not carrying out given homework and the positive foils of such variables are attending school regularly and carrying out homework (ibid).

Similarly, Hupfeld (2007) discovered that personal resilience can be linked to a sense of self-efficacy and self-determination. A learner who believes that he or she has the ability to shape what happens and is responsible for his or her successes will most likely work hard and ultimately realise his/her dreams. In addition, when a person believes that he/she has the ability to succeed, and is also motivated, this will result in resilience towards school dropout (*ibid*).

Dweck, et al. (1999) cited in Dwyer (2011) also found that an entity theory of self-intervention is susceptible to change with relatively simple external interventions, such as how praise is given to learners. Dwyer (*ibid*) believes, therefore, that when learners are praised for their achievements in academic work by their teachers and parents, they will tend to strive to work hard to do well in their school work despite prevailing difficult circumstances that may seem to hinder them from doing well. Conversely, the absence of praise for good academic and/or other work by their teachers and other mentors in their lives will, in most cases, prevent them from excelling or continuing to succeed in their endeavours and may result in school dropout.

According to this theory it can thus be concluded that:

- A learner's beliefs about why successes and failures occur are very powerful predictors of their behaviour in relation to dropping out of school in the face of difficulties

- The belief that intelligence is fixed ("entity theory of self") leads to withdrawal of effort and school dropout tendencies when learners are faced with difficulties that challenge their view of their own intelligence

(Dwyer, 2011: 11).

Dwyer (2011: 7) states that "feedback focussing on intelligence increases entity thinking whilst feedback focusing on effort and learning strategies decreases it." His study (Dwyer's) found that people's (learners' in this case) successes and failures should be attributed to effort, successful selection and use of problem solving strategies that are under one's control, rather than attributing successes to an unalterable entity labelled "intelligence," which would not be under one's control. An important finding of Dwyer's study has been that entity theories of intelligence are more prevalent among women and under-represented minorities. In addition, this has been established to be true for a varied range of ages and school achievement levels (*ibid*).

Incremental theory of self

This theory states that learners with an incremental theory of self believe that intelligence can be increased through hard work (called the "incremental theory" of self). Usually these learners have the aspirations to overcome schooling challenges such as school dropout predisposition or other challenges in their lives. They have high self-esteem and are highly motivated to work towards success in school or life in general (Dwyer, 2011). Incremental self-theories, therefore, lead to increased resilience towards school dropout predisposition in the face of home and school problems and impediments, and eventually lead to academic success (*ibid*).

Factors associated with school dropout resilience

Studies on school dropout resilience include those by Manzione (2002) on the major factors that contribute to Hartford public high school students continuing their education until

graduation; Hupfeld (2007) on resilience skills and dropout prevention in the United States; Chen and Kaufman (2010) on risk and protective factors and their effects on students' dropping out of high school in the USA, and Akyeampong and Ananga's (2010) study on how to reduce school dropouts through inclusive approaches to education in Ghana.

Chen and Kaufman (2010:4-6) grouped the factors emerging from these studies as contributing to learners' resilience against school dropout under the following headings:

Socio-economic factors

The following socio-economic factors were identified as being associated with resilience against school dropout in some learners:

Parenting style

Children who grow up in households where they receive attention and support from their parents are more likely to deal with socio-economic hardships such as school dropout (Benard, 1991; Rutter, 1990; and Wang, Haertel and Walberg, 1994, as cited in Chen and Kaufman, 2010). In addition, parents or caregivers who interact with their children about life issues and are also involved in the children's school work (Westfall and Pisapia, 1994, as cited in Chen and Kaufman, 2010), do contribute much towards the success of their children's life at school.

Parents' economic status

In cases where parents' economic status is healthy children are more likely to be resilient towards school dropout since they are provided with all the necessary financial and material support that enables them to be interested in going to school, be resilient towards school dropout and subsequently complete their schooling (Chen and Kaufman, 2010).

School-related factors

The following factors were identified by some researchers and scholars as being triggered by school circumstances in preventing or making some learners become resilient towards dropping out of school:

School experiences

A school has the most influence on the life of a child (Chen and Kaufman, 2010). Children spend more of their time at school than at home. This therefore means that children will always spend most of their time with teachers. Mostly teachers ensure that they try and make schooling interesting in order to encourage children to like schooling. When school children are provided with an environment in which they feel a sense of belonging, they like schooling and become more resilient towards school dropout (Wang, Haertel, and Walberg, 1994, as cited in Chen and Kaufman, 2010; and Manzione, 2002). Werner (1990) cited in Chen and Kaufman (2010), also found that caring teachers usually serve as good role models for resilient learners. Positive attitudes of the teachers towards learners, care and the giving of support contribute towards higher motivation for learners to go to school and be resilient against school dropout (Chen and Kaufman, 2010).

Similarly, Hupfeld (2007) says that:

> In addition to providing academic and emotional support, teachers play an important role in modelling resilient behaviours. They can teach learners that adversity is temporary and can be overcome. By displaying excitement about learning and building on learners' interests, they show them that internal motivation leads to fulfilling knowledge and skills. By engaging in goal-oriented behaviours, such as identifying goals, making plans, and providing feedback, they provide models of these processes for their learners. By having high expectations for themselves and their learners, they begin the self-fulfilling prophecy of believing in self-efficacy.

(Hupfeld, 2007: 3)

Peer association

Clark (1991) cited in Chen and Kaufman (2010), carried out a study on friendship forms and found out that a child who befriends with those who like schooling will more likely like schooling too and become resilient towards school dropout. Similarly, Patchen (1982) in Chen and Kaufman (2010) also found that children with peers who like schooling spend most of their time on school work and attend classes more regularly than children who have peers who dislike schooling.

Individual factors

It has been found that resilient learners often demonstrate distinctive personal traits that promote their school success irrespective of risks they encounter at home or in school

(Garmezy, et al., (1984) in Chen and Kaufman, 2010). The personal characteristics which resilient school children possess act as protective factors that change the more likely negative school outcomes into positive ones and consequently enable learners to manifest resilience (Chen and Kaufman, 2010). Chen and Kaufman (2010: 5) say that researchers like Benard (1991), Werner (1990) and Rutter (1987) found that "... resilient learners tend to have a strong internal locus of control." They often display high self-esteem, have positive attitudes towards school and are highly motivated to do well in school work (Westfall and Pisapia, 1994, cited in Chen and Kaufman, 2010). In addition, resilient learners are generally optimistic about their future and maintain a positive vision of a meaningful life despite hardships they face in life (Rutter, 1987; and Worrell, 1996, as cited in Chen and Kaufman, 2010).

Conclusion

In summary, the school dropout and resilience conceptualizations underpinning this study, the theoretical explanations of school dropout predisposition and resilience, and research findings emerging from various studies regarding factors associated with these phenomena have been presented. The next chapter will discuss the research methodology used in the study.
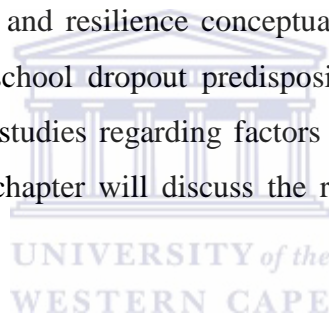
Chapter Three

Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter is about the research methodology that "enabled me to see, evaluate, describe and analyze the reality" (Kamupingene, 2001:91) of the study participants regarding Grade 10 school dropout predisposition and resilience in the two case study schools. The methodology included the research method and tools that were found to be fit in addressing the research problem so that the purpose, aims and objectives of the study could ultimately be achieved (Wiersma, 1975).

The discussion of the methodology begins with a section on the research paradigm followed by one on the research approach. The third section is about the research method whilst the fourth addresses the theoretical framework. Subsequent sections are centred on the sample, data gathering tools, the analysis of data, study limitations, ethical considerations and the concluding part of the chapter.

Interpretive Paradigm

The study was framed by an interpretive research paradigm. Williams (1998) defines this paradigm as a model that provides a conceptual framework for seeing and making sense of the social world through participants' experiences, beliefs, opinions and knowledge about phenomena (school dropout predisposition and resilience in this case). This paradigm enabled me to examine, explain and understand the phenomena as they related to the context in which they were happening (Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit, 2004; Yin, 1986). The studied phenomena were thus "understood through the mental processes of interpretation which were influenced by and interacted with the social contexts" (Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit, 2004:20).

Qualitative Approach

The choice of a research approach was carefully considered for obtaining data that would address the research problem satisfactorily (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001). In my search for a suitable approach in this study, I was therefore guided by the factors such as the purpose

of the study, research questions and the kind of questions I was seeking answers to, (Opie, 2004 and McMillan and Schumacher, 2001). Furthermore, apart from the studies by Flores-Gonzales (2002) and Weis, Farrar and Petrie (1989), it appears from the reviewed studies that most studies on the school dropout phenomenon have mostly been approached quantitatively. This suggested a need for a more descriptive and in-depth approach in order to contribute to a better and deeper understanding of the phenomenon (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001). It was for this reason that this study was qualitative, as explained in more detail below.

With the above in mind, the qualitative approach was deemed to be most appropriate to this study when compared with the quantitative approach. According to Makwinja-Morara (2007:54) the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research approaches is that, 'Whereas quantitative research uses experiments to test hypothetical generalizations, qualitative research encounters the world first hand'.

Furthermore, according to McMillan and Schumacher qualitative research qualitative research:

> …suggests grounded propositions, provides explanations to extend our understanding of phenomena, or promotes opportunities of informed decisions for social action. Qualitative research contributes to theory, educational practice, policy making and social consciousness
>
> (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:393).

Similarly, Merriam (1998:5) describes qualitative research as "an umbrella concept that covers several forms of inquiry helping researchers understand and explain the meanings of social phenomena with little or no disruption of the natural setting".

What the above means is that qualitative researchers "seek insight rather than statistical analysis" (Bell, 1999:7). Qualitative research methods therefore enabled me to obtain information about participants' experiences, beliefs, and perceptions about the school dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena in extensive details in their own words and voices. What was most important to me was to understand how the subjects constructed the meanings and explanations of school dropout predisposition and resilience in the two study locations (Ary, Jacobs & Kazaviah, 1990). To achieve a level of understanding of the participants, I entered their natural settings by employing research techniques such as the case study and interviews which helped elicit meanings, experiences and perceptions of these participants (Bogdan & Bikten, 1992). The qualitative research methods allowed me to obtain a better

understanding of the studied phenomena that may have been difficult to do so quantitatively (Hoeffel, 1997).

Furthermore, as a qualitative researcher, I was "immersed in the situations and phenomena studied" (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:396). My role was an interactive social one in which I only asked questions and recorded the interactions with participants. I remained neutral in the participation (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001) of the study, interviewing and leaving it all to the participants to give their views and opinions about the topics discussed and only intervening when it was necessary or giving direction to get the 'ball rolling'.

The Research Method

The selection of the methods used in this study was "dependent on the aims and objectives of the study, the nature of the phenomena investigated and the underlying expectations" in the study (Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit, 2004:49). Of the five qualitative five traditions identified by Creswell (1998), namely biography, case study, ethnography, grounded theory and phenomenology, the case study and grounded theory methods were viewed to be most appropriate for this study.

The Case Study

As already mentioned above this study was a case study of two secondary schools in which I set out to study the incidence of school dropout predisposition among learners in the two schools of the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia against the resilience of some learners towards school dropout in the same locations in depth. The choice of the case study method was informed by views such as Bell's (1999:10) that "a case study provides an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth within a limited timescale". This was because, being a case study and not an ethnographic one, which should be carried out for a long period of time, this whole study was designed and expected to be completed within a defined short period of time (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010), i.e. two years. In this study I therefore sought to search for a deeper understanding of school dropout predisposition and resilience in the two Kizito Cluster secondary schools within such a short period of time.

In addition, the case study method enabled the development of an in-depth understanding of school dropout predisposition and resilience in the two schools of different circumstances, as

informed by McMillan & Schumacher (2001) and Hitchcock & Hughes in Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007). In this case, the differences in circumstances related to the rural and urban locations of the sample schools. The in-depth understanding was important because it helped with the realisation and gaining of some awareness of the different and related aspects of the school dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena in the two contexts.

Grounded theory

Grounded theory is a method, an approach or a strategy that was used to inductively generate categories and themes from the collected data (Punch, 2009 and Jeggels, 2006) in this study. The study's findings, therefore, emerged through my interaction with the data. The use of grounded theory enabled me to have findings which identified alignments between the study's findings and existing theories, whilst also enabling the identification of theoretical gaps (Creswell, 1998, in Jeggels, 2006) which subsequent studies should address in future. Grounded theory, therefore, was a suitable method to use for my exploratory research study (*ibid*). This, therefore, implies that grounded theory was not used to generate a new theory or theories as this was not its purpose and also due to time factor.

In addition, grounded theory also helped to present a theoretical discussion of the two studied phenomena using themes and conceptual categories that emerged from the analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967 and Creswell, 2005). This was taking into consideration that most theories on school dropout were related to studies undertaken outside Namibia and appeared to have been focussing either on causes or resilience and not both, whilst their focus also appeared to have been either on urban or rural contexts.

The Sample

The study sample comprised two schools and groups of individuals who were all purposively selected on the basis of their experiences (Behr, 1988) about the school dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena in the two case study schools of the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia.

The Caprivi Education Region is one of the thirteen educational regions in Namibia situated in the far north-east of the country. The region is mostly rural and most schools are located far away from most learners' residential areas and there are only a few schools with hostels, making it difficult for some learners to access the schools (Ministry of Education, 2010).

Since the region is the furthest from the capital city, Windhoek, which is the country's administrative headquarter, it seems to be receiving infrastructural development so late as compared to other regions that are close to the headquarter/administration centre. It is because of these factors, amongst others, that it is considered to be one of the regions in the country with the highest school dropout rate.

The Kizito Cluster in which the two secondary schools that were studied are located is part of the Katima Mulilo circuit. The Katima Mulilo circuit has four clusters and Kizito cluster is the only cluster in the circuit and even in the entire region that has a combination of rural and urban secondary schools. The Kizito Cluster comprises six schools; a senior secondary school, one combined school and one upper primary school are located in an urban area whilst two combined schools and one lower primary school are in rural areas.

As already mentioned, the two sample schools were purposively selected based on their rural/urban location (Christensen and Johnson, 2008), not on dropout rates. In addition, they (schools) were also randomly selected based on, to some extent, their easy accessibility from my home. Such contemplation was necessary taking into consideration that data collection was going to involve travelling to the schools on a daily basis for about a month or so. One of the two case study schools was a senior secondary school located in an urban area and the other was a combined school located in the rural areas. The purpose of including a rural and an urban school in the sample was to make a good comparison of the two types of settings which helped develop a better understanding of the dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena in these two settings.

The complexity of the school dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena call for explorations by means of multiple perspectives of these phenomena by different groups of individuals in different sites (urban and rural) (Creswell, 2005). The participating individuals in this study therefore comprised the schools' principals, five teachers in each school, ten resilient/Grade 11 learners (five of them who attended their Grade 10 at school A and the other five who attended Grade 10 at school B the previous year and were all at school B at the time of the study as School A only goes as far as Grade 10). It also comprised of five Grade 10 school dropouts in each school (two males and three females in each school as there were more female dropouts than males in both schools) and the parents of the two groups of children/learners in each school.

The inclusion of the schools' principals was based on the understanding that, by virtue of them being experienced educators and school heads, they were knowledgeable about school issues, and would thus help provide rich data about these phenomena at their schools. Both principals of school A and B in the study were males. The principal of School A had been at that school for three and half years, while that of School B had been at the school for 23 years. For the purpose of anonymity participants' real names were also not used in the study. The Principal of School A is referred to as PSA whilst that of School B is referred to as PSB, respectively.

Only teachers who had been at the school for a period of about 5 years or more were selected as they were more likely to be experienced and knowledgeable about the school dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena (Creswell, 2005 & Christensen and Johnson, 2008) in the school. Though gender balance was sought in the selection of teachers, there were two male teachers and three female teachers selected in both School A and B. This was because there were more female teachers in both schools than their male counterparts, and hence a higher representation of female teachers in the two study locations.

School dropouts and non-school dropouts or resilient learners were also part of this study. The rationale behind the selection of both school dropouts and resilient learners/non-dropouts was to try and find out the differences or similarities in reasons that made the two groups to either stay or drop out of school. School dropouts were referred to as School Dropout 1,2,3,4 and 5 or (SD1, 2, 3, 4 & 5) in short. Their (School dropouts') ages ranged from seventeen (17) to twenty-three (23) years at the time of the study.

Parents or guardians of school dropouts from School A were referred to as Parent or Guardian of School Dropout 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 from School A or (P/GSD1SA, 2, 3, 4 and 5) in short, While parents or guardians of school dropouts from School B were referred to as Parent/ Guardian of School Dropout 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 from School B or (P/GSD1SB, 2, 3, 4 and 5) in short. Three of the parents/guardians who participated in the study were males and two were females in each school. This was because more male parents/guardians of school dropouts in each school availed themselves for the interviews than their female counterparts.

The addition of resilient learners in the study enabled the development of an in-depth understanding of dropout resilience, that is, why these learners were still at school when their friends and/or siblings from similar socio-economic and school experiences had dropped out of school. There were both male and female resilient /Grade 11 learners in the sample. These

learners were in Grade 11 at the time the study was carried out. Two groups of resilient Grade 11 learners were included in the sample. One comprised five learners who attended their Grade 10 at School A and the other comprised five learners who attended Grade 10 at School B the previous year. For anonymity purposes those who attended their Grade 10 at School A the previous year were referred to as Learner 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 from School A or L1SA, L2SA, L3SA, L4SA and L5SA, in short, while those who attended their Grade 10 at School B were referred to as Learner 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 from School B or L1SB, L2SB, L3SB, L4SB and L5SB, in short.

Parents of resilient learners were also purposively selected to help explore what these parents did to help keep their children in school under trying circumstances. Two groups of resilient Grade 11 learners' parents/guardians were also part of the sample. One focus group comprised of five parents/guardians whose children attended their Grade 10 at School A the previous year while the other group of five comprised of those whose children attended Grade 10 at School B. For anonymity purposes the real names of parents/guardians of resilient learners were not used in the study too. Parents/guardians whose children attended their Grade 10 at School A the previous year were referred to as Parent/Guardian of Learner 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 from School A or P/GL1SA, P/GL2SA, P/GL3SA, P/GL4SA and P/GL5SA, in short, while those whose children did their Grade 10 at School B were referred to as Parent/Guardian of Learner 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 from School B or P/GL1SB, P/GL2SB, P/GL3SB, P/GL4SB and P/GL5SB, in short.

Data Gathering:

Data in this study was gathered by means of document analysis and semi-structured interviews.

Document Analysis

Bell (1993) suggests that most educational researches require the analysis of educational documents. This was also found to be the case in this study and, as a result, part of the data were obtained from documents which helped access information about participants in the research and supplement the information that was obtained through interviews (*Ibid*). The educational documents that were analysed were the admission and Grade 10 attendance registers. These documents showed Grade 10 learners who were admitted in preceding five years (2006 to 2010) and those who dropped out of the two secondary schools. The

documents also provided background information on the dropouts and non-dropouts studied, such as age, sex; parental occupation and home address (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001). The data obtained from the documents orientated me to dropout predisposition and resilience at the two schools in the study.

Admission Registers

The admission register in School A did not have all the required information about the school dropouts' names, addresses and their parents' details. These details, such as sex, year of withdrawal and their home addresses, were acquired from the Grade 10 class teachers and learners who knew them. This gave me problems in locating the dropouts and their parents/guardians as; in some cases the information which was obtained from the class teachers and learners was not correct and precise.

Grade 10 Attendance Registers

The Grade 10 attendance registers were studied and analysed in order to obtain data regarding the number of Grade 10 learners (boys and girls) who registered/enrolled and dropped out of school within the period of five preceding years, i.e. from 2006 to 2010. Like it was the case with admission registers, only little information was available and obtained in the attendance registers, particularly in School A.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were purposeful conversations that were conducted between me and the research participants in order to get information (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992) about the school dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena in the two case study schools of the Kizito Cluster from them (study participants).

A guide/interview protocol was used, where questions and topics that were covered were written in the interviews that were carried out with the study participants (Christensen and Johnson, 2008) in the two study locations. As mentioned in the section about grounded theory as one of the research methods used in this study on page 36, grounded theory enabled me to analyse inductively from the collected data (Punch, 2009 and Jeggels, 2006) through the use of semi-structured interview research questions. Though I had some discretion about the order in which questions were to be asked, the questions were a little bit standardized, and probes were provided to ensure that I covered the correct material. In addition, probes were

used to make sure that complete and reliable information was received throughout the interviews. This helped collect thorough information in a manner that was fairly conversational. Semi-structured interviews were also used because this study was aimed at delving deeply about and thoroughly understand the answers provided by participants about the school dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena in the study locations (*Ibid*).

Various strategies were used to enter the 'inner worlds' of the interviewees. For example, close relationships were established with the interviewees through the use of an informal tone. It was hoped that this strategy would help develop participant trust and good rapport between the participants and me and that this would enable participants to respond fully and honestly to questions presented to them (Christensen and Johnson, 2008 and Creswell, 2005). Though the tones of the interviews were informal, I used an interview guide in order to keep the interviews on track and help bring the interviewees back when they went off topic (Christensen and Johnson, 2008). The guide was relatively unstructured in order to allow probing and free expressions of opinions by respondents (Christensen and Johnson, 2008).

Twelve (12) one-on-one interviews were conducted with five school dropouts and their parents, and the two schools' principals because it would have been difficult to interview them (school dropouts and their parents) in groups as they had sensitive issues to disclose (Creswell, 2005).

Four focus group interviews were conducted with different participant groups in the study. One comprised five teachers whilst the second comprised five resilient/Grade 11 learners and their parents from each sample school. Focus group interviews "created a social environment in which group members were stimulated by the perceptions and ideas of each other", and in this way, I was able to increase the quality and richness of my data (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:455). Participants were also enabled to give additional comments beyond what they originally said once they heard other participants' responses (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2008). Group discussions in these interviews also helped provide shared understanding of the school dropout and resilience phenomena amongst participants and helped highlight their shared common interests (Christensen and Johnson, 2008 & Creswell, 2005) about the issues that were investigated.

Interviews with the schools' principals, teachers and the two groups of resilient learners were carried out in the English language, while those (interviews) with school dropouts and their parents and the parents of the two groups of resilient learners were carried out in Silozi, the

lingua franca in the Caprivi Region. This was so because some parents and school dropouts could not express themselves proficiently in the English language. I did all the translation from Silozi to the English language.

The interviews were audio-taped to ensure complete capturing of the verbal interactions and provide material for reliability checks (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001). The tape-recording of the interviews also ensured that important information was not lost (Christensen and Johnson, 208). Though interviews were audio-taped, handwritten notes were also taken to help reformulate questions and probes and record nonverbal communicated information (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001).

The Analysis of Data

The analysis helped convert data into meaningful information or findings (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport 2005). The process involved reducing the volume of raw information, ordering and structuring a mass of data, identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data revealed (*Ibid*).

I used statistical strategies to analyze data collected from attendance and admission registers (Bell, 1999). This involved the determining of dropout averages in each of the schools in preceding 5 years and the determination of averages in dropouts categories such as age group or sex group (*Ibid*).

Grounded theory data analysis process

After all the data was collected and transcribed and I had read all the information and obtained a general sense of its meaning, I began the process of coding, which involved organizing chunks of information into groups or categories based on similarities. After all codes were decided upon, the data was then studied in order to determine what was being revealed as far as the research topic was concerned. I then determined the categories into which the collected information was falling (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2008). I also familiarised myself with the descriptive information that was collected and allowed the categories to emerge as the analysis continued (*ibid*).

Data analysis was thus conducted through a process in which findings were "inductively generated from robust data patterns" (Haig in Ngcobo and Tikly, 2010). This meant focusing on identifying what the study participants valued and felt was important when articulating

their views, opinions and experiences (Ngcobo and Tikly, 2010) about the school dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena in the two study locations.

Categories (Charmaz, 2006) were used to refer to the words of the study participants used during the interviews.

During the analysis of the data the following codes emerged:

- the general terms which were used by the study participants, and

- the participants' original terms that captured their meanings or experiences about school dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena in the two study locations.

Memo-writing was the next stage of the analysis process. This consisted of the writing of systematic notes derived from the participants' own words, feelings and experiences about the studied phenomena.

Study Limitations

The study was only confined to Grade 10 classes in two secondary schools of the Kizito Cluster because of time and financial constraints. There is therefore a need for future studies to explore all school grades, particularly those that were identified as being at high dropout risk by the 2010 Education Report. The constraints also call for studies that will explore other clusters in the educational region of focus and other regions in the country if we are to develop a generalizable understanding of the dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena in Namibia that contributes to theory generation about the phenomena. There is thus a need for future studies to explore the problem at the location of focus in this study quantitatively.

Ethical Considerations

The data in this study included intimate details of the participants. This made it crucial to keep the information as confidential and anonymous as possible by, for example, using codes or pseudo names in place of participants' real names. The use of participants' real names might be damaging to the participants by exposing their problems and experiences about the school dropout phenomenon to the rest of the world (Creswell, 2005 and Lichtman, 2006).

Confidentiality consent (see Appendices N, O and P) was agreed upon with focus group participants. Informed consent from all the research participants was also sought before data gathering (Christensen and Johnson, 2008). In addition, parental/guardian consent was sought in case of minor school learners and dropouts (see Appendix Q for consent form for minors) as they were too young and incompetent to make decisions on their own (Christensen and Johnson, 2008). After gaining parental/guardian consent, I asked for assent from the minors (Ibid). The purpose of the study was explained to them so that they would be able to decide whether to participate in the study or not. Personal consent forms (see Appendix R) were designed for completion by research participants to serve as proof of their consent and for reference purposes in case adverse happenings occur in future in relation to the study (Bell, 1999). Guarantees of privacy and confidentiality were part of consent forms, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage whenever they felt unwilling to continue participating in the study (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2008). Another additional measure to guarantee confidentiality that I took was to store the interview tapes and notes in a safe place for two years before destroying them. I, the researcher, was the only person who had access to the raw data in safe keeping before their destruction (Manzione, 2002).

Ethical clearance (see Appendix G) was acquired from the university whilst permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Caprivi Regional Education Directorate and the schools' principals (see Appendices I, K and M) (Creswell, 2005). Both the permission and ethical clearance ensured that the rights of participants in the study were protected (Ibid). Permission to access, study and analyze educational documents was sought from the schools' principals and teachers beforehand.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the research design and methods used to sketch out the study and collect and analyse data about school dropout predisposition and resilience in the stated context. The sample and selection strategies used to determine the study participants; my role as a researcher, limitations of the study and how ethical issues were approached have also been provided. The next chapter will focus on the presentation of the findings on school dropout and resilience phenomena in School A of the study.

Chapter Four

Dropout predisposition and resilience in "School A"

Introduction

In this chapter the findings about school dropout predisposition and resilience in School A are presented. The discussion begins with a description of School A's historical background. This is followed by a section on the findings about the factors associated with the school's learner dropout predisposition and resilience. The last part of the chapter presents a discussion of the findings of the study in relation to findings and associated theories in other studies.

The analysis of School A's data was derived from the questions that were designed to examine the experiences, perceptions and views (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2008) of the school's principal, teachers, dropouts, resilient learners and parents of the two groups of children (see Appendices A, B, C, D, E and F for the interview questions which were presented to the study participants).

Context and historical background

The purpose of this section is to lay the foundation for the generation of a better understanding of findings about the school's learner dropout predisposition and resilience. "School A" is a pseudonym for the rural school in this study. At the time of the study it offered classes from Grade 1 to 10. It is situated about 21 kilometres east of the Katima Mulilo Township of the Caprivi Region in Namibia. The school was established by the Roman Catholic missionaries in 1944. It is ranked one of the first among the schools which were established in the Eastern Caprivi Zipfel, as the region was formerly known, during the German and South African colonial times.

The school has been headed by fifteen principals from the time of its inception until the time when this study was carried out. It appears that there has been a lack of stability at the school as principals served at the school for only a year or two. However, the principal who headed the school at the time of the study had been at the school since 2006. This suggested a level of stability at the school during this principal's leadership.

In 2010 the school had an enrolment of 488 learners which showed an increase of learner enrolment from 367 in 2003 to 488 learners in 2010. Four additional classrooms were built

during 2003 to 2007 to accommodate the increasing number of learners in the school. In 2010 the school had twenty-one teaching staff comprising ten males and eleven females and also had four female staff responsible for the cleaning of the school. In 2009 one of the community members was elected as its first patron to oversee the development of the school and inspire children with a "culture of learning." Besides the school's principal and two teachers, the school's governing body was composed mainly of members/parents who did not have a Grade 12 qualification and who were small-scale farmers and business owners.

One of the challenges facing the school with regard to learning and teaching, related to long distance commuting of teachers to and from their residential homes located in town which is about 21 kilometres away from the school. The distance made it difficult for the teachers to arrive at work on time. Other challenges facing the school related to the lack of safe drinking water, ablution and toilet facilities, a library, a science laboratory and hostel accommodation, as well as fencing around the school.

Table 1: Enrolment figures of Grade 10 learners in School A: 2006 – 2010

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
2006	27	24	51
2007	24	21	45
2008	23	19	42
2009	21	17	38
2010	23	18	41

As indicated in Table 1, more boys were, on average, enrolled at the Grade 10 level in School A than their female counterparts from 2006 to 2010.

Table 2: Dropout figures of Grade 10 learners in School A: 2006 - 2010

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
2006	1	1	1
2007	1	0	1
2008	1	2	3
2009	1	1	2
2010	1	3	4

Table 2, above, shows an increasing dropout rate in the school's Grade 10 class. Furthermore, although there were more boys than girls enrolled in the school (see Table 1), more girls were dropping out at Grade 10 level in the school than their male counterparts.

Findings

Some of the findings regarding school dropout predisposition and resilience at this school were similar to those of other studies conducted in different locations and at different periods. However, other findings appear to be unique to this school. The differences served to highlight why it had been important to conduct this study, frame it through grounded theory and not rely on findings about contexts that are different from those of focus in this study.

The main factors associated with school dropout predisposition at School A

The following categories emerged from the analysis of the participants' responses about school dropout predisposing factors in School A: individual, school, learners' socio-economic backgrounds and gender related.

Individual learner attributes

The following school dropout factors were identified as the being related to certain individual learner attributes.

Poor academic performance

Poor academic performance appeared to be one of the predisposing factors for school dropout in School A. To arrive at findings about the school's dropout predisposing factors, participants were asked about what they viewed as having been the main causes of learner dropout at the school. When asked to indicate whether academic performance was one of the main causes of school dropout in the school, the school principal and some of the teachers, dropouts and their parents gave the following responses:

The teachers who were of the opinion that the academic performance of learners predisposed them to dropping out of school included **Mrs Pink** who said:

> There are some learners who do not academically do well in school and these tend to be unwilling to come to school as they are afraid or shy of being mocked at by other learners. There are also those who academically do well and these always come to school as they are motivated and therefore want to come and "show" their classmates how good they are
>
> (Other teachers in the focus group showed their agreement to what she was saying by nodding their heads and murmuring 'Uhmm' as she was talking).

Similar to what teachers agreed upon, School Dropout 3 from the school (SD3SA) had this to say:

> I dropped out of school because I realised that I was not academically doing well and this made me repeat nearly every grade. By the time I got to Grade 10 I was already over the age of eighteen years. So, I may say that I dropped out of school due to two reasons, which were poor academic performance and being over-aged.

Gender- related learner attributes

School dropout predisposing factors that were found to relate to gender in School A were as follows:

School dropout predisposing factors among boys

The following emerged as unique predisposing factors to male learner dropout in School A.

Alcohol and drug abuse

Alcohol and drug abuse emerged from the school's principal and the teachers' responses as one of the factors that contributed to school dropout predisposition among boys in School A.

PSA's response was as follows:

We have some learners, more especially boys who indulge themselves in alcohol and drug abuse. Children who abuse alcohol and drugs have absenteeism and disciplinary problems and the school does not tolerate such things. Those who use alcohol and drugs are punished and some consequently drop out of school as they cannot endure the punishments inflicted on them.

Another response that served to illustrate this finding was that **of Mr Samuels**, one of the teachers in the focus group, who responded as follows when the teachers were asked what they thought, were the predisposing school dropout factors among Grade 10 boys in the school:

Older boys in this school, more especially Grade 10 ones, use drugs such as marijuana and also drink the locally brewed beer which is very cheap to buy and acquire around this area (sic). It is difficult for those who take alcohol and drugs to regularly come to school as they cannot "serve two masters" at the same time, which is using drugs and drinking alcohol and coming to school.

Age

Age emerged from the school's principal and the teachers' responses as another cause of school dropout among boys in School A.

In an interview with him, **PSA** said that:

Boys who are already above eighteen years of age, for example, tend to drop out of school than the younger ones as they feel too old to be with younger ones in the same classes and would thus not like to be jeered at by their young classmates, more especially when they are not academically doing well.

Like the PSA, teachers also mentioned age as one of the causes of school dropout among boys in the school. **Mr K** had this to say:

I have had boys who dropped out of school in my classes during the past years because of being over-aged. Older boys tend to drop out of school than the younger ones as they feel too old to be with younger ones in the same classes.

Similar to the PSA and teachers' responses, **SD3SA**'s response when he was asked about the reason for him dropping out of school was:

I dropped out of school because I realised that I felt I was too old for school. Some learners in my class used to laugh at me saying I was very old to be in Grade 10. Since I was also not doing well in my subjects, I then decided to just leave to go and look for a job than wasting my time.

School dropout predisposing factors among girls

This section discusses some of the unique issues that were found to contribute to female learner dropout in School A.

Long walking distance

Long walking distance to and from the school emerged from the school dropouts and their parents' responses as one of predisposing factors of school dropout among girls in School A.

One of the responses that were suggestive of this finding was that of **SD1SA**'s. When she was asked about the cause of her dropout of school at Grade 10 level, she had this to say:

I dropped out of school because the walking distance from home to school and back was too long and dangerous as I was in fear of wild animals and criminals like rapists and assaulters along the way to and from school. That happened during the flood season when people in the area were forced to relocate to higher, dry places which were far away from the school. The school became too difficult for me to access and had to finally drop out since I had been absent from school for so long.

Her guardian, **GSD1SA**, also alluded to the same reason as the cause of his child dropping out of school by saying:

The school is difficult for children to access during the flood season as people have to relocate during those times to get to higher grounds. Girls are the more affected ones as they are more vulnerable to rape, assault and being beaten by gangster boys on their long way to and from school.

Teenage pregnancy

From the school's principal and the teachers' responses, teenage pregnancy emerged as another cause of school dropout among girls in School A. The responses suggested that, though pregnant girls were, by ministerial policy, allowed to continue with their schooling, some chose to drop out of school because of stigmatization. The responses that pointed to this finding included the following by **Mrs Pink** in the focus group interview:

We have an experience where some pregnant learners choose to drop out even when we encourage them to stay. We read and tell them about what the Ministry's policy on teenage pregnancy says … (pause in search for words) but they still drop out. They seem to be in fear or shy of being laughed at by other learners in the school for them to continue with schooling while pregnant. Some even never come back after giving birth though they are given the opportunity to do so.

In addition to what Mrs Pink said, **Mr K** also added by saying that:

… I agree with what Mrs Pink has just said … because girls who fall pregnant usually feel ashamed about it and consequently choose to drop out of school even when they are allowed to continue with their schooling until they are about to deliver and even come back after delivering.

School-related factors

The following school-related factor emerged as being associated with learner dropout predisposition at the school:

Curriculum

The school curriculum seemed to be another predisposing factor of school dropout among Grade 10 learners in School A. When asked whether the curriculum of the school served the interests of all children to find out whether this aspect also contributed to learner dropout at this school, **PSA** responded as follows:

The curriculum of the school does not cover all the needs and interests of all children in the area and the school community is not quite satisfied with it at the moment. So I can say that it is a contributing factor towards learner dropout in this school.

Similarly, teachers were of the opinion that their curriculum was not serving the interests of all children in the school. In support of this view, **Mr Samuels**, one of the teachers in the focus group, responded as follows:

The school has learners with different subject needs and interests. It therefore means that the school is not catering for all of them. For example, subjects such as Accounting, Visual and Performing Arts, Music and Dancing are not part of our school's curriculum. There are learners who are good at such subjects and these are not provided with the opportunity to take such subjects. So I feel that in some way this is a contributing factor towards some learners dropping out of school, particularly those who find the curriculum uninteresting.

(Other teachers in the focus group were also in support of what he said because most of them said 'uhmm' as he was talking).

Socio-economic factors

The following socio-economic factors emerged as factors that had an influence on learner dropout predisposition in School A:

Poverty

Poverty emerged from teachers' responses as one of the categories that had a major influence on learners' dropping out in School A. When asked whether socio-economic factors, poverty in particular, were a contributing factor towards learner dropout in the school, the **PSA** had this to say:

> …we have learners coming from well-up (sic) families who are not serious with schooling in one scenario while in another, there are those from impoverished families who take schooling seriously. However, generally learners who come from poor family backgrounds tend to drop out more than those from richer family backgrounds because poor children usually come to school with empty stomachs. This ultimately makes them to drop out of school to go and look for food or work somewhere out there.

In relation to the same matter, **Mr K**, another teacher participant in the focus group, responded as follows:

> Some girls who come from poor homes are sometimes enticed to get involved in relationships with older men, "sugar daddies", in order to get financial and material support from them. Some poor parents even encourage their daughters to get men in order to get support from them. Consequently this leads such girls to drop out of school to go and make a living out of such "business". I therefore mean that some girls drop out of school due to poverty.

Another teacher in the focus group, **Mrs Brown**, also added on by saying that:

> Boys are also dropping out of school due to lack of financial support or poverty. When some boys are faced with financial difficulties they opt to drop out of school to go and find some work, particularly in farms that produce grapes in the south of the country, which is the largest employer of unskilled labour in the southern part of the country. A few girls who do not get men to marry also opt to go to the farms to seek employment as well.

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(All the teachers in the focus group were in support of what both Mr K and Mrs Brown said as they nodded their heads as these participants spoke).

Consistent with what teachers said, **School Dropout 4** (**SD4SA**) responded as follows when she was asked about the cause of her school dropout:

> I dropped out of school due to lack of financial support to pay for school development fund, examination entry fees and buying school uniforms. My parents were both not working and were too old to work or have alternative means of getting money, so I finally decided to drop out so that I would find a job to feed my parents and siblings.

Similarly, her **guardian** (**GSD2SA**) gave the following response when asked why his child dropped out of school:

> The girl dropped out of school because of lack of finances to pay for everything needed at school. I do not work and therefore cannot afford to feed, clothe and pay for all my children's needs. The school demands a lot of things such as school uniform, books, examination entry fees and school development fund.

The **Parent of School Dropout 4** (**PSD4SA**) also gave the following response:

> I am not employed and have no income generating business. It is difficult for me to cater for all my children's needs. The school demands a lot of things which require money. Already two of my children had dropped out of school due to lack of financial support. My daughter dropped out in Grade 9 a few years ago before the younger brother did in Grade 10.

Similarly **School Dropout 5** (**SD5SA**) also stated that:

> I dropped out of school due to lack of financial support to pay for school development fund, examination entry fees and school uniforms. My parents are not working and are too old to work or have alternative means of getting money, so I finally decided to drop out of school so that I would find a job to feed them and my younger brothers and sisters.

In addition to what others already said about the problem of poverty as a contributing factor towards learner dropout, the **guardian of School Dropout 3** (**GSD3SA**) stated that:

> I only depend on a social grant from the government which is not enough to cater for all the school and basic needs of my three grandchildren that are in my custody. Thus one of my grandchildren dropped out of school due to a financial problem. I really wanted him to continue with his education but could not afford all the things the school demanded like school fees, uniforms and so on.

Peer pressure

Responses from both teachers and parents of school dropouts suggested that peer pressure was another predisposing factor of school dropout among Grade 10 learners in the school. They were all in agreement that there were children who were involved with "wrong groups" and these tended to hate school like their friends did and consequently dropped out of school. For example, **Mrs Pink** had this to say:

> One of the learners in my class dropped out of school last year because he was involved with a wrong group of friends. His two friends were two boys who left school a few years ago and they influenced him to drop out too.

In an interview with **SD5SA**, he said:

> I think I dropped out of school because of peer pressure. When I got to Grade 10 I involved myself in a 'wrong group' of friends who persuaded me to regularly abscond from classes and finally decided to drop out of school.

In addition to what Mrs Pink and SD5SA said, the **PSD5SA** gave the following response when he was asked about the reason that made his child to drop out of school at Grade 10 level:

> My son dropped out of school because of peer pressure. I realised that the boy started getting involving himself with a 'wrong group' of friends who began influencing him to dodge classes and finally dropped out of school like they did. I tried all I could to make him go to school but I eventually failed.

The last question asked in the interviews related to whether there were other factors which participants could think of as school dropout predisposing ones in their school. In response to this question the school's principal and the teachers came up with the following factors:

Lack of parental involvement in education

Responses that came from both the school's principal and the teachers in the interviews suggested that lack of parental involvement was also one of the factors that caused school dropout among some learners in Grade 10 in School A. One of the responses that were suggestive of this view included the **PSA**'s. When asked to say whether the parents of learners were involved in the education of their children and whether that was also one of the predisposing factors of school dropout in learners, he had this to say:

There are children whose parents are not involved in their education and those children tend to drop out of school more than those whose parents are. There are parents and guardians who do not want to attend parents' meetings and even come to school when they are summoned by the school to come and discuss about their child's problems at school, for example.

Teachers also shared similar sentiments to those of the PSA, as conveyed, for example, by **Mrs Pink**'s response on the matter:

Most parents of leaners in this school do not care very much whether their children come to school or not. I think the main reason for parents' lack of involvement in their children's education is that they themselves did not either go to school or, if they did, they did not go too far with schooling. I say so because we have had cases where parents of some children have often refused to come to school to come and attend to their children's disciplinary problems.

Mrs Red also added on what Mrs Pink said by saying that:

Yes, I agree with what my colleague has just said, to add on what she just said; (paused) mostly children of such parents are the ones who tend to give us more absenteeism and disciplinary problems as they have no fear of their parents.

Similar to what teachers said, **SD3SA** said:

The other reason that contributed to my dropping out of school was that my parents were not seriously involved in my education. There were many instances in which I presented them with letters from school summoning them to school but they did not go. This discouraged me and made me feel that may be education was not important and had to finally drop out of school.

Factors associated with dropout resilience in School A

The following emerged as being the factors associated with resilience at the school:

Individual learner attributes

Some of the factors that were found to be associated with learner dropout resilience at this school related to the following individual learners' attributes:

Role models

Availability of role models from whom children imitate good behaviour emerged as one of the strategies that enhanced dropout resilience in learners in School A.

The following response from **PSA** was part of the data that were suggestive of the above finding:

> Resilient learners have personalities they look at as their role models whom they want to be like in future. The role models can be parents, teachers or people around them or in the community they live. These people motivate them to go to school in order to realise the benefits of education in the future.

Similarly, **Mrs Red** had this to say:

> I have realised that learners who are resilient towards school dropout have people who serve as their role models. Such people are either their parents or teachers. Usually these children would want to be like their role models as they admire them for the better positions they hold in the society and would thus like to be like such people when they grow up. This encourages them to go to school and work hard to succeed in life.

In addition to what educators said, **L2SA** responded that:

> I think I am resilient towards school dropout because of my dad who serves as my role model. Since he managed to go through schooling and has a good job, this encourages me to work hard and be like him in future.

Good academic performance
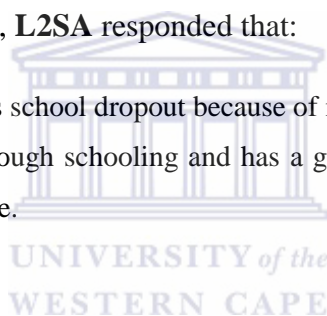
Responses from the PSA, teachers and resilient learners suggested that most learners who did not drop out of school were those who performed well in their subjects. One of the responses suggestive of this finding was the **PSA**'s who said:

> I have realised that learners who are resilient towards school dropout are those who usually do well in their subjects and this serves as their source of encouragement. They are therefore able to continue with schooling and be resilient towards school dropout than those who are academically challenged.

Similar to what the PSA said, **Mrs Red**, one of the teachers in the focus group, also said:

> Those learners, particularly Grade 10s who are good in their school subjects are the ones who are able to persist in their schooling because they are quite sure that … (paused, looking for words) that they will succeed in the end, that is to say, they will pass their grade. Those who are not doing very well are the ones that are always absent and who finally drop out of school because they have no hope in themselves.

(All teachers in the focus group were in support of this as some were saying "Uhmm" and/or "Yes", while others nodded their heads as she was speaking).

In addition, **L3SA** replied:

> I am resilient towards school dropout because I do well in all school subjects and this serves as a source of encouragement and motivation to me.

School-related factors

Another factor that was found to be contributing to resilience for some learners in School A related to the school's practices.

Teaching of the Life Skills subject

The teaching of the Life Skills subject to Grade 10 learners also emerged as another factor that was seen as contributing to resilience in Grade 10 learners in the school.

Responses that demonstrated this were those of the school's principal and the teachers. The **PSA** said this in this regard:

> Life Skills program/subject is offered to learners in the school to help in teaching them about career opportunities and life in general. In that course learners are sensitised about the social challenges they might face if they do not receive education. They are even educated or warned about the social ills such as HIV and AIDS which may be the consequence of alcohol and drug abuse which non-school going children involve themselves in and consequently find themselves trapped in.

Similar to the PSA's response, **Mrs Pink** said that:

> In Life Skills children learn about how to behave in a normal way both at school and home. They are also educated about the social ills such as alcohol and drug abuse and HIV and AIDS which may spoil their future and therefore learn to be punctual at school and be resilient towards school dropout.

Family-related factors

The following was identified as being a factor related to family matters that contributed to school dropout resilience in some of the learners in the school.

Parental involvement and support

Parental involvement and support towards the education of learners also came out as a factor contributing towards resilience in Grade 10 children in the school. Expressive of this finding were a number of responses. The **PSA** said:

> Parents/guardians of resilient learners are involved in the education of their children; these children take their education seriously because they have both financial and moral support from their parents. Such parents also do come to school to have a look at their children's work and discuss their school/learning-related problems and how to go about solving them with teachers, and by also attending parent meetings where school-related issues are discussed and resolved. We are always encouraging parents/guardians to get involved in the education of their children and this is helping us a lot in curbing school dropout among our leaners.

PL2SA also responded as follows:

> I always go to school to have a look at my child's work and discuss his school/learning-related problems with the teachers, and also attended some parents' meetings where school-related matters are discussed and resolved. I also usually help my child with his school home works and assignments. I also make sure that I provide my child with all the necessary support she needs at school - i.e. in terms of payment of school development fund and buying the school uniform, books and stationery. I also always advise him about the value of education and how it can change the family's economic status.

Similarly, **PL4SA** responded as follows:

> I always attend parents' meetings where we discuss about our children's learning problems and how we can solve them together with their teachers. Though I am not employed I ensure that my children have food to eat and clothes to wear; I provide them with nearly everything they need at school and home. I strive to do some piece jobs in order to be able pay for their school development fund and also advise them to be serious with schooling so that they can live a better life in future.

In addition to what teachers and parents said, **L4SA** responded that:

> Parents are involved in my education through giving me financial and moral support. They also regularly come to school to have a look at my work and discuss my school/learning-related problems with teachers.

Strategies used by resilient learners and their parents to cope with schooling challenges

Learner strategies

When interviewed, resilient learners gave the following as the strategies which they used to cope with school dropout predisposing challenges:

Avoiding negative forms of friendship

Avoiding negative forms of friendship emerged as a strategy which resilient learners used to overcome schooling challenges. Some of the responses that pointed to this finding were:

L2SA replied that:

> I always ensure that I do not mingle with some friends or relatives who dropped out of school or those with bad behaviour and do not attend school regularly. I do not want them to influence me to hate education and eventually drop out of school. I want to have a bright future.

Similar to L2SA's response, **L4SA** responded that:

> I have no close friends and this is because I do not want to be influenced by friends to have a hatred of school. Some learners can encourage you to start smoking dagga and drink alcohol and these ultimately lead to school dropout. My dream is to become a better person in future.

Parental strategies

Interviews with parents of resilient learners revealed the following as the strategy which they used to help their children deal with school dropout predisposing challenges:

Reprimand children for absenteeism and bad attitude towards schooling

Responses which suggested that parents of resilient learners relied on reprimanding their children for absenteeism and bad attitude towards schooling to help the children overcome school dropout predisposing challenges included:

PL2SA said:

> I do not condone school absenteeism in my children and do reprimand them for being from school without reasons. I also scold them when they seem to have a negative attitude towards schooling. I want them to have a bright future.

Similarly, PL3SA said:

> I do not allow my child to be absent from school when she is not sick. I also scold her when she seems to have a negative attitude towards schooling because I want her to pass and even get university.

Discussion

In this section the discussion provides links between findings in this study and findings in other studies on similar subjects. In addition, the discussion also links the findings to extant theories where such links exist. The purpose of the discussion is to provide further insight into the phenomena of focus in this study (Birks & Mills, 2011), namely: school dropout predisposition and resilience.

The discussion of predisposing factors

The following discussion relates to the relationship between findings in this study and related findings in other studies, together with related theories accessed from the reviewed literature.

Individual learner attributes

The factor below was identified as a predisposing one towards school dropout in some learners in School A.

Poor academic performance

As indicated above, one of the findings in the study was that the performance of learners affected their school attendance and consequently contributed to learner school dropout. Similarly, Colclough et al., (2000) in Ananga (2011)'s study on dropping out of school in Southern Ghana also found that poor academic performance is connected to higher school dropout rates in most children.

These findings relate to Flores-Gonzalez (2002)'s deficit theory, whose claim is that low academic achievers lack motivation and involvement in school activities. As a result, they frequently absent themselves from school and consequently end up dropping out, getting suspended or dismissed from school (Flores-Gonzalez, 2002).

Gender-related individual learner attributes
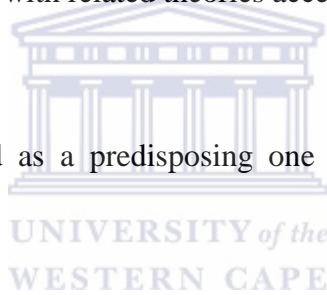
The discussion in this section is about the link between emergent information from literature and the finding that there were school dropout predisposing factors that related to a particular gender only and not to another:

School dropout predisposing factors among boys

The following factors were found to be the ones predisposing boys to drop out of school in School A:

Alcohol and drug abuse

One of the findings was that the older boys who made use of drugs and alcohol ultimately dropped out of school as they could not 'serve two masters', i.e. schooling and alcohol and drug abuse. Similar to this finding McCaffrey, Pacula, Han and Ellickson's (2008) study on marijuana use and high school dropout found that alcohol and drug abuse, particularly marijuana, which is mostly used by adolescents as it is more easily accessible to them than other types of drugs affects school performance or dropout status, as alcohol and drugs are known to impair the cognitive functioning of a person.

There is no link between this finding and theories in the reviewed literature. This suggests the need for the generation of a new theory to better explain the finding in relation to other findings in the study.

Age

Findings in this study were that over-age was one of the predisposing factors to school dropout among boys in the school. This finding is similar to findings in Akyeampong and Ananga's (2010) study in which researchers from the Consortium for Research on Education Access, Equity and Transitions (CREATE) in Ghana found over-age as one of the causes of school dropout in southern Ghana. The possible explanation about this tendency is that over-age boys are mostly given little attention in classes and, therefore, end up feeling unwanted and consequently choose to drop out of school.

There is also no link between this study and the findings in the reviewed literature and the revised theories so far discussed, thus suggesting the need for the generation of new theory to better explain the stated findings.

School dropout predisposing factors among girls

The following were the factors that were found to predispose girls to drop out of school in School A:

Long walking distances

Long walking distances to school was found to be one of the reasons for dropping out of school mostly for girls. Consistent with this finding is what was found in Hellmann's study (1940) on causes of school dropout in Johannesburg amongst the then, so-called, 'Bantu' youth. The finding in that study was that parents sent children to rural areas, more especially girls, whom they considered more vulnerable and exposed to the contagion and dangers of the urban environment, such as teenage pregnancy. The problem encountered by these children in most cases related to the long distances between the schools and the girls' adopted homes. The demands of walking the long distances consequently made some of the girls start absenting themselves from school and ending up being either dismissed or dropping out of school (*ibid*). Similarly, the Ministry of Education of Namibia's National Report on educational matters states that most learners in the country are forced to walk long distances to get to schools due to the "... long distances between most learners' residential areas and where the nearest school is situated and insufficient hostel facilities/dormitories at most schools, particularly in rural areas" (Ministry of Education, 2010: 3).

There appears to be no link between the above findings, including this study's with any of the reviewed theories so far and this suggests the need for the generation of a new theory in this regard.

Teenage pregnancy

This study found that though pregnant girls were, by ministerial policy in Namibia, allowed to continue with their schooling, some chose to drop out of school because of fear of stigmatization. Article 15(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia stipulates that, "Children shall have the right from birth … (to) be cared for by their parents." In relation to this, the Ministry of Education's teenage pregnancy policy states that:

> ... girls (are) (brackets mine) to return to school shortly after giving birth, … the learner-parent and her parents, primary caretaker or guardian (are to) (brackets mine) provide a signed statement with an exposition on how the infant will be cared for and an undertaking to maintain open communication with the school (Ministry of Education, 2010:3).

Similar to this finding, Weis, Farrar and Petrie's study (1989) that was conducted in the USA on why some students dropped out of school, also found that girls dropped out of school mainly because of pregnancies. These authors claim that once a girl is pregnant she no longer continue with schooling either because the school rules and regulations do not allow pregnant girls to be in school, or the girl feels insecure and ashamed to continue with classes because she is afraid that her friends will laugh at her. In addition, Ananga's study (2009) of typologies of school dropout in rural Ghana also found pregnancy to be one of the main causes of school dropout among learners, particularly girls, in rural Ghana.

There also appears to be no links between the above findings with any of the reviewed theories so far and this suggests the generation of a new theory in this regard.

School-related factors

The following were the factors that emerged as school-related factors:

Curriculum

The school's curriculum was found to be a contributing factor towards dropout predisposition at the school. The finding was that this was particularly the case amongst those learners who found the curriculum inadequate, non-inclusive and even boring. Consistent with this finding is a finding in Redmond's study (2011) that was conducted in 114 schools in Latin America to find out the causes of high school dropout among Hispanic learners. A finding in the study was that one of the reasons learners dropped out of school was because of the curricula of their schools which were not stimulating for them. Similarly, one of the findings by Flores-Gonzalez (2002) was that a learner may drop out of school because of the inability of the school to provide enough educational opportunities and experiences to the learner that would enable or make him/her like to stay in school. A learner, for example, who is not having a close relationship with teachers, or is not given an opportunity to partake in extracurricular activities, or who does not also experience schooling or the curriculum as challenging, is more likely to drop out of school than the one who finds schooling/curriculum exciting and challenging. In other words, a learner who finds the curriculum or schooling boring and unchallenging will have the street-kid identity dominant over the school-kid identity and consequently choose to drop out of school (Flores-Gonzalez, 2002). Conversely, a learner who finds the curriculum/school life more challenging and interesting will have the school-kid identity dominant over the street-kid identity and be able to stay in school (*ibid*).

The above findings relate to Flores-Gonzalez's structural theory (2002) which states that certain school structural traits, such as the size of the school and a boring curriculum, cause low achievement, particularly among racial/ethnic minorities of low-income backgrounds. For example, large schools usually have many disciplinary problems as a result of an uninteresting curriculum and few opportunities for learner involvement in school programmes of interest to them or those which relate to their talents. Consequently some learners choose to drop out of school because they find schooling/curriculum discriminatory and unrewarding while it is, on the other hand, more demanding and exerts pressure on them to the extent that they are unable to deal with it successfully.

Socio-economic factors

The following discussion relates to the link between the findings about socio-economic factors associated with school dropout predisposition in School A and findings in related studies, together with theories that have been generated on the subject.

Poverty

Findings in this respect indicated that learners who came from poor family backgrounds were more predisposed to dropping out of school than those from richer family backgrounds because poor children usually go to school with empty stomachs, torn clothes or without school uniforms. Conditions of such nature ultimately make them drop out as they become afraid of being jeered at by their school/classmates. Others choose to drop out to go and look for food or work somewhere out there. These findings are consistent with Makwinja-Morara's findings on the study of the causes of female dropouts in Botswana. Her study reported that learners from poor family backgrounds have shown to have higher dropout rates than those from richer ones (Makwinja-Morara, 2007). Many learners drop out because of the compounded effects of poverty, coming from broken homes, having been held back or being slothful (Sutherland, 1999, as cited in Makwinja-Morara, 2007). Similarly, Hellmann's study (1940) on school dropouts in Johannesburg reports that the category of school dropouts who left school in Johannesburg because of poverty formed about 20% of the total number of school dropouts. The inability to pay school fees and other school expenses caused school dropout among most children (Hellmann, 1940). In addition, schools usually demand that children wear school uniforms which might not be affordable by poor children. Not only do they need children to wear school uniforms, but they also require them to have sportswear and other clothing for certain school occasions (Hellmann, 1940). All these factors put a

burden on poor children. Even when the school would make exceptions for poor children, the children's psychological reactions, their feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem, cannot easily be discounted (*ibid*).

These findings are linked to both, the reproduction and the resistance/oppositional theories. The reproduction theory states that schools are instruments of the dominant group designed to foster low achievement among racial/ethnic minority and low-income students and in this way replicate and re-create social relations. Schools are said to replicate the structure of class relations in two ways: firstly, by rewarding knowledge of the dominant culture and, secondly, by providing different kinds of education on the basis of class, race and gender. Scholars like Bourdieu (in Galloway, 1985) argue that schools hide the advantage of schooling for upper-class students through the guise of meritocracy. This practice does not acknowledge that upper-class students possess the cultural capital valued at school. Schools further transform the cultural capital into economic capital as knowledge of the dominant culture leads to better performance, which in turn results in access to better schools and universities. Eventually these upper-class children end up in well-paid jobs reserved for individuals who completed schooling.

On the other hand, the resistance or oppositional theory states that learners, particularly those from low-income groups, develop identities in opposition to school culture when they believe that high school completion will not improve their socio-economic status, or that the behaviours required for academic achievement are not compatible with their racial/ethnic or class identity.

Peer pressure

Peer pressure emerged as another dropout predisposing factor among boys and girls in the school. Similarly, findings in Clark's study (cited in Chen and Kaufman, 2010), was that a child who befriends those who like schooling is more likely to like schooling too and is less likely to drop out of school. Conversely, children who befriend themselves with those who dislike schooling are more likely to dislike schooling and are more likely to drop out of school in the end. Patchen (1982) in Chen and Kaufman (2010) also found that children with peers who like schooling spend most of their time on school work and attend classes more regularly than children who have peers who dislike schooling.

There appears to be no link between the above findings and the reviewed theories so far and this calls for generation of new theory to fill this gap.

Family-related factors

The following discussion is about the relationship between findings about school dropout predisposing factors related to family matters in this study and information from literature about this matter.

Lack of parental involvement and support

The finding was that one of the school dropout predisposing factors at the school related to parents who were not involved in their children's education. Such parents did not motivate their children or did not show any interest in the education of their children. Makwinja-Morara's (2007) study on female dropouts in Botswana confirms this study's finding in that it found that in Botswana there were generally very few parents who were involved both in their children's education and social life. Some of the parents did not attend parents' meetings and, thus, never had any knowledge of how their children were performing in school (*ibid*).

There also seems to be no link between the above findings and the reviewed theories so far and this, too, calls for generation of new theory to fill the gap.

Main factors contributing to resilience

The following section relates to a discussion about the main factors found to be associated with resilience in School A:

Learners' individual attributes

The following personal attributes were identified:

Role models

As indicated in the section on findings above, one of the findings of this study is that resilient learners have people they look at as their role models whom they want to be like in future. These people motivate them to go to school in order to realise the benefits of education in the future. Similar to this finding, Hupfeld's study (2007) on resilience skills and dropout prevention in the United States, found the following:

In addition to providing academic and emotional support, teachers play an important role in modelling resilient behaviours. They can show students that adversity is temporary and can be overcome. By displaying excitement about learning and building on student interests, they show students that internal motivation leads to fulfilling knowledge and skills. By engaging in goal-oriented behaviours, such as identifying goals, making plans, and providing feedback, they provide models of these processes for their students. By having high expectations for themselves and their students, they begin the self-fulfilling prophecy of believing in self-efficacy

(Hupfeld, 2007:3).

In addition to what Hupfeld's study (2007) found out, Werner (1990), as cited in Chen and Kaufman (2010), also found that:

Among the most frequently encountered positive role models in the lives of resilient children, outside of the family circle, is a favourite teacher who is not just an instructor for academic skills but also a confidant and positive model for personal identification.

(2010: 5-6)

Similar findings also emerged in studies by Geary (1988); and by Pisapia and Westfall (1994) (cited in Chen and Kaufman, 2010). Findings by these researchers were that resilient learners usually relate with teachers who like, listen and talk to them about their learning difficulties, and even offer personal help. To sum up, motivation to go to school, good attitudes toward schooling, together with a school environment where learners can associate with helpful, loving and knowledgeable teachers, may play an important role in making learners resilient towards school dropout predisposing factors.

There seems to be no link between the above findings and resilience theories that were reviewed in this study and this, therefore, calls for a generation of new theory.

Good academic performance

The findings of the study in School A revealed that, in most cases, resilient learners did well in their subjects and this encouraged them to continue with schooling. Consistent with this study's finding, findings in Hupfeld's study (2007) on resilience skills and dropout prevention in the United States were that students who were academically struggling or were receiving low or failing grades, who scored poor results on tests, repeated grades, and who fell behind on credits required for graduation were more likely to drop out. Conversely, those

who were doing well academically or were receiving high passing grades or scored excellent marks on tests and did not repeat grades were more likely to be resilient towards school dropout.

There are links between the above findings and the entity theory of self-intervention which states that when learners have the belief that intelligence is alterable (called the "entity theory" of self), it leads them to make an effort and face challenges. Learners who have an entity theory of self-intervention are more likely to exhibit academic improvement and inclination. They also display complete commitment in learning and ultimately perform well in their school work.

School-related factors

The following factors were found to contribute to resilience in School A and were discussed in relation to the reviewed literature.

Teaching Life Skills

This study found that the Life Skills subject/programme encouraged children to pursue careers in their lives and also warned them of the social challenges they might face in life if they did not get education. Similar to this finding, Hupfeld's study (2007) on resilience skills found that the presence of a caring and supportive teacher in a school can make a difference to a learner. The support available in schools, where the teacher provides opportunities for learners to plan for and work towards academic success, fosters their resilience towards school dropout.

These findings are also linked to the entity theory of self-intervention which, amongst others, states that resilient learners are of the belief that school dropout predisposing factors are alterable and easily modified through support from their parents and teachers. Consequently, their opportunity for succeeding in education is intensified.

Family-related factors

The following factor was found to be a family-related one that contributed to dropout resilience in some learners in School A:

Parental involvement and support

It was evident from this study's findings that parents of resilient learners were always involved in the education of their children. When this is the case, children take their education seriously as they are being motivated and advised by parents to go to school to realise the ultimate value of education. Consistent with this finding, findings in Chen and Kaufman's study (2010) on risk and protective factors on students dropping out of high school were that:

> Compared with parents of dropouts, parents of resilient students not only have higher educational expectations for their child, but also show more behaviour that support child's education, such as talking with the child about school-related matters, monitoring the child's school work and progress, and setting up the rules about learning and school engagement. These results suggest that resilient students and dropouts live in quite different family environments, though both families tend to be in low SES. The structured, cohesive, and supportive family environments that resilient students have may have a protective function that keeps them from dropping out of school

<div align="center">(2010: 8).</div>

Felsenstein in Reid (1987) also says that:

> Not only do parents have a right to be involved in the education of their children, but their positive involvement is a source of great strength to schools in their desire to understand their pupils, to link with their communities and to establish the sort of partnership which is increasingly recognised as of benefit to all concerned.

<div align="center">(1987: 98)</div>

The above findings are also linked to the entity theory of self-intervention which states that resilient learners are of the belief that school dropout predisposing factors are alterable and easily modified through parental support and involvement in the education of their children. Consequently, when this is the case, children's opportunities for succeeding in academic work are intensified.

How resilient learners and their parents deal with school dropout predisposing challenges

None of the findings that emerged in this study regarding strategies used by learners and parents to deal with school dropout predisposing challenges were similar to findings in studies presented in the literature reviewed in this study.

Conclusion

The factors that were found to be associated with school dropout predisposition in School A included school-related aspects such as the curriculum; individual attributes such as poor academic performance; socio-economic backgrounds such as poverty and peer pressure; and gender-related factors such as alcohol and drug abuse and age in boys and long walking distance and teenage pregnancy in girls. There appeared to be differences between the school dropout predisposing factors that were provided by the teachers and those that were provided by the school dropouts. For example, teachers mentioned the curriculum, alcohol and drug abuse and early marriages as some of the factors that predisposed learners to drop out of school but none of the dropouts or their parents referred to these factors. These might have just been unfounded teachers' speculation about what they thought were the factors that predisposed leaners to drop out of school. However, on the other hand, dropouts might have found it rather too embarrassing to mention such factors as having predisposed them to dropping out of school.

Factors associated with resilience included individual attributes such as role modelling and good academic performance; school-related factors such as teaching of Life Skills; and family-related factors such as parental involvement in the education of children.

Some of this study's findings link with existing school dropout predisposing theories whereas some do not and this calls for generation of new theories. School dropout predisposition factors in this study which were found to have links with existing theories are: poor academic performance, curriculum and poverty. School dropout predisposition factors in this study which were found to have no links with existing theories are: alcohol and drug abuse and age in boys; long walking distances and teenage pregnancies in girls; and peer pressure and lack of parental involvement and support in the education of children in both sexes.

The resilience enhancing factor in this study that was found to have links with existing resilience theories are: good academic performance, teaching of the Life Skills subject, and parental involvement and support. The resilience enhancing factor in this study that was found to have no link with existing resilience theories is the availability of role models.

Avoiding forming friendships with learners who have negative attitudes towards schooling was found to be a strategy which resilient learners in School A used to overcome school dropout predisposing challenges. Scolding children for absenteeism and bad attitude towards

schooling was found to be a strategy which parents of resilient learners used to help their children overcome schooling challenges. None of the studies in the reviewed literature had this finding. The differences in the findings serve to highlight the importance of grounded theory in this study.

The next chapter presents the findings and discussion on school dropout predisposing and resilience factors in School B.

Chapter Five

Learner dropout predisposition and resilience in "School B"

Introduction

In this chapter the findings about school dropout predisposition and resilience in School B are presented. The discussion begins with a description of School B's historical background. This is followed by a section on the findings about the factors associated with the school's learner dropout predisposition and resilience. The last part of the chapter presents a discussion of the findings in the study in relation to extant theories and other aspects that emerged from the reviewed literature, such as findings from related studies.

Context and historical background

"School B" is a pseudonym for the urban senior secondary school. The school is offering Grade 8 to 12 and is situated within the Katima Mulilo Township area. Though the school is situated within the township area, there are some shanty towns and villages which are located a few kilometres away from the town and the school from where some of the school's learners come.

The school was founded in 1964 under the Roman Catholic Church missionary administration and was partly funded by the government. It mainly served as a girls' school before the independence of Namibia in 1990. Furthermore, at the time of the study, the school still had hostel accommodation for girls only. Only a few boys were incorporated into the school and this still looked to be its culture as, at the time of this study, there were more girls than boys (see Table 1 on Grade 10 learner enrolment below) in the school, even after it became a government school after the country's independence.

The school had an enrolment of 429 learners with twenty-five teaching staff, nine males and sixteen females. It also had four non-teaching staff members comprising one male and three females responsible for the cleaning of the school. School board members comprised four staff members (the school's principal, a nun and two teachers), five parents, one church reverend and one learner (chairperson of LRC).

It appears that there had been a level of stability within the school, as deduced from the small number of principals that had been responsible for running the school since its establishment

in 1964 up to the time of this study. The first principal administered and managed it for eighteen years, i.e. from 1964 to 1982. The second one administered the school for five years, i.e. from 1983 to 1987, whilst the third started in 1988 and was still at the school at the time of data gathering for this study in 2011.

Table 1: Enrolment figures of Grade 10 learners in School B: 2006 - 2010

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
2006	31	62	93
2007	23	59	82
2008	25	64	89
2009	27	56	83
2010	22	59	81
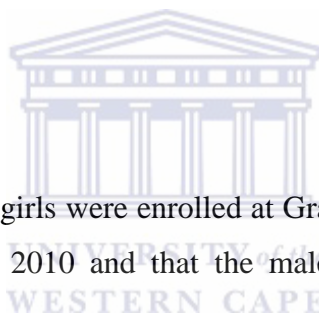
The above table shows that more girls were enrolled at Grade 10 level in School B than their male counterparts from 2006 to 2010 and that the male enrolment appeared to be on a continual decline over this period.

Table 2: Dropout Figures of Grade 10 Learners in School B: 2006 - 2010

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
2006	0	1	1
2007	0	1	1
2008	1	2	3
2009	1	1	2
2010	0	0	0

The above table shows that on average more girls dropped out of school at the Grade 10 level in the school than their male counterparts from 2006 to 2010. In addition, school dropout

rates for both sexes seemed to have been decreasing after 2008 in relation to School A's whose dropout rate did not show a significant decrease up to the time of this study. This shows that School B seems to be an exception in relation to high dropout rates that are a matter of concern in School A and other Namibian schools at Grade 10 level, as indicated in the 2007 EMIS Report (EMIS, 2007 in Ministry of Education, 2010).

Findings

Whilst some of the findings in this study were similar to those of other studies conducted in different locations and periods, other findings appear to be unique to this school. This also serves to highlight why it was important not to rely on findings, and theories, about contexts that are different from those under focus in this study.

Dropout predisposing factors at School B

The discussion about the predisposing factors that were found to be associated with learner dropout at School B is presented in four categories that emerged from the analysis of data as being the main causes of school dropout at the school, namely: school related, individual, socio-economic and gender-related factors.

School-related factors

The following were found to be school-related dropout predisposing factors in School B:

Curriculum

The curriculum appeared to be one of the school dropout predisposing factors among Grade 10 learners in the school. Responses that were suggestive of this finding included the **school principal**'s (**PSB**'s) response when asked about whether the curriculum of the school had a role on learner dropout:

> The curriculum of the school seems not to be serving all the interests and needs of the children from all socio-economic backgrounds. This is so because, for example, there are some children from other regions of the country who usually relocate to the Caprivi Region with their parents due to employment opportunities. These learners do not speak Silozi; a mother language used in the region, but they are forced to take it at school because the school has a two language curriculum - i.e. Silozi and English. Their incompetence in the Silozi First Language which is made compulsory in their grading to subsequent grades consequently forces them to drop out of school as they cannot easily and quickly master the language.

Similar to the principal, the teachers were also of the opinion that their school was not serving the interests and needs of children from all socio-economic backgrounds.

Mr Kashuto, one of the teachers in the focus group, had this to say:

> Some pre-vocational subjects like, bricklaying, welding and so on, are not offered in the school. Some learners seem to be gifted and interested in doing these subjects, but are forced to take the ones that are available. The issue of making English and Mathematics compulsory in the grading of learners as pass subjects (sic) is also problematic as not all children are good at those subjects. In addition - the extra-curricular activities that are offered in the school do not cater for the disabled learners.

> (Other teachers in the focus group showed their agreement with what he was saying by nodding their heads as he was talking).

Individual learner attributes

The following attributes were identified as characterising a number of learners who had dropped out at this school:

Poor academic performance

Similar to findings in School A, poor academic performance also appeared to be one of the predisposing factors of school dropout in School B.

When asked whether poor academic performance was one of the causes of school dropout in the school, **PSB**'s response was:

> Yes - the poor performance of learners affects their school attendance. Most learners who are not doing well in their subjects tend to absent themselves from school because they cannot cope up with the amount of work they get at school. This in the end forces them to drop out of school.

Like the PSB teachers were also of the opinion that the poor academic performance affected learners' school attendance and ultimately learner dropout.

One of the responses that were suggestive of this finding was that of **Mrs Peace**, one of the teachers in the focus group:

> Learners who do not do well in their subjects usually drop out of school to go and do something worthwhile, like finding a job than wasting time failing in school. In addition, poor

performance in school makes some learners feel bad about it as their friends jeer at them all the time they fail a test or an examination.

The following response by **School Dropout 4 from School B** (**SD4SB**) was also indicative of the above finding:

> I dropped out of school because I was not academically doing well at school and therefore found that I was just wasting time. I then thought of dropping out to just go and start a small business.

The **Parent of School Dropout 3** (**PSD3SB**) also responded as follows:

> My daughter was not academically doing well; this made her repeat almost every grade at school and was a bit older than her classmates when she got in Grade 10. This made her lose interest in schooling and finally decided to drop out of school and do a small business at home.

Age

Similar to findings in School A, responses from the participants indicated that age was another predisposing factor to learner dropout in School B. However, this factor appeared not to be related to learner sex, as was the case in School B.

One of the responses that were suggestive of this finding was given by **Ms Isabel**, one of the teachers from the focus group:

> Children who are older than sixteen years, for example, usually feel bad about their age as they find themselves in the same class with the younger ones. This consequently makes them to choose to drop out of school than being laughed at by the younger ones, more especially when they are not doing well in their subjects.

> (All the teachers from the focus group appeared to be in support of this statement as they nodded their heads while she was saying this).

An example of other responses that were of similar opinion to those of the teachers was that of **SD3SB**:

> I dropped out of school because I realised that I was already over the Grade 10 age limit. I was not also academically doing well; this made me repeat almost every grade and consequently was above 16 years when I got in Grade 10. I then finally decided to drop out of school to go and start a small business at home than wasting time in school.

Gender-related individual learner attributes

As in School A, there were school dropout predisposing factors that related to a particular learner sex only and not to another which were also identified in School B:

School dropout predisposing factors among boys

The following were found to be one of the main predisposing factors of school dropout among boys in School B.

Alcohol and drug abuse

Alcohol and drug abuse appeared to be one of the school dropout predisposing factors among boys in School B.

One of the responses that suggested this was **PSB**'s:

> We have had some boys in the school that used alcohol and drugs and our rules and regulations do not allow learners to take alcohol and drugs … be it in the school premises or outside school. Usually those who use such substances absent themselves from school … are very difficult to handle in classes … especially by our female teachers and consequently end up either suspended or drop out as they cannot cope up with the pressure we give them here.

Responses from teachers indicated that they shared the same sentiment in this regard as that of PSB, as illustrated, for example, by **Ms Isabel**'s response:

> Most boys … who come from shanty places where alcohol and drug abuse is a common practice … tend to drink alcohol and use drugs. This makes them absent from school on regular basis and finally decide to drop out from school. In addition, this school is situated at the banks of the river and it is close to the villages of the neighbouring country … where drugs like marijuana are easily accessible. Most boys engage themselves in drug trafficking activities for a living. This also makes them usually absent from school as they have to be sometimes away from school for a couple of days in search for marijuana. Consequently they decide to drop out because of fear of punishment at school when they come back.

In addition, **Mrs Peace** said:

> Boys mostly involve themselves in alcohol and drug use at an adolescent stage and this result in school dropout once it graduates into something done regularly. An alcohol or drug user will always be absent from school and finally drop out of school because of the amount of

pressure he will get from teachers and perhaps parents. I have had one boy … for example … in my class who had left school due to drinking alcohol a few years ago.

(In agreement to what Mrs Peace was saying some of the teachers were nodding their heads and another one (**Mr D**) even interrupted by saying, 'yes that is really happening with some boys here … not only in Grade 10 but in other grades too').

Bullying

From the responses that the school's principal and the teachers gave, it appeared that bullying was one of the school dropout predisposing factors among boys in School B. The following were some of the responses which pointed to this finding:

For example, **PSB**'s response was:

> Boys … especially those who seem to have reached the adolescence stage are too bully. This is not allowed in the school and therefore those who commit it are punishable. Normally once a learner finds punishment stiff, he may decide to drop out than going through it. This means that some boys who are bully dropped out of school as they did not want to be punished and this might have been due to the fact that they found punishment harsher than dropping out of school. In most cases … these boys do not come from homes parented by the fathers who would be able to discipline them when they seemed difficult to handle.

Teachers also shared the same sentiment with their principal in that regard. **Mr D**'s response illustrated this:

> We do not condone bullying in our school and it is therefore a punishable offence. When a learner finds punishment difficult to cope up with … he may decide to drop out of school than being punished.

Lack of hostel accommodation

Lack of hostel accommodation appeared to be another contributing factor towards school dropout among boys in School B. The finding was suggested by responses from both the school's principal and teachers in the focus group.

PSB responded as follows:

> Our school has no hostel accommodation for boys … they have to commute from home to school and back. Some boys' homes are far away from the school and this makes them to drop out of school as they find it difficult to walk to and from school every day.

When probed further to find out whether some of the learners who dropped out of the school due to long walking distance enrolled at other schools, **PSB** replied that:

> No, most of those learners who dropped out of this school never enrolled at any other school since this school is the only one which is a bit closer to their homes.

Similarly, **Ms Ann** said:

> Since there is no hostel accommodation for boys, they have to walk from home to school and back. Some boys come from homes that are far away from the school. This consequently makes them to drop out of school.

Mr D added on what Ms Ann said by saying:

> Absenteeism and late coming is more prevalent in boys than girls in this school because most boys come from afar and that makes them come late to school or even absent themselves from school and eventually drop out of school.

The following response from **SD3SB** also showed a similar sentiment to those given above by educators:

> There is no hostel accommodation for boys at the school and our home is about four kilometres or so from it … I had to daily walk from home to school and back. That made me drop out of school as I found it difficult to walk to and from school every day.

School dropout predisposing factors among girls

The following factors emerged from participants' responses as school dropout predisposing factors among girls in School B.

Early marriages and involvement in sexual activities with older men

The following are some of the responses from the teachers in the focus group that pointed to this finding.

Mr Kashuto had this to say:

> Some girls drop out of school to get married or to get into "business" or marriage with older men as they find it paying a quick reward than schooling where they have to continue for more than twelve years plus other years of training in tertiary institutions. In some cases … parents encourage this … especially when they are financially handicapped as they think marriage of their children to rich or working men would alleviate their poverty in some ways.

Mrs Peace also added:

> In other instances, girls engage themselves into relationships with older rich or working men to give them financial support. Like it has been said … some parents would approve this with the hope that the man would help them in their financial difficulties. Their relationships with older men eventually end in marriage and thus dropping out of school.

Teenage pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy was also identified as a predisposing factor towards school dropout among girls in School B. Responses from participants that confirm this finding are:

PSB's was:

> Though there is a teenage pregnancy policy that was promulgated by the Ministry of Education to allow girls who fall pregnant to continue schooling … some girls feel insecure and shy about continuing with their lessons while they are pregnant … they instead chose to drop out of school than staying.

SD1SB said the following on the same matter:

> I got pregnant while at school and therefore decided to drop out of school as I could not stay because I did not want to be laughed at by other learners in the school. It is shameful to be in class with others while being pregnant.

Like SD1SB, **SD5SB** said:

> I dropped out of school because I got pregnant when I got in Grade 10. Even though the pregnancy policy allows pregnant school girls to continue schooling; I was in fear of victimisation by fellow learners, teachers and people in the community around me.

SD1SB's father also confirmed what his child said when asked why he did not advise his daughter to continue schooling even when she got pregnant as the ministry allowed pregnant learners to do so, he (**PSD1SB**) replied as follows:

> I tried but the child was not comfortable with that as she said she was shy of her class/school mates and teachers.

Socio-economic factors

The following socio-economic factors were found to be associated with learner dropout in School B.

Poverty

Poverty was a problem that seemed to be one of the socio-economic factors that predisposed school dropout among learners in School B, as had been the case at School A.

In an attempt to find out whether learners from rich family backgrounds stayed at school more than those from poor family backgrounds, **Mr D**'s response was:

> Children who come from richer families always have enough food and clothing and have no worries about what to eat the next day. Those from poor families usually have no food to eat the next day and this makes them absent themselves from school on regular basis and consequently choose to drop out as they fear punishment from teachers at school after having been absent for a day or two from school.

Another response that was suggestive of the above sentiment by teachers included that of **SD2SB** who stated that:

> I dropped out of school because I wanted to help out my mother who was struggling with feeding and clothing me and my siblings. Our father died about some years ago and I felt I could be the breadwinner in some way as my mother was not employed. I therefore left school to look for a job.
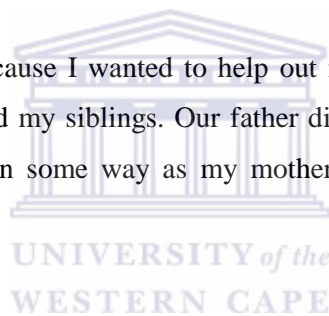
Peer pressure

Peer pressure came out as another school dropout predisposing factor in School B.

One of the responses that suggested that peer pressure was also a dropout predisposing factor at the school was that of **Ms Ann**, one of the teachers in the focus group:

> Some children who have dropped out of school here had friends who had left school and these influenced them to drop out of school too. Children who fall victims of such situations are usually those who come from broken and one-parent homes where the parent or guardian is not so serious with the well-being of the child.

Similarly, **PSD3SB**'s response was:

> I think the reason why my child dropped out of school was that he involved himself in a wrong group of friends. Most of his friends had either left school or were alcohol and drug abusers. It became very difficult for me to take him out of that group … he consequently dropped out of school like some of his friends.

Main factors contributing to resilience

This section is about the factors that emerged from the analysis of the participants' responses as contributing to resilience in learners of School B.

Individual learner attributes

The following factors were identified as individual attributes which enhanced dropout resilience in learners:

Good academic performance

Good academic performance emerged from the responses that the participants gave as one of the factors that enhanced dropout resilience among Grade 10 learners in the school. The following are the responses that were suggestive of this finding:

In the interview with him, PSB responded as follows:

> Resilient learners have great interest in schooling. I think they do so because they academically excel. A learner will like to stay in school when he/she is doing well in their subjects than when they are not.

Mr D, one of the teachers, shared a similar sentiment to that of PSB:

> Usually learners who academically perform very well will like to stay in school than those who do poorly. Only in exceptional cases will a learner who academically perform well drop out of school. I think there is no point in someone doing well … leaving or dropping out of school.

> (Other teachers in the focus group nodded their heads as he said this as a signal of agreeing with what he was saying).

In addition to what PSB and teachers said on the above-mentioned matter, it appeared that nearly all resilient learners were doing well in their subjects, as **Learner 2** (**L2SB**) responded when asked about what made her resilient from school dropout:

> I feel that it is because I am doing very well in school that is why I am still here. If I was not, I think I could not have the determination I have to continue with schooling - meaning that I would have dropped out of school already. There is no reason in someone hanging in school when they are doing badly in their subjects.

Similarly, **L3SB** responded as follows:

> What motivates me to be in school is the fact that I am doing fairly very well in my subjects. I think I would have dropped out of school if I were performing badly in my subjects as there would be no reason for me to stay when I would not be progressing.

> (Other learners in the focus group showed their agreement to what L3SB was saying by murmuring 'uhmm' as she was saying this).

Learning from siblings and friends' dropout experiences

Learning from siblings and friends' dropout experiences also came out from participants' responses as another factor that contributed to resilience among some Grade 10 learners in School B, as was pointed out, for example, by **Mrs Peace**, one of the teachers from the focus group:

> I think children who have seen how those who dropped out of school are suffering at home are always motivated to go to school in order to avoid similar circumstances falling onto them.

Similarly, **L2SB** had this to say in this regard:

> I have always thought to complete my education because I am seeing how my friends who left school are suffering at home. Some of my friends have become drunkards and look awful. I don't want to be like them.

> (In agreement to his point, others were saying '… yes' as he was saying this').

Self-determination and self-motivation

Self-determination and self-motivation emerged as another factor that enhanced dropout resilience in Grade 10 learners in School B, as was, for example, suggested by **PSB**'s following response:

> Some children are self-determined and self-motivated and are thus able to withstand all schooling challenges. They have an inner drive to pursue in schooling until they finally realise their dreams, which is to complete Grade 12 and even get to colleges or universities.

This sentiment was also shared by some resilient learners when they were asked what motivated them to be in school when their friends and siblings had already dropped out of school.

For example, **L5SB** had this to say in this regard:

> I always feel that I should make it up to Grade 12 and even university because that will be the only way that will make my life better in the future. Today… in this world we live in… education is the only key to everything.

> (Some of her friends nodded their heads as she said this in agreement to what she was saying).

Valuing education

Linked to self-motivation as a factor that contributed to dropout resilience among Grade 10 learners in School B, the valuing of education by some individual learners was also noted.

One of the responses that were suggestive of this finding was from **PSB** that:

> Children who find education important will always be resilient towards schooling challenges. These children have a great value for education simply because they have role models whom they try to imitate or their parents and family members have always cherished education.

Similar to what PSB said, **L4SB** responded as follows when they (learners) were asked what the value of education was in their lives:

> I find education as the most important thing in today's life. Without it one will not live a better future. In other words, it is a key to a better future.

> (Other learners agreed to this by nodding their heads as he said this).

Family-related factors

The following was identified as a family-related factor that enhanced resilience amongst Grade 10 learners at this school:

Motivation from parents and relatives

Motivation from parents and family members was also found to be contributing to resilience among some resilient Grade 10 learners in School B.

One of the teachers from the focus group, **Ms Isabel**, responded thus:

> Some resilient learners get motivated by their parents, family members or teachers who talk to them about the value of education to stay in school or be resilient towards school dropout.

(Other teachers agreed to this by saying uhmm as she was speaking).

Similar to what Ms Isabel said **L3SB** had this to say:

> I am always motivated by my parents to go to school in order to realise the benefit of education that they themselves are enjoying. Both my mother and father are educated; they all went to the University of Namibia. My father is a Lecturer at the Caprivi College of Education and my mother is a teacher. They give me all that I need at school and even for my personal needs (sic).

School-related factors

The following factors emerged from the school's principal and the teachers' responses as school resilience building strategies in School B.

Counselling

Counselling emerged as one of the strategies that School B used to develop school dropout resilience among Grade 10 learners.

Responses that pointed to this finding included the following:

PSB said that:

> There are teachers who are appointed as teacher counsellors to help with advising learners who have disciplinary, learning and social problems in the school. This helps to keep children in school as they feel loved and cared for. We have had a significant improvement in learner school retention since the introduction of this programme in our school about a few years ago.

Similarly, **Mr D** stated that:

> I think teacher counsellors do a lot in helping with advising learners who have disciplinary and social problems like school dropout in the school. They assist in advising children about all the social ills they may face if they drop out of school.

Inviting renowned individuals to speak to learners

The invitation of some renowned individuals in the community who had attended School B was also found to be one of the strategies that the school used to build school dropout resilience.

Responses that pointed to this finding included the following two from some of the teachers.

In a focus group interview, **Mrs Peace** responded that:

> Well-known educated and famous people in the communities in which learners live are always invited to come to school on an annual basis to come and speak to learners about the value of education so that they get motivated to attend school. This has tremendously contributed to school attendance and a reduction in learner dropout in the school since its introduction about five years ago or so.

Mr Kashuto also added to what Mrs Peace said by saying that:

> To add on what Mrs Peace has just said, I think inviting renowned individuals to come and speak to learners encourages and makes learners to realise the value of education as well. When children see how well those people are living, they get encouraged to come to school and even work hard to succeed.

Praising or rewarding good performing learners

Praising or rewarding good performing learners in Grade 10 emerged as another factor that was used as one of the strategies by School B to enhance resilience in the school.

Responses that pointed to this finding came from teachers.

Mr D replied as follows in a focus group interview:

> Learners who do well in their subjects and sports activities are praised or rewarded by giving them small tokens of appreciation like pens, books and so on. This motivates them to come to school or like schooling and even become resilient to school dropout.
>
> (Other teachers from the focus group showed their agreement to this by nodding their heads while he was speaking).

Ms Isabel's response was:

> I usually praise and reward learners who do well in my subject by giving them small tokens of appreciation like pens, books and money. This has proved to be a very good motivator and resilience builder.

Strategies used by resilient learners and their parents to deal with schooling challenges

Learner strategies

Resilient learners gave the following as the strategies which they used to deal with school dropout predisposing challenges:

Avoiding negative forms of friendship

Avoiding friendships with learners who have negative attitude towards schooling also emerged as a strategy which resilient learners in School B used to overcome school dropout predisposition challenges. Some of the responses that pointed to this finding were:

L2SB's response was:

> I do not want to befriend with people who dropped out of school because they will influence me to drop out of school too.

Similar to L2SB's response, **L4SB** stated that:

> I only have friends who like schooling and are always encouraging me to learn and homework. Wrong friends can influence you to dodge classes and absent yourself from school and finally drop out of school.

Parental strategies

Parents of resilient learners indicated that they relied in the following strategy to help their children deal with school dropout predisposing challenges:

Educating children about the benefits of education

Responses which indicated that parents of resilient learners relied on educating their children about the benefits of education to help them overcome school dropout predisposing challenges included:

PL1SB said:

> I always advise my children to go to school so that they will be able to live a better life in future. Today education is important in one's life as one gets employment when he/she has received education and is ultimately able to feed, clothe and house him/herself and his/her family.

Similarly, **PL4SB** said:

> I always make sure that my children go to school every day because education is essential for a better future. I also have time to tell them how crucial education is in their future life, with or without me (sic).

Discussion

In this section the findings that emerged from the data analysis are discussed with reference to the existing literature discussed in chapter two in an attempt to see whether the findings are suggestive of an emergent theory or a confirmation or an extension of an existing theory. The purpose of the discussion, therefore, is to provide further insight into the phenomena which were of focus in this study (Birks & Mills, 2011), namely: school dropout predisposition and resilience. In addition, the following discussion links the findings about school dropout predisposition and resilience in School B to various aspects that emerged from the literature review on these phenomena.

School dropout predisposing factors

The following discussion relates to the common themes which emerged from the findings in the study regarding factors associated with school dropout among Grade 10 learners in School B.

School-related factors

The following emerged about the links between school-related dropout predisposing factors amongst Grade 10 learners in School B and related topics from the reviewed literature.

Curriculum

Findings in this study suggests that one of the school dropout predisposing factors at this school was that the school's curriculum did not serve the interests, talents and needs of children from all socio-economic backgrounds. This finding is consistent with findings in Redmond (2011) and Flores-Gonzalez (2002) which indicated that learners dropped out of school because of the curricula which were not as stimulating as they wanted them to be. The findings in these studies are that a learner who, for example, is not given an opportunity to partake in extracurricular activities and does not also experience schooling or the curriculum as challenging, is more likely to drop out of school than the one who finds schooling/curriculum exciting and challenging.

The above findings relate to Flores-Gonzalez's structural theory (2002) which states that certain school structural traits such as the size of the school and an unexciting curriculum cause low achievement, particularly among racial/ethnic minorities of low-income backgrounds. For example, large schools usually have many disciplinary problems as a result of an uninteresting curriculum and few opportunities for learner involvement in school programmes of interest to them or those which relate to their talents. Consequently, some learners choose to drop out of school because they find schooling/curriculum discriminatory and unrewarding while it is, on the other hand, it is demanding and exerts pressures on them with which they are unable to deal.

Individual learner attributes

The predisposing factors to dropping out of school that were identified as being related to individuals' attributes at this school included the following:

Poor academic performance

Similar to findings in School A, in School B it was also found that the poor performance of learners affected their school attendance and ultimately made them drop out of school. The finding, for example, was that a learner who is not doing well in his/her subjects may decide to drop out of school to go and do something "worthy" like finding a job rather than spending time failing in school.

The above findings are consistent with what Flores-Gonzalez (2002) labels as a deficit theory which states that low academic achievers lack motivation and involvement in school activities. Since such learners lack motivation and involvement in school activities, they frequently absent themselves from school and consequently end up dropping out, getting suspended or being dismissed from school (Flores-Gonzalez, 2002).

Age

The finding in this study was that children who were older than sixteen years usually felt bad about their age as they found themselves in the same class with the younger ones. This consequently made them choose to drop out from school rather than being laughed at by the younger learners, more especially when they were not doing well in their subjects. This finding is similar to what emerged in Akyeampong and Ananga's study (2010) in which researchers from the Consortium for Research on Education Access, Equity and Transitions

(CREATE) in Ghana found over-age to be one of the causes of school dropout in southern Ghana. These learners were mostly given little attention in class and, therefore, ended up feeling unwanted and consequently chose to drop out of school.

There appear to be no links between these findings and the reviewed theories and this, then, calls for the generation of a new theory.

Socio-economic factors

The following discussion is about socio-economic factors that were found to predispose learners towards dropping out of school in School B in relation to the reviewed literature.

Poverty

It was found in this study that poverty played a role in learner dropout predisposition. Participants stated that children who come from rich families always have food and clothing and have no worries as to what to eat the next day as opposed to those from poor families. This makes learner from poor families absent themselves from school on a regular basis and, consequently, they choose to drop out as they fear punishment from teachers at school after having been absent for a day or two. It was also learnt that in some cases children dropped out of school because they wanted to help their parents who were struggling with feeding and clothing them and the siblings. This mostly occurred in mother-led homes or one-parent homes where fathers had died and elder children felt they could be the breadwinners in some way. Findings indicated that learners who came from poor family backgrounds were more predisposed to dropping out of school than those from richer family backgrounds because poor children usually go to school with empty stomachs, torn clothes or without the school uniforms. Conditions of such nature ultimately make them drop out as they become afraid of being jeered at by their school/classmates. Others choose to drop out to go and look for food or work somewhere out there.

Consistent with the above findings in this study are Makwinja-Morara's findings (2007) on the study of the causes of female dropouts in Botswana which found that learners from poor family backgrounds have higher dropout rates than those from richer ones. Many learners drop out because of the compounded effects of poverty which includes coming from broken homes, having been held back in previous class/es or being slothful (Sutherland, 1999, in Makwinja-Morara, 2007). Similarly, Hellmann's study (1940) on school dropouts in Johannesburg reports that the category of school dropouts who left school in Johannesburg

because of poverty formed about 20% of the total number of school dropouts. The inability to pay school fees and other school expenses caused school dropout among most children (Hellmann, 1940). In addition, schools usually demand children to wear school uniform which might not be affordable to poor children. Not only do these schools require learners to wear school uniforms, but they also require them to have sportswear and other clothing for certain school occasions (Hellmann, 1940). All these factors put a burden on poor children. Even when the school makes exceptions for poor children, the children's psychological reactions, their feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem cannot easily be discounted (*ibid*).

These findings are linked to both, the reproduction and the resistance/oppositional theories. The reproduction theory states that schools are instruments of the dominant group designed to foster low achievement among racial/ethnic minority and low-income students and in this way replicate and re-create social relations. Schools are said to replicate the structure of class relations in two ways: firstly, by rewarding knowledge of the dominant culture and, secondly, by providing different kinds of education on the basis of class, race and gender. Scholars like Bourdieu (in Galloway 1985) argue that schools hide the advantages of schooling for upper-class students through the guise of meritocracy. This practice does not acknowledge that upper-class students possess the cultural capital valued at school. Schools further transform the cultural capital into economic capital as knowledge of the dominant culture leads to better performance, which, in turn, results in access to better schools and universities. Eventually these upper-class children end up in well-paid jobs reserved for individuals who completed schooling.

On the other hand, the resistance or oppositional theory states that learners, particularly those from low-income groups, develop identities in opposition to school culture when they believe that high school completion will not improve their socio-economic status, or that the behaviours required for academic achievement are not compatible with their racial/ethnic or class identity.

Peer pressure

This study's finding was that some children who were dropping out of school had friends who had already left school and these influenced them to drop out of school too. Learners who had fallen victims of such situations were usually those who came from broken and one-parent homes where the parents or guardians were not concerned with the well-being of the children. Consistent with this finding is what emerged in a study by Clark (cited in Chen and

Kaufman, 2010) on friendship formations, that a child who befriends those who like schooling will more likely like schooling too and become resilient towards school dropout. Conversely, a child, who befriends with those who dislike schooling, will more likely dislike schooling and drop out of school in the end. Similarly, Patchen (1982) in Chen and Kaufman (2010) also found that children with peers who like schooling spend most of their time on school work and attend classes more regularly than children whose friends dislike schooling.

There appear to be no links between the above findings and the reviewed theories so far and this calls for the generation of new theory to fill this gap.

Gender-related individual learner attributes

Similar to findings in School A, some findings in School B about school dropout predisposing factors related to a particular learner sex only and not to the other.

School dropout predisposing factors among boys

The following discussion relates to the link between the factors that were found to be associated with school dropout among boys in School B and findings in other studies, including associated theories where applicable.

Alcohol and drug abuse

One of the findings in the study was that most boys who came from shanty places where alcohol and drug abuse was a common practice tended to drink alcohol and abuse drugs as well. As a result, these boys were absent from school on a regular basis and finally decided to drop out of school. Furthermore, most boys engaged themselves in drug trafficking activities for a living. This often made them absent themselves from school as they had to be away from school sometimes for a couple of days to search for marijuana. Consequently, they dropped out of school because of fear of punishment at school or of having found that the drug trafficking life was better than attending school. Consistent with this finding, McCaffrey, Pacula, Han and Ellickson's study (2008) on marijuana use found that heavy and persistent marijuana use is associated with high school dropout among boys because of its impact on cognitive functioning.

There are no links so far between this study and that of the findings in the reviewed literature and the revised theories, thus suggesting the need for the generation of new theory to better explain the stated findings.

Bullying

One of this study's finding is that boys, especially those who seemed to have reached the adolescence stage, bullied other learners. Since this was not allowed in the school and was therefore punishable, and, usually, once the bullies found the punishment stiff, they decided to drop out of school rather than going through the punishment. Similar to this study's finding von Wietersheim (2006:9) found that some older boys and girls use their oldness as a weapon towards other boys or girls, even though it is more frequently targeted at girls. The effects of bullying on victims include substantial decrease in academic performance and ultimately school dropout.

There are also no links so far between this study and the findings in the reviewed literature and the revised theories. These appeal for the generation of new theory to better explain the stated findings.

Lack of hostel accommodation

This study found that School B had no hostel accommodation for boys. Most boys who came from far away from the school, therefore, often dropped out of school as they could not endure the suffering of travelling long distances to and from school and home. Consistent with this finding is a statement in the Namibian's Ministry of Education National Report on educational matters that most learners in the country (Namibia) are forced to walk long distances to get to schools. This is due to the long distances between most learners' residential areas and where the nearest schools are situated, and not enough hostel facilities/dormitories at most schools, particularly in rural areas (Ministry of Education, 2010: 3). This ultimately contributes to learner dropout in most schools; more especially in less motivated learners who may not be prepared to endure all the difficulties and challenges associated with schooling.

There seem to be no links between the above stated findings and the reviewed theories. This suggests a need for the generation of new theory to better explain the stated findings.

School dropout predisposing factors among girls

The following discussion is about the issues that emerged about this finding in the literature review in this study.

Early marriages or involvement in sexual activities with older men

This study found that some girls in School B dropped out of school to get married or to get into "business" with older men as they found it paying a quick reward rather than schooling where one has to continue for about twelve years plus other years of training in tertiary institutions, for example.

Similar to this study's finding, Makwinja- Morara (2007)'s findings were that some girls drop out of school to go and get married than going through the schooling process which lasts for more years for one to get the rewards of education at the end.

There were no links between this finding and the theories accessed in the reviewed literature. Again, the generation of new theory to better explain the stated findings is needed.

Teenage pregnancy

Article 15(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia stipulates that, "Children shall have the right from birth to be cared for by their parents." In addition to this, the Ministry of Education's teenage pregnancy policy allows the young mother to stay with the child at home for a period of time which should not be less than a year in order to give him/her the necessary care needed for the child to grow normally. After that period, the girl should be allowed back in school to continue with her education (Ministry of Education, 2010).

However, findings in the study are that, although the country's teenage pregnancy policy allows girls who fall pregnant to continue schooling, some girls felt insecure and shy about continuing with their studies while they were pregnant. Similar to this finding, Weis, Farrar and Petrie's study (1989) in the USA on why some students dropped out of school also found that girls dropped out of school mainly because of pregnancies. Once a girl is pregnant she can no longer continue with schooling because the girl feels insecure and ashamed to continue with classes because she is afraid that her friends will laugh at her. Similarly, Ananga's study (2009) of typologies of school dropout in rural Ghana also found pregnancy as one of the main causes of school dropout, particularly in rural Ghana.

There also appears to be no links between the above findings with any of the reviewed theories and this suggests the need for the generation of a theory in this regard.

Factors associated with dropout resilience at School B

The following factors emerged as being associated with dropout resilience in School B:

Individual learner attributes

The following attributes were identified to be attributes characterising some of the learners who displayed resilience against the school dropout phenomenon:

Good academic performance

It was found in this study that resilient learners had greater interest in schooling because they usually excelled academically. Consistent with this study's finding, Hupfeld's study (2007) on resilience skills and dropout prevention in the United States found the following in this regard: students who were academically struggling or were receiving low or failing grades, scored poor results on tests, repeated grades, and who fell behind on credits required for graduation were more likely to drop out of school. Conversely, those who were academically doing well or were receiving high passing grades and did not repeat grades were more likely to be resilient towards school dropout.

There are links between the above findings and the entity theory of self-intervention which states that when learners have the belief that intelligence is alterable (called the "entity theory" of self) it leads them to exertion of effort and the facing of challenges. Learners who have an entity theory of self-intervention are more likely to exhibit academic improvement and inclination. They also display complete commitment in learning and ultimately perform well in their school work.

Learning from siblings and friends' dropout experiences

Another finding in this study was that children who had been exposed to how others who dropped out of school were suffering at home were usually motivated to go to school in order to avoid similar circumstances falling onto them. None of the studies in the reviewed literature seemed to have pointed to this finding. As a result, it also appears that no theory has been generated with regards to the finding. This finding, therefore, suggests a need for the generation of a theory that links this attribute to resilience against school dropout.

Self-determination and self-motivation

This study found that resilient learners were more self-determined and self-motivated than school dropouts. Similarly, Chen and Kaufman's study (2010) on risk and protective factors and the effects on students dropping out of high school also found that resilient learners show more positive personal qualities towards schooling than school dropouts. Resilient learners

are highly motivated towards school work, more self-confident in their ability to do things (school work in particular), are more optimistic and have a stronger sense of a positive future.

The above findings, including findings from this study, are linked to the incremental theory of self which states that learners with an incremental theory of self believe that intelligence can be increased through hard work (called the "incremental theory" of self). Usually these learners have the aspirations to overcome schooling challenges such as school dropout predisposition or other challenges in their lives. They have high self-esteem and are highly motivated to work towards success in school or life in general. Incremental self-theories, therefore, lead to increased resilience towards school dropout predisposition in the face of home and school problems and impediments, and eventually lead to academic success.

Valuing education

It was found that children who found education important were resilient towards schooling challenges. Similar to this finding, Chen and Kaufman's study (2010) found that the value that school children and their peers put on school attendance and education plays a bigger role in either making them less or more resilient towards school dropout. Children and peers who place more value on school attendance and education are more resilient towards school dropout than those who do not.

It appears that no theory has been generated with regards to the above findings. This study's finding, therefore, suggests a need for the generation of a theory that links this aspect to resilience against school dropout.

Family-related factors

The following family-related factor was found to be contributing to resilience in learners at School B:

Motivation from parents and relatives

Another finding in this study was that resilient learners were motivated by their parents and family members or teachers who talked to them about the value of education. Similar to this study's finding Geary, 1988; and Pisapia and Westfall, 1994, in Chen and Kaufman, 2010) also found that resilient learners usually relate with teachers, family members and parents who like them, and listen and talk to them about their learning difficulties and even offer personal help.

The above findings, together with this study's findings, are linked to the entity theory of self-intervention which states that learners with an entity theory of self-intervention are of the belief that school dropout predisposing factors are alterable and easily modified through support from their parents and teachers. Consequently, their opportunity for succeeding in education is intensified.

School-related factors

The following emerged as strategies that School B used to enhance dropout resilience among learners at the school.

Counselling

It was found in this study that the teachers who were appointed as teacher counsellors to help with advising learners who had disciplinary, learning and social problems in the school helped build resilience amongst learners as they felt loved and cared for by teachers. These feelings, together with the counselling, helped build confidence amongst the learners to cope with challenges such as school dropout predisposing factors facing them. Consistent with this study's finding, von Wietersheim (2006)'s study on counselling guidelines for specific difficulties in Namibia found that counselling is mainly done to enhance dropout resilience in learners by enabling them to deal with social issues like negative peer pressure, alcohol and substance abuse and bullying which are usually some of the school dropout predisposing factors.

The above findings are also linked to the entity theory of self-intervention which states that learners with an entity theory of self-intervention are of the belief that school dropout predisposing factors are alterable and easily modified through support from their parents and teachers. Their opportunity for succeeding in education is consequently intensified.

Inviting renowned individuals to speak to learners

Part of the findings of this study are that some well-known educated and renowned individuals in the communities in which learners lived were regularly invited to the school on an annual basis to speak to learners about the value of education so that they would be motivated to value education. None of the findings in the studies in the reviewed literature seemed to have pointed to this finding. This finding, therefore, indicates the need for the generation of a theory linking this finding to dropout resilience in learners.

Praising or rewarding good performing learners

This study found that praising or rewarding good performing learners motivated them to go to school or like schooling and even become resilient to school dropout. Even though none of the reviewed literature pointed out this finding, as in the above matter, this also advocates a need for the generation of a theory linking the finding to dropout resilience in learners.

How resilient learners and their parents deal with school dropout predisposing challenges

This section relates to strategies which were found to be used by resilient learners and their parents to deal with schooling challenges.

Learner strategies

The following strategy was found as a strategy which was used by learners to deal with school dropout predisposing challenges:

Avoiding negative forms of friendship

As in School A, avoiding friendships with learners with negative schooling tendencies was also found to be a strategy which resilient learners in School B used to avoid falling prey to dropping out of school. None of the studies in the reviewed literature had a similar finding. The difference in the finding also serves to highlight the importance of grounded theory in this study

Parental strategies

The following strategy was found to be a strategy which parents of resilient learners used to deal with school dropout predisposing challenges:

Educating children about the benefits of education

Educating children about the benefits of education was found to be one of the strategies which parents used to overcome school dropout challenges. Consistent with this finding, Chen and Kaufman (2010)'s study found that when children are aware of the value of education they get more resilient towards school dropout than those who are not.

Conclusion

The factors that were found to be associated with school dropout predisposition in School B included school-related aspects such as inadequately relevant curriculum; individual attributes such as poor academic performance and age; socio-economic backgrounds such as poverty and peer pressure; and gender-related elements such as alcohol and drug abuse, bullying and lack of hostel accommodation for boys, and early marriages and teenage pregnancy in girls. As was the case in School A, there appeared to be differences between the school dropout predisposing factors that were provided by the teachers and those that were provided by the school dropouts. For example, teachers mentioned the curriculum, bullying, alcohol and drug abuse and early marriages as some of the factors that predisposed learners to drop out of school but none of the dropouts or their parents referred to these factors. These might have just been unfounded teachers' speculation about what they thought were the factors that predisposed leaners to drop out of school. However, on the other hand, dropouts might have found it rather too embarrassing to mention such factors as having predisposed them to dropping out of school.

The factors that were found to be enhancing dropout resilience included school-related aspects such as counselling, inviting renowned individuals to speak to learners, praising good performing learners and implementing the teenage pregnancy policy; learner individual attributes such as good academic performance, learning from siblings and friends' dropout experiences, self-determination and valuing education; and family-related factors such as provision of necessities by parents and motivation from parents and relatives. Not all of these factors link to theories that have been generated about this topic.

As in School A, avoiding negative forms of friendship was also found to be a strategy which resilient learners in School B used to overcome schooling challenges while educating children about the benefits of education was found to be a strategy which parents used to help their children avoid dropping out of school.

The final chapter presents a summary of the findings and a discussion on the theoretical conclusions, the recommendations on the findings, suggestions for future research and the conclusions of the whole thesis.

Chapter Six

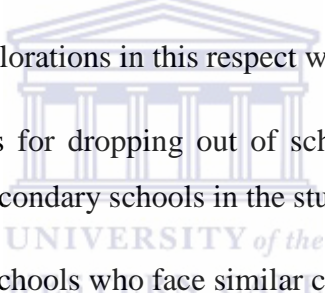## Summary, conclusions and recommendations

Introduction

In this chapter the study's methodology and findings are summarized. The discussion also relates to theoretical conclusions and recommendations from the findings, including the limitations of the study.

Research questions

As indicated in Chapter One, the main question in this study related to dropout predisposition and resilience among Grade 10 learners in one urban and one rural secondary school located in the Kizito Educational Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia.

The key questions that guided explorations in this respect were:

- What are the main causes for dropping out of school at the Grade 10 level in the selected urban and rural secondary schools in the study?

- How do learners in these schools who face similar challenges at Grade 10 level but do not drop out of school deal with the challenges?

- How do parents of learners who drop out of school in this school deal with these challenges?

- How do parents of learners who do not drop out of school in these schools deal with these challenges?

- What strategies are used by each of the schools in the study to prevent the dropping out of school amongst at risk learners?

- What theoretical implications emerge from findings about the above questions?

The Study Methodology

The qualitative research methodology and tools were found to be fit in addressing the school dropout predisposition and resilience phenomena in the study locations and realising the purpose, aims and objectives of the study (Wiersma, 1975).

The study was framed by the interpretive research paradigm. This paradigm provided a conceptual framework for seeing and making sense of the social world through participants' experiences, beliefs, opinions and knowledge about the studied phenomena (school dropout predisposition and resilience in this case) (Williams (1998).

In addition, the case study and grounded theory methods were also viewed to be most appropriate for this study. The choice of the case study method was informed by views such as Bell's (1999:10) that "a case study provides an opportunity for one aspect of a problem (school dropout predisposition and resilience in this case) to be studied in some depth within a limited timescale". The grounded theory method was used to inductively generate categories and themes from the collected data (Punch, 2009) in this study. The study's findings therefore emerged through my interaction with the data (Jeggels, 2006). The use of grounded theory also enabled me to have findings which identified alignments between the study's findings and existing theories whilst also enabling the identification of theoretical gaps (Creswell, 1998 in Jeggels, 2006) regarding some the study's findings which subsequent studies should address in future.

Summary of the findings

In this section, the findings in both School A and B are summarised in relation to the key research questions of the study.

> *Q.1: What are the main causes for dropping out of school at the Grade 10 level in the selected urban and rural secondary schools in the study?*

The above question was asked to determine the factors that predisposed Grade 10 learners to drop out of school in both schools. Findings about the predisposing factors, together with theories for dropping out of school, fall under the following themes:

Individual learner attributes

The following factors were identified as individual attributes which predisposed learners in both School A and B to drop out of school:

Poor academic performance

Poor academic performance was found to be one of the school dropout predisposing factors in both schools. These findings relate to Flores-Gonzalez's deficit theory, the claim of which is that low academic achievers lack motivation and involvement in school activities (2002). As a result, they frequently absent themselves from school and consequently end up dropping out of school.

Age

Age was found to be a school dropout predisposing factor in boys in School A whereas in School B it was found to be a predisposing one in both sexes. The finding in School A was that older boys were more likely to drop out of school than those of normal school-going age, whereas in School B it was found that both older boys and girls were more likely to drop out of school than the younger ones. No links were found between this study's findings and findings in studies in the reviewed literature and the reviewed theories. There is thus a need for the generation of new theory to better explain the stated findings.

Gender-related individual learner attributes

Gender-related individual learner attributes are factors that were identified to be gender-related in influencing school dropout among some individual learners in the two schools.

School dropout predisposing factors among boys

The following are the factors that were identified as school dropout predisposing factors among boys in the two schools:

Alcohol and drug abuse

Alcohol and drug use/abuse was found to be a cause of school dropout in boys in both case study schools. So far no links were found between this study and findings in the reviewed literature and the revised theories. Again, this suggests the need for the generation of new theory to better explain the stated findings.

Bullying

Bullying was found to be a cause of school dropout in boys in School B only. There were no links between this study's findings and findings in the reviewed literature and the reviewed theories. This suggests a need for the generation of new theory to better explain this finding.

Drug trafficking

Drug trafficking from the neighbouring country was found to be a school dropout predisposing factor among some boys in School B only. There were no links found between this study's and findings in the reviewed literature and the revised theories so new theory is needed to better explain the stated findings.

Lack of hostel accommodation

Lack of hostel accommodation was also found to be a cause of school dropout among some boys in School B only because most of them lived far from school and found it difficult to walk long distances to and from school and finally decided to drop out of school rather than going through such difficulties. There were no links found between this study's and findings in the reviewed literature and the revised theories so, once more, there is a need for new theory to better explain the stated findings.

School dropout predisposing factors among girls

The following are the factors that were identified as school dropout predisposing ones among girls in both School A and B.

Teenage pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy was found to be the main predisposing factor of school dropout in both schools. It was found that though the teenage pregnancy policy was promulgated by the Ministry of Education to allow girls who fell pregnant to continue schooling, some girls felt insecure, stigmatised and shy about continuing with their schooling while they were pregnant and afterwards. There were no links found between the findings of this study and the findings in the reviewed literature and the revised theories so there is a need for the generation of new theory to better explain the stated findings.

Long walking distance to and from school

Long walking distance to and from school was found to be a cause of school dropout amongst girls in School A only. Respondents maintained that, since the areas around the school

experienced floods during the autumn season, it became difficult to access the school as people had to relocate to higher ground far away from the school. This made it difficult for girls to risk walking the distances to school as they were more vulnerable to assault, rape and attacks by gangsters. Some girls, therefore, decided to drop out of school rather than going through such dangers. There were no links found between this study and the findings in the reviewed literature and the revised theories so new theory is required to better explain the stated findings.

Early marriages and involvement in sexual activities with older men

Early marriages and involvement in sexual activities with older men were together found to be one of the causes of school dropout for some girls in School B only. Study participants reported that some girls got in relationships with older men and some got married at an early age. This dragged them from school as they could not serve two masters at the same time, i.e. schooling and being in relationships. There were no links between the findings of this study and findings in the reviewed literature and the revised theories so the generation of new theory to better explain the stated findings is required.

School-related factors

Some of the predisposing factors to school dropout in both School A and B were found to be triggered by the schools themselves.

Curriculum

The school curriculum was found to be the main school-related factor contributing towards dropping out of school among Grade 10 learners in both School A and B where some learners found the curriculum uninteresting. These findings relate to structural theory (Flores-Gonzalez, 2002) which states that certain school structural traits such as the size of the school and a boring curriculum cause low achievement, particularly among racial/ethnic minorities from low-income or economic status backgrounds. Subsequently, some learners choose to drop out of school because they find schooling/curriculum discriminatory and unrewarding while it is, on the other hand, more demanding and exerts pressure on them with which they are unable to deal effectively.

Socio-economic factors

The factors below were identified as socio-economic factors that predisposed Grade 10 learners to drop out of school in either School A or B, or in both of them.

Poverty

Poverty was found to be a contributing factor towards the dropping out of some Grade 10 learners in both School A and B. These findings are linked to both, the reproduction and the resistance/oppositional theories. The reproduction theory states that schools are instruments of the dominant group designed to foster low achievement among racial/ethnic minority and low-income students, and in this way replicate and re-create social relations. On the other hand, the resistance or oppositional theory states that learners, particularly those from low-income groups, develop identities in opposition to school culture when they believe that high school completion will not improve their socio-economic status, or that the behaviour required for academic achievement is not compatible with their racial/ethnic or class identity.

Peer pressure

Peer pressure was found to be another contributing factor towards the dropping out of some Grade 10 learners in both School A and B. There appears to be no links between the above finding and the reviewed theories so far and this calls for the generation of new theory to fill this gap.
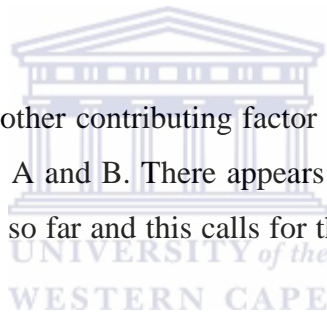
Family-related factors

The factor below was identified as a family factor that contributed to school dropout among learners in School A.

Lack of parental involvement in education

Lack of involvement of some parents in the education of their children was discovered to be a contributing factor towards school dropout in School A only. There were also no links found between the above finding and the reviewed theories so far, thus calling for the generation of new theory to fill this gap.

> *Q.2: How do learners in these schools who face similar challenges at Grade 10 level but do not drop out of school deal with the challenges?*

To determine the factors that contributed to school dropout resilience in Grade 10 learners the above key questions was asked. The following factors were identified as contributing to resilience towards school dropout in learners either in one or both of the schools:

Good academic performance

It was found that learners in both schools who performed well in their subjects were more resilient to dropping out than those who performed poorly. There are links between the above findings and the entity theory of self-intervention which states that when learners have the belief that intelligence is alterable (called the "entity theory" of self), it leads them to make greater effort and face challenges more effectively. Learners who have an entity theory of self-intervention are more likely to exhibit academic improvement and inclination. They also display complete commitment in learning and ultimately perform well in their school work.

Learning from siblings and friends' dropout experiences

This study found that some Grade 10 learners whose siblings or friends had dropped out of school were more resilient from school dropout in School B only due to their exposure to difficulties associated with the failure to complete schooling. None of the studies in the reviewed literature seemed to have pointed to this finding. As a result, it also appears that no theory has been generated with regard to the finding. This finding, therefore, suggests a need for the generation of a theory that links this attribute to resilience against school dropout.

Motivation from parents, relatives or teachers

One of the findings in School B was that Grade 10 learners who were motivated by parents, relatives or teachers were more resilient against dropping out of school than those who did not receive such motivation. The above findings are also linked to the entity theory of self-intervention which states, among other things, that learners with an entity theory of self-intervention are of the belief that school dropout predisposing factors are alterable and easily modified with support from their parents and teachers. Consequently, their opportunity for succeeding in education is intensified.

Self-determination and self-motivation

Learners who were self-determined and motivated in their schooling were found to be more resilient towards school dropout in School B than those who were not. The above findings, including those of this study, are linked to the incremental theory of self which states that

learners with an incremental theory of self believe that intelligence can be increased through hard work (called the "incremental theory" of self). They also have high self-esteem and are highly motivated to work towards success in school or life in general. Incremental self-theories, therefore, lead to increased resilience towards school dropout predisposition in the face of home and school problems and impediments, and eventually lead to academic success.

Valuing education

Valuing education was found to be a contributing factor towards resilience in School B only. This study found that learners who valued education as important in their future lives were more resilient towards school dropout than those who did not. It appears that no theory has been generated with regards to the above finding. This study's finding, therefore, suggests a need for the generation of a theory that links this aspect to resilience against school dropout.

Role models

Findings of this study suggest that resilient learners have people they look up to as their role models whom they want to be like in future. There seem to be no links between the above findings and the resilience theories that were reviewed in this study and this, therefore, calls for a generation of new theory.

> *Q. 3: How do parents of learners who drop out of school in these schools deal with these challenges?*

To address the above question participants were asked to state what they thought were the strategies that parents of dropouts used to enhance resilience in their children. The following strategies were identified in this regard in both School A and B.

Parental involvement in education

The involvement of parents in the education of their children was found to be a strategy that parents of school dropouts tried to use to enhance dropout resilience among their children. This group of parents appeared to rely on only one strategy compared with the other group who relied on more than one strategy, as presented below:

This finding is linked to the entity theory of self-intervention which states that resilient learners are of the belief that school dropout predisposing factors are alterable and easily

modified through parental support and involvement in the education of their children. When this is the case, children's opportunities for succeeding in academic work are intensified.

> *Q. 4: How do parents of learners who do not drop out of school in these schools deal with these challenges?*

To address the above question study participants were asked to state what the strategies that parents of resilient learners used to enhance dropout resilience in their children. The following were found to be strategies the parents used to enhance resilience in their children:

Parental involvement in education

The involvement of parents in the education of their children was also found to be a strategy that parents of resilient learners used to enhance resilience in their children or a factor that contributed towards resilience among resilient learners who were in Grade 11 at the time of this study. These findings are also linked to the entity theory of self-intervention which states that resilient learners are of the belief that school dropout predisposing factors are alterable and easily modified through parental support and involvement in the education of their children. Consequently, when this is the case, children's opportunities for succeeding in academic work are intensified.

Motivation from parents and relatives

Learners whose parents motivated them in relation to schooling were also found to be more resilient against dropping out of school than those whose parents did not provide such motivation. These findings, together with the findings of this study, are linked to the entity theory of self-intervention which states, among other things, that learners with an entity theory of self-intervention are of the belief that school dropout predisposing factors are alterable and easily modified through support from their parents and teachers. Consequently, their opportunities for succeeding in education are intensified.

> *Q. 5: What strategies are used by each of the schools in the study to prevent the dropping out of school amongst at risk learners?*

To address the above question study participants were asked to state what strategies the schools used to enhance resilience in Grade 10 learners. The following strategies were identified to be relied upon by the schools to enhance resilience in Grade 10 learners in one or both of the schools.

Life Skills subject

The teaching of the Life Skills subject was found to be one of the strategies that School A relied upon for strengthening learner resilience against school dropout. This subject sensitised learners about the social challenges they might face if they do not complete schooling. These findings are also linked to the entity theory of self-intervention.

Counselling

The counselling of learners about the value of education was found to be one of the strategies that were used by School B to strengthen learner resilience against school dropout. These findings are also linked to the entity theory of self-intervention.

Inviting renowned individuals from the community to speak to learners

Inviting renowned individuals from the community to speak to Grade 10 learners was found to be one of the strategies that were used by School B to enhance dropout resilience in learners. None of the findings in studies in the reviewed literature seemed to have pointed to this finding. This finding, therefore, points to the need for the generation of a theory linking it to dropout resilience in learners

Praising and rewarding good performing learners

Praising and rewarding good performing learners was another strategy that was also found to be used by School B to facilitate learner resilience against dropping out of school. Even though none of the reviewed literature pointed out this finding, as in the above matter, this finding also indicates the need for the generation of a theory linking it to dropout resilience in learners.

> *Q. 6: What theoretical implications emerge from findings about the key research questions?*

This section relates to theories that were found to be linked to the various findings about school dropout predisposition and resilience at the two schools in the study. It also informs about findings which were not found to be linked to any existing theories and which, therefore, suggest the need for the generation of theories in relation to such findings in this study.

Links between theories on school dropout predisposition and findings in this study

While some of this study's findings were found to be linked to some of the theories presented in Chapter Two of this study, there were no links to theories found regarding other findings of this study. There is, therefore, a need for further studies to generate theories in relation to those findings where no theoretical links were found.

School A

No finding in this school was found to be related to school dropout predisposing theories in School A only. On the other hand, alcohol and drug abuse, age, long walking distances to school, peer pressure and lack of parental involvement and support in the education of children were the school dropout predisposing factors in School A which were not found to be linked to any of the stated theories. These findings, therefore, call for the generation of new theories by future studies to help better explain them.

School B

Like in School A, no finding in this school was found to be related to school dropout predisposing theories in School B only. On the other hand, bullying, lack of hostel accommodation, early marriages or involvement in sexual activities with older men and teenage pregnancy were the school dropout predisposing factors in School B which were not found to be linked to any of the stated theories. These findings, therefore, also call for the generation of new theories by future studies to help better explain them.

Both Schools

The deficit theory was found to be linked to poor academic performance as a school dropout predisposing factor in both schools while the structural theory was found to be linked to curriculum as one of the school dropout predisposing factor in the two schools. The reproduction and resistance theories were found to be linked to poverty as one of the school dropout predisposing factors in both schools of this study.

Whereas the above stated findings were found in both schools to be linked to some theories discussed in Chapter Two, teenage pregnancy was the school dropout factor in both schools

which was found not to be linked to any of the theories stated in this study and, therefore, it calls for the generation of new theory by future studies to better explain this finding.

Links between theories associated with school dropout resilience and findings in this study

There are some of this study's findings that were found to be linked to some of the theories presented in Chapter Two of this study and there are those where no links to theories were found regarding other findings of this study. There is, therefore, a need for further studies to generate theories in relation to those findings where no theoretical links were found.

School A

The theory of self-intervention was found to be associated with the teaching of the Life Skills subject and parental involvement in and support of children's education as school dropout resilience enhancing factors in School A of this study.

None of the school dropout resilience enhancing factors discussed in this study was found not to be linked to the theories stated in Chapter Two of this study. This, therefore, means that this study's dropout resilience enhancing factors have been better explained by previous studies so far.

School B

The entity theory of self-intervention was found to be associated with motivation from parents and relatives and counsellors as school dropout resilience enhancing factors in School B of this study. The incremental theory of self was found to be associated with self-determination and self-motivation parental involvement and support of children's education as school dropout resilience enhancing factors in the school.

While the above stated findings were found to be linked to some theories discussed in Chapter Two, learning from siblings and friends' dropout experiences, valuing education, inviting renowned individuals to speak to learners and praising or rewarding good performing learners were the school dropout enhancing factors which were not found to be linked to any of the stated theories. These findings, therefore, call for the generation of new theories by future studies to help better explain them.

Both Schools

The theory of self-intervention was found to be associated with good academic performance, one of the school dropout enhancing factors, in both schools of this study. On the other hand, there is no school dropout resilience enhancing factor in both schools which was found to be associated with any of the theories stated in Chapter Two of this study.

As already mentioned, the study did not involve generating a new theory or theories as that was not its purpose and due to time factor, but rather to link existing theories to the study's findings and recommend further explorations to generate new theories where no links were found.

Limitations of the findings

The study generated a deep understanding about school dropout predisposition and resilience in the two schools which would not have been generated through quantitative methods. However, as a qualitative study, it was limited to a small sample which means the findings are not generalizable because they relate mainly to the participants' experiences and views about the school dropout and resilience phenomena within their own unique contexts.

Recommendations

The recommendations below relate to key findings about school dropout predisposition and resilience and also to the limitations of the study.

Key findings about school dropout predisposing factors in both schools

Alcohol and drug abuse was one of the key findings that were found to predispose some learners in both schools of this study to drop out of school. This is a call to parents, schools and churches to educate school children about the dangers of alcohol and drug use.

Poor academic performance was also one of the key findings that were found to predispose some learners in both schools of this study to drop out of school. It is recommended that schools offer compensatory teaching programmes to slow learners so that they can catch up with their school work. In addition, parents are also advised to be involved in the education of their children at home so that they can assist them with their school work.

A non-inclusive or an uninteresting curriculum was another key finding that was found to predispose some learners in both schools of this study to drop out of school. This calls for the Ministry of Education and schools to identify subjects that are more interesting and relevant to learners, for example, vocational subjects such as bricklaying, plumbing and drawing need to be introduced in all schools to carter for those who are talented and gifted in such subjects. In addition, teachers should also use class participation and discussion methods in their teaching in order to involve all learners in the learning process.

Another key factor that was found to predispose some learners to drop out in both schools is poverty. All schools should implement the school feeding programme to assist children from poverty-stricken homes have something to eat at school and be encouraged to stay in school. Furthermore, unemployed parents need to be encouraged by schools to do "food for work activities" offered in schools and piece jobs to be able to feed and clothe their children.

Teenage pregnancy is another key factor that predisposed some learners to drop out of school in both schools. Though the Ministry of Education introduced the teenage pregnancy policy, some Grade 10 learners in both schools still dropped out of school and some even never went back to school after giving birth. The problem of not going back to school after delivery by some of the pregnant learners, therefore, calls for government and schools to do more in promulgating the teenage pregnancy policy so that girls who fall pregnant may continue schooling until they are to deliver and even go back to school after giving birth. Moreover, counselling should include sex education in the school.

In addition, since school dropout seems to be a problem, not only at the Grade 10 level in the Namibian schools but also in other grades (Ministry of Education, 2010), it is recommended that it is necessary for the school system to recognise early on possible dropouts in order to develop intervention strategies before the problem gets out of control.

In conclusion, some differences in school dropout predisposing and resilience factors in the two schools emerged as being associated with differences in contexts in relation to rural and urban locations. School dropout predisposing factors in rural settings seemed to be different from those in urban settings. For example, in School A, which is the rural school in this study, walking long distances to and from school and lack of parental involvement in their children's education were found to be factors uniquely associated with school dropout predisposing factors in that school in comparison with School B. However, in School B, the urban school in this study, early marriages and involvement in sexual activities with older

men were found to be predisposing factors uniquely associated with learner drop out at this school in comparison with School A.

Key findings about factors contributing to dropout resilience in both schools

Good academic performance was the only factor found to be contributing towards resilience in learners of both schools. This calls for schools to come up with academic performance enhancing strategies that all schools should use to enhance dropout resilience in learners.

Another recommendation is that contextual dropout prevention strategies, such as counselling, be put in place by the Regional Education Directorate to minimise the dropout rate in all schools at Grade 10 level and even at other levels of schooling in the region.

In conclusion, as was the case with school dropout predisposing factors, some differences in resilience factors in the two schools emerged as being due to differences in contexts in relation to rural and urban locations. For example, motivation from parents, learner self-determination and self-motivation and valuing education were found to be school dropout resilience enhancing factors unique to learners from school B, the urban school. It was however found that all the resilience enhancing factors found in learners from School A, a rural school were also applicable to the learners from School B, the urban school. All of these findings, however, need to be studied quantitatively in order to come up with generalizable outcomes.

Recommendations about the limitations of the study

Although exploratory, this research contributed to an in-depth understanding about school dropout predisposition and resilience in the stated context of focus. There is a need, however, for future research to investigate school dropout predisposition and resilience quantitatively in this context in order to have generalizable findings on the phenomena.

In addition, there is also a need for further research to focus on generating theories in relation to those findings which are apparently not linked to any existing theories in order to better explain such findings.

Conclusion

This study was embarked on in order to gain a deeper understanding about school dropout predisposition and resilience. The generation of this understanding in this study involved the

exploration of why Grade 10 learners in two secondary schools in the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia dropped out or remained in school. The study was framed by a grounded theoretical framework whose purpose was to develop the stated understanding both in terms of factors associated with the phenomena of focus but also regarding theories that linked with these factors in schools located in the contexts of focus.

Some factors emerged as being associated with school dropout predisposing ones whereas others emerged as associated with dropout resilience ones in the two schools. Similarly, in both cases some factors were found to be linked to dropout predisposition and resilience theories whereas, in others, no links were found to exist. These calls for exploration by further studies in generating new theories to better explain such findings.

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Appendix A

Schedule for focus group semi-structured interviews with teachers

Title of thesis: Grade 10 dropout predisposition and resilience in one rural and one urban secondary school in the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia

1. I am aware that all of you have been at this school for a period of at least five years. Is there anyone of you who has been at the school for a period much longer than five years?

2. In your own words, how do you define or describe the term "school dropout"?

3. Do you think that the performance of learners affects their school attendance? Explain your answer.

4. Would you say that your school has very strict rules and, if so, may they be a contributing factor towards some learners dropping out of school? Explain.

5. Would you say that the curriculum of your school serves the interests of children from all socio-economic backgrounds? Explain your answer.

7. Do you think learners' socio-economic backgrounds contribute towards learner dropout and resilience? Explain your answer.

8. What do you think causes boys to drop out of school at Grade 10 level in your school?

9. What do you think causes girls to drop out of school at Grade 10 level at your school?

10. Some learners are still in school while their friends or siblings have dropped out. In your view, what makes them resilient towards schooling challenges?

11. What strategies do you have in place to minimize dropping out of school amongst Grade 10 learners in your class/school?

12. Do you think these strategies are effective or not? Explain why you feel they are or they are not.

Appendix B

Schedule for one-on-one semi-structured interviews with school principals

Title of thesis: Grade 10 dropout predisposition and resilience in one rural and one urban secondary school in the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia

1. For how long have you been a principal at this school?

2. In your own words, how would you define or describe the term "school dropout"?

3. Do you think that the performance of learners in your school affect their school attendance? Explain your answer.

4. Would you say that your school rules and regulations are a contributing factor towards some learners dropping out of school? Explain.

5. Would you say that the curriculum of your school serves the interests of children from all socio-economic backgrounds in this area? Explain your answer.

6. Would you say learners from rich family backgrounds love schooling more than those that come from poor family backgrounds? Explain the difference.

7. Would you say that these differences also relate to school performance, dropout and resilience? Explain.

8. What do you think are the causes of dropping out of school at Grade 10 level amongst boys in your school?

9. What do you think are the causes of dropping out of school at Grade 10 level amongst girls in your school?

10. Some learners are still in school while their friends or siblings have dropped out of school. In your own view, what keeps them at school?

11. What strategies does your school have in place to minimize the dropping out of school amongst Grade 10 learners?

12. Do you think these strategies are effective or not? Explain.

Appendix C

Schedule for one-on-one semi-structured interviews with Grade 10 school dropouts

Title of thesis: Grade 10 dropout predisposition and resilience in one rural and one urban secondary school in the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia

1. How old are you?

2. In which year did you drop out of school?

3. How did you value education when you were still at school?

4. What career/job did you intend to follow in your life when you were still at school?

5. What level of education did you consider sufficient for that career /job?

6. At what level of education did your mother/father or guardian end their schooling?

7. Does your mother/father or guardian work? If working, what job do they do?

8. What did you like or did not you like about school? Explain.

9. How was your academic performance at school?

10. Would you say this was one of the causes of your dropping out of school? Explain.

11. How was your relationship with your teachers? Explain.

12. How was your relationship with other learners? Explain.

13. At what level of study did your brothers, sister, and friends leave school?

14. What were the other reasons for your dropping out of school at Grade 10 level?

15. What did your parents/guardian do when you did not go to school? Or what was their reaction towards your absence from school?

16. Do you intend to further your studies in future?

Appendix D

Schedule for one-on-one semi-structured interviews with parents of Grade 10 school dropouts

Title of thesis: Grade 10 dropout predisposition and resilience in one rural and one urban secondary school in the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia

1. What is your occupation?

2. Up to what level was your schooling?

3. Is your monthly income enough to cater for all your children's needs?

4. Of what value is the education that children receive at school?

5. In your view, was there something wrong with the rules and regulations of the school where your child was? Explain briefly.

6. How was the performance of your child when he/she was in school? Explain briefly.

7. What do you think were the main reasons for your child dropping out of school at Grade 10 level?

8. How many of your children have dropped out of school?

9. At which levels did they drop out of school?

10. Why did they drop out of school?

11. What measures did you use to ensure that your child/children did not drop out of school?

Appendix E

Schedule for focus group semi-structured interviews with Grade 11 learners

Title of thesis: Grade 10 dropout predisposition and resilience in one rural and one urban secondary school in the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia

1. For how long have you been at this school?

2. What do you think is the value of education in your life?

3. At what level did your parents stop schooling?

4. At what level did your other siblings stop schooling?

5. How has your performance been in school? Would you leave school if you were failing? Explain why you would or would not.

6. Do you like the rules and regulations of your school? If not, what makes you unhappy?

7. If unhappy with the school's rules, do you think of transferring to another school because of this?

8. What do you think are the main causes of dropping out of school at Grade 10 level amongst boys in your school?

9. What do you think are the main causes of dropping out of school at Grade 10 level amongst girls in your school?

10. What do you like or not like about schooling in general and this school in particular?

11. Why is it that you are still in school while some of your classmates, friends or siblings have already dropped out of school? Or what is it that motivates you to be in school?

12. How do you overcome schooling challenges?

13. What support do you get from your parents for overcoming these challenges?

14. What support do you get from your teachers, friends and relatives to overcome schooling challenges?

Appendix F

Schedule for focus group semi-structured interviews with parents of Grade 11 learners

Title of thesis: Grade 10 dropout predisposition and resilience in one rural and one urban secondary school in the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia

1. What are your occupations?

2. Is what you earn per month enough to cater for all your children's needs?

3. How do you value the education that children receive at school?

4. How is the performance of your children at school? Explain briefly.

5. What do you like about this school?

6. Is there anything bad happening at the school with which you are not happy? Explain.

7. If so, would you still like your children to go to the school?

8. What kind of support do you give to your children to overcome schooling challenges and remain in school?
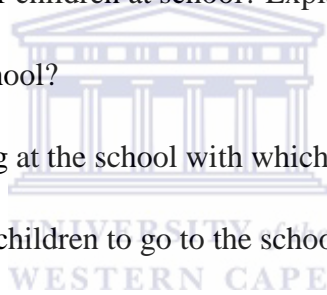
Appendix G

Ethical clearance from the Senate Research Committee of the UWC

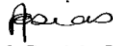**OFFICE OF THE DEAN
DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH
DEVELOPMENT**

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535
South Africa
Telegraph: UNIBELL
Telephone: +27 21 959-2948/2949
Fax: +27 21 959-3170
Website: www.uwc.ac.za

05 May 2011

To Whom It May Concern

I hereby certify that the Senate Research Committee of the University of the Western
Cape has approved the methodology and ethics of the following research project by:
Mr I Maswahu (Education)

Research Project:	Grade 10 drop-out predisposition and resilience in one rural and one urban secondary school in the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia
Registration no:	11/3/37

*Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape*

**UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE**
A place of quality, a place to grow, from hope to action through knowledge

UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

Appendix H

Letter to the Regional Education Director requesting permission to do research

<div align="right">

P. O. Box 569

Ngweze

Namibia

11 May 2011

Cell no.: 00264 813957371

</div>

The Regional Director

Caprivi Education Region

Private Bag 5006

Katima Mulilo

Namibia

Dear Sir

Re: Request for permission to visit schools in the Kizito Cluster for research purposes

I am writing to request permission to study 2 secondary schools in the Kizito Cluster for my research during May and June 2011. The secondary schools I wish to visit are Kizito College/Senior Secondary School and Lisikili Combined School.

The objective of my study is to investigate the school dropout phenomenon at Grade 10 level. I would like to investigate the predisposing and resilience factors of the school dropout phenomenon in both rural and urban school settings so as to gain a deeper understanding of the issue within these contexts. The study will include interviews with the schools' principals, teachers, learners, school dropouts and the parents of the two groups of children. These will have to be interviewed in order to gain their perceptions, views and opinions about the issue of focus.

With this study I wish to answer the following research questions:

Why do Grade 10 learners in urban and rural secondary schools in the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia drop out of school or remain in school?

The key sub questions are:

(i) What are the main causes for girls dropping out of school at Grade 10 level in the selected rural and urban secondary schools in the study?

(ii) What are the main causes for boys dropping out of school at Grade 10 level in the selected rural and urban secondary schools in the study?

(iii) How do learners in these schools who face similar challenges at Grade 10 level but do not drop out of school deal with the challenges?

(iv) How do parents of learners who drop out of school in these schools deal with these challenges?

(v) How do parents of learners who do not drop out of school in these schools deal with these challenges?

(vi) What strategies are used by each of the schools in the study to prevent the dropping out of school amongst at risk learners?
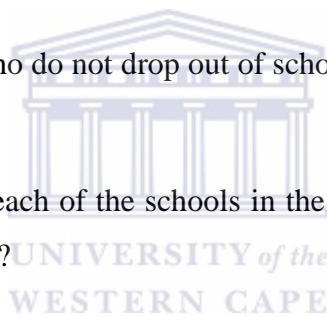
I hope this study might be of benefit to both the target schools and the Education Directorate as it will help discover some of the problems that might have not been identified by these education stakeholders in relation to the school dropout and resilience phenomena. I will therefore share my findings with all of the above.

I thank you in advance for your understanding in this matter.

Yours faithfully

_____

Mr I.L. Maswahu

Appendix I

Letter of permission from the Regional Education Director to conduct a study

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
CAPRIVI REGIONAL COUNCIL
DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION

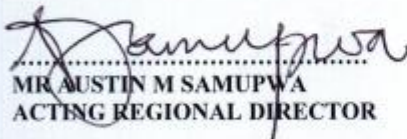|	
Enquiries: R N Mabuku	Tel: 066-253002
File No.:	Fax: 066-253187
E-mail: nrmabuku@gmail.com	Date: 19 May 2011

Mr I L Maswahu
P O Box 569
NGWEZE

Dear Sir

RE: PERMISSION TO VISIT SCHOOLS IN THE KIZITO CLUSTER FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES

Given the importance of your research topic as outlined in your letter, permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at Kizito College and Lisikili Combined School. However, please note the following conditions attached to such authorisation:

1. Prior notification to the schools should be made via the Circuit Inspector
2. The study should at all times NEVER disrupt the formal school programme
3. Academic research ethics are not compromised at any stage
4. The Directorate would be grateful if the results of your study would be shared with both this office and the schools concerned at the appropriate time and in line with the publication requirements of the University of the Western Cape.

We wish you success in your endeavour.

MR AUSTIN M SAMUPWA
ACTING REGIONAL DIRECTOR

CAPRIVI REGIONAL COUNCIL
DIRECTORATE EDUCATION
1 9 MAY 2011
DIRECTOR
PRIVATE BAG 5006 - KATIMA MULILO

cc: Inspector of Education: Katima Mulilo Circuit

Appendix J

Letter to the principal of School A requesting permission to conduct a study

P.O. Box 569

Ngweze

Namibia

20 May 2011

Cell no.: + 264 813957371

The School's Principal

Lisikili Combined School

Dear Sir

Re: Request for permission to carry out a study at your school

I write to inform you that permission was granted to me by the Acting Regional Education Director to carry out a study at your school in May and June 2011. Though the Acting RED gave me permission, I still find it procedurally necessary to ask permission to gain access to the school from you as well. The title of the study is "Grade 10 dropout predisposition and resilience in one rural and one urban secondary school in the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia". It is a M.Ed. study with the University of the Western Cape in South Africa. With this study I wish to investigate the Grade 10 predisposing and resilience factors towards the school dropout problem in the Kizito Cluster.

The two selected schools will be referred to as school A and B; you are therefore assured of anonymity and confidentiality in this regard. The study will involve interviews with the schools' principals, five teachers and five learners from each school. Semi-structured interview questions have been prepared for all the participants. These interviews will take place during breaks or any other time you may suggest avoiding disruption of your normal daily routine activities.

Individual interviews will be conducted with the school's principal, while focus group interviews are planned for teachers and learners, respectively.

It is hoped that an investigation of this matter will contribute towards improved "Education for All". You are thus humbly requested to participate in this study so that we may together gain a better understanding of the issue under focus.

Attached, please find the letter from the Acting Regional Education Director allowing me to visit your school for research purposes.

I look forward to working with you in this study.

Yours faithfully

_____

Mr I.L. Maswahu

Appendix K

Letter of permission from the principal of School A to conduct a study

LISIKILI COMBINED SCHOOL
"Education is Wealthy"

PO Box 2407, Ngweze, Katima Mulilo, Namibia
Telephone No.: +264 66 252806

02 June 2011

Dear Mr. I. Maswahu

RE: ACCEPTANCE LETTER.

Referring to your letter dated: May 2011 which states: Permission to do research at Lisikili Combined School. Your request for permission is accepted, you may start as soon as possible.

Thank you for choosing Lisikili Combined School.

Yours faithfully

PP Nkando
NKANDO G K
PRINCIPAL

Appendix L

Letter to the principal of School B requesting permission to conduct a study

P.O. Box 569

Ngweze

Namibia

20 May 2011

Cell no.: +264813957371

The School's Principal

Kizito College/Senior Secondary School

Dear Sir

Re: Request for permission to carry out a study at your school

I write to inform you that permission was granted to me by the Acting Regional Education Director to carry out a study at your school in May and June 2011. Though the Acting RED gave me permission, I still find it procedurally necessary to ask permission to gain access to the school from you as well. The title of the study is "Grade 10 dropout predisposition and resilience in one rural and one urban secondary school in the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia". It is a M.Ed. study with the University of the Western Cape in South Africa. With this study I wish to investigate the Grade 10 predisposing and resilience factors towards the school dropout problem in the Kizito Cluster.

The two selected schools will be referred to as school A and B; you are therefore assured of anonymity and confidentiality in this regard. The study will involve interviews with the schools' principals, five teachers and five learners from each school. Semi-structured interview questions have been prepared for all the participants. These interviews will take place during breaks or any other time you may suggest avoiding disruption of your normal daily routine activities.

Individual interviews will be conducted with the school's principal, while focus group interviews are planned for teachers and learners, respectively.

It is hoped that an investigation of this matter will contribute towards improved "Education for All". You are thus humbly requested to participate in this study so that we may together gain a better understanding of the issue under focus.

Attached, please find the letter from the Acting Regional Education Director allowing me to visit your school for research purposes.

I look forward to working with you in this study.

Yours faithfully

_____

Mr I.L. Maswahu

Appendix M

Letter of permission from the principal of School B to conduct a study

KIZITO COLLEGE

Private Bag 1019, KATIMA MULILO, Namibia

Tel/Fax: +264 66 253192

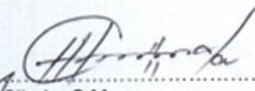June 3, 2011

P.O. Box 569
Ngweze
Namibia

Dear Mr. Maswahu I.L

SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT STUDY

Your request for permission to carry out study at Kizito College in May and June 2011 is hereby accepted in accordance with the promises stated in said request letter.
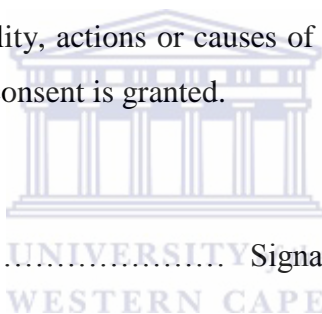
Thank you

Sincerely yours

Sibuku S.M
Principal

Confidentiality consent form for teachers participating in a study

We, the undersigned focus group of teachers agree to keep all the information that we will provide and share in the interview discussion of the study entitled: **Grade 10 dropout predisposition and resilience in one rural and one urban secondary school in the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia**, as confidential as much as possible.

The nature and general purpose of the study and all the possible risks have been explained to us beforehand and understand that we have the right to terminate our services in this research study at any time we desire.

We indemnify and hold harmless the researcher, the University of the Western Cape and its employees from any and all liability, actions or causes of actions that may accrue to us as a result of activities for which this consent is granted.

Name of Teacher 1…………………………Signature……………………..

Name of Teacher 2………………………………… Signature………………………

Name of Teacher 3………………………………… Signature……………………….

Name of Teacher 4………………………………… Signature……………………….

Name of Teacher 5………………………………… Signature……………………….

This is to certify that I (researcher) have explained the purpose of the study to all the research subjects and promise to keep the information provided to me confidential.
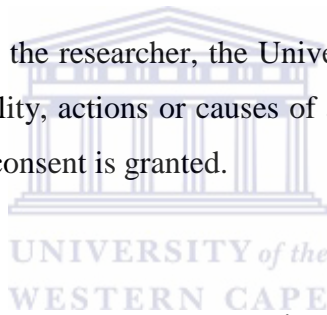
Signature of Researcher: ………………………..

Appendix O

Confidentiality consent form for Grade 11 learners participating in a study

We, the undersigned focus group of Grade 11 learners agree to keep all the information that we will provide and share in the interview discussion for the study entitled: **Grade 10 dropout predisposition and resilience in one rural and one urban secondary school in the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia**, as confidential as much as possible.

The nature and general purpose of the study and all the possible risks have been explained to us beforehand and understand that we have the right to terminate our services in this research study at any time we desire.

We indemnify and hold harmless the researcher, the University of the Western Cape and its employees from any and all liability, actions or causes of actions that may accrue to us as a result of activities for which this consent is granted.

Name of Learner 1…………………………………… Signature……………………..

Name of Learner 2…………………………………. Signature……………………...

Name of Learner 3………………………………… Signature………………………

Name of Learner 4………………………………… Signature……………………...

Name of Learner 5………………………………… Signature……………………...

This is to certify that I (researcher) have explained the purpose of the study to all the research subjects and promise to keep the information provided to me confidential.
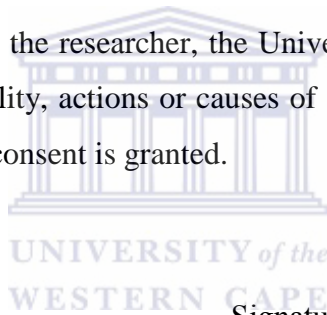
Signature of Researcher: ……………………………

Appendix P

<u>Confidentiality consent form for parents of Grade 11 learners participating in a study</u>

We, the undersigned focus group of parents of Grade 11 learners agree to keep all the information that we will provide and share in the interview discussion of the study entitled: **Grade 10 dropout predisposition and resilience in one rural and one urban secondary school in the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia**, as confidential as much as possible.

The nature and general purpose of the study and all the possible risks have been explained to us beforehand and understand that we have the right to terminate our services in this research study at any time we desire.

We indemnify and hold harmless the researcher, the University of the Western Cape and its employees from any and all liability, actions or causes of actions that may accrue to us as a result of activities for which this consent is granted.

Name of Parent 1…………………………………. Signature………………………...

Name of Parent 2…………………………………. Signature…………………………

Name of Parent 3…………………………………. Signature…………………………

Name of Parent 4…………………………………. Signature…………………………

Name of Parent 5…………………………………. Signature…………………………

This is to certify that I (researcher) have explained the purpose of the study to all the research subjects and promise to keep the information provided to me confidential.

Signature of Researcher: …………………………..
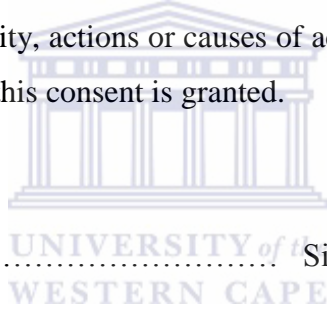
Appendix Q

Consent form for minors to participate in a study

I, the undersigned parent/guardian of ………………………………(name of minor) agree to allow my child to participate and share information in the interview discussion of the study entitled: **Grade 10 dropout predisposition and resilience in one rural and one urban secondary school in the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia.**

The nature and general purpose of the study and all the possible risks have been explained to me beforehand and understand that the child has the right to terminate his/her services in this research study at any time he/she desires.

I indemnify and hold harmless the researcher, the University of the Western Cape and its employees from any and all liability, actions or causes of actions that may accrue to the child as a result of activities for which this consent is granted.

Name of Parent/Guardian……………………………… Signature…………………

This is to certify that I (researcher) have explained the purpose of the study to the parent/guardian and his/her child and promise to keep the information provided to me as confidential as possible.
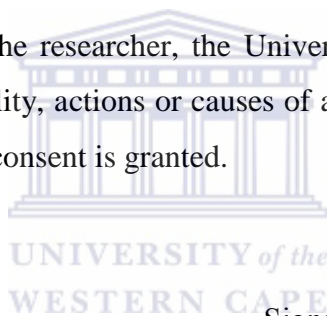
Signature of Researcher…………………………

Appendix R

Personal consent form for research participants to participate in a study

I, the undersigned research participant…………………………………(name of research participant) agree to participate and share information with the researcher in the interview discussion of the study entitled: **Grade 10 dropout predisposition and resilience in one rural and one urban secondary school in the Kizito Cluster of the Caprivi Education Region in Namibia.**

The nature and general purpose of the study and all the possible risks have been explained to me beforehand and understand that I have the right to terminate my services in this research study at any time I desire.

I indemnify and hold harmless the researcher, the University of the Western Cape and its employees from any and all liability, actions or causes of actions that may accrue to me as a result of activities for which this consent is granted.

Name of Participant……………………………… Signature…………………

This is to certify that I (researcher) have explained the purpose of the study to the research participant and promise to keep the information provided to me as confidential as possible.

Signature of Researcher…………………………