

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL



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**INYUVESI
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**THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN ADDRESSING LEARNER ENROLMENT
DECLINE IN TWO EASTERN CAPE RURAL JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS:
SMTs PERSPECTIVES**

DESMOND MONDE GOGO

**DECEMBER
2016**

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DECLINE IN TWO EASTERN CAPE RURAL JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS:
SMTs PERSPECTIVES**

BY

DESMOND MONDE GOGO

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education Leadership, Management and Policy in the School of Education**

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SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT

This dissertation has been submitted with / without my approval

Miss P. Mthembu (Supervisor)

Date: _____

Dr S.D. Makhasane (Co-supervisor)

Date: _____

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- The staff at Edminson Library for their assistance and friendliness.
- The Eastern Cape Department of Education for allowing me to conduct research in its schools.
- The SMTs of the two schools in which this study was conducted.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my dear wife Mrs. S. Gogo and to all my children especially Manyano, Bayolise and my last born Yolokazi, for supporting and motivating me to accomplish this academic goal. To them, I will always be thankful.

This study is also dedicated to my mother, Miss S. N Bandezi, my late father Mr. D.P Gogo, my late grandmother Mrs. R.Y Bandezi (uMakhayise) and my late younger sister Mrs. N. Ndayi for their understanding, encouragement and support during this academic journey.

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored learner enrolment decline and the perspectives of SMTs regarding their leadership role in addressing learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary. Learner enrolment decline has an impact on the number of teachers that are to be employed in schools. A case study was conducted in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools in Flagstaff town. The participants were SMTs of both rural junior secondary schools. This study was located in the interpretive paradigm.

Documents reviewed and semi-structured interviews constitute the research instruments for data generation. This study was framed by Weitzel and Jonsson's (1989) model of organisational decline and Transformational Leadership Theory. Local, continental and globally scholastic works, on the research topic, were interrogated to seek insights into the progress so far made and determine the agenda to the explored phenomenon of learner enrolment decline. The analysis and discussion of the generated data showed that learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools was caused by a myriad of factors such as the following: teacher absenteeism, incompetence of teachers, shortage of teachers, dearth of learner leadership, poverty, lack of resources and migration.

The following were the recommendations of the study based on the findings and conclusions: It was suggested that SMTs should initiate leadership workshops within the school. They should invite departmental officials to facilitate them. SMT members should stimulate learners, teachers, parents and other stakeholders to be creative and innovative in addressing learner enrolment decline in those two participant schools. It was suggested that SMT members should empower themselves by initiating conflict management workshops as to alleviate conflict among themselves and their subordinates. Fund raising committee should be established as to raise fund to assist in providing some of the resources such as electricity and water. Recycling should also be promoted so as to improvise for the schools. SMT members should empower teachers and learners with skills of recycling old materials. Technology as a learning area should be enhanced so that learners can be taught to design commodities that can be sold as to alleviate poverty. Learners and the community should be educated on the importance of education. Parental involvement should be promoted. Curriculum should be enhanced.

The purpose of the study was to explore SMTs perspectives of their leadership roles pertaining to learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary school.

Implications for further study were to do a comparative study of learner enrolment decline phenomenon across districts and provinces including an increased sample size, sample population and time.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

DBE Department of Basic Education

HoD Head of Department

SACE South African Council for Educators

SGB School Governing Body

SMT School Management Team

TBVC Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, Ciskei

ETHICAL CLEARANCE



14 July 2016

Mr Desmond Monde Gogo 215079576
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Gogo

Protocol reference number: **RSS/0327/016M**

Project Title: **A qualitative study of school leadership practices in schools with learner enrolment decline in Flagstaff sub-district in Eastern Cape**

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 04 April 2016, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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100 YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

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CHAPTER ONE

AN ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This is a dissertation which reports a study that was conducted in two junior secondary schools in Flagstaff, in the province of the Eastern Cape, South Africa. Through this study, I wanted to obtain insights about the factors that contributed to the decline of learner enrolment in the two junior secondary schools. My interest in this topic emanated from my experience in teaching in the circuits where schools are located. The focus of the study was on understanding the role played by the SMT in this problem. The SMTs have a critical role to play in ensuring that learner enrolment does not decline. In addition, through this research, I wanted to understand how the SMTs' leadership assisted in responding to the challenge of enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools.

Rural school teachers faced challenges such as migration of learners to urban area schools due to the insufficient sports facilities and inadequate educational resources. My personal experience and informal observations suggest that all the factors cited above play a role in this problem. This chapter serves as an orientation to the study, and as such, it provides a background to the problem being studied. As part of the orientation, other component of the research process such as the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, definition of key concepts, demarcation of the study, objectives of the study and critical questions of the study, the outline of the study are presented. The chapter concludes with the chapter summary.

1.2 Background to the problem

Learner enrolment decline is the problem even globally and in South Africa since it may results to closure and consolidation of schools (Robertson, 2014). This may be as a result of many factors such as population demographics and economic factors to mention few (Robertson, 2014). There is a constant trend of declining enrolment rates which are prevalent at secondary school level (Malik, 2015). This vividly shows that learner enrolment decline is `in secondary schools worldwide. According to a report compiled by the Department of Education (DoE) and released in 2007, there were 30 117

operational schools but in a report compiled in 2009 the number of schools had declined to 25 827. The most affected schools were in the townships and the rural areas. Some of those schools ended up becoming white elephants, as they ended up not being used.

The Eastern Cape Department of Education once identified more than 500 schools with less than 100 learners each and some were identified to be shut down. It was further affirmed by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) that the process of closing down schools went smoothly (Zangwa, 2012). In Terms of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act No, 108 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996a), the right to education should be observed. The closing down of schools implied that the right of learners to learn may be compromised if no proper attention has been put to ensuring that learners are not left stranded. This indicated the seriousness of the problem of learner enrolment decline in rural junior secondary schools.

Prior to 1994 there were homelands that were considered independent in South Africa. They were four in total and consisted of Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei, and they were usually called TBVC states. Transkei was the first to receive what it called independence in 1976. These states were running their own affairs including education. Transkei was running education according to its own laws. There were junior secondary schools starting from Sub-A to Standard 7. Then, there were senior secondary schools starting from Standard 8 to Standard 10. After 1994 the TBVC states ceased to exist and the four states were re-incorporated into South Africa as a democratic state. In 1996, the term 'standard' was discontinued and replaced by grades. In the former Transkei, now belongs to the province of the Eastern Cape, junior secondary schools starts from Grade-R to Grade 9 and senior secondary schools from Grade 10 to Grade 12. The democratic government of South Africa is in a process of rationalising schools (Department of Basic Education, 2009). Flagstaff is the small town in the Eastern Cape Province which is one of the nine provinces of the Republic of South Africa. The government of the former Transkei invested a lot of money in building most of the rural schools in Flagstaff under present` Lusikisiki District. Most of those rural junior secondary schools were well built with face bricks.

Prior to 1994, the learner enrolment was in high peak and there was no redeployment of educators. Learners from old South African provinces such as Transvaal were attending those rural junior secondary schools because of their quality of education. After 1994

some of schools in those rural areas were struggling to reach their previous average figure. It is suggested that since 1994, there is a non-stop emergency in South African training as that the present framework is coming up short the lion's share of South Africa's childhood. It is further contended that except for a well off minority, most South African students cannot read and write at their levels of development (Spaull, 2013). Elaborating further, Spaull (2013) displayed the other side of the coin by noting that the Department of Basic Education (DBE) is starting to address more of the root causes of underperformance.

I assume that learner enrolment at Flagstaff had gone by almost a quarter of what it was in the previous years. Different scholars display different causes or factors that contribute in learner enrolment decline, in different context such as open distance learning, mode of delivery, policy changes on payment fees and negative media reports (Bishau & Samkange, 2015). Numan, Islam and Sadat (2007) as well as Bishua and Samkange (2015) have mentioned around five contributing factors to the decrease in learner numbers. These include the conveyance framework to bolster understudy which is not compelling, the projects that are not really at work request list; there are superfluous deferrals in distributing the examinations timetable and production of results and there is absence of inspiration communicate to achieve inaccessible viewers.

In a study conducted in Kenya, it was found that fees and levies contributed to the decline in enrolment of girls in boarding schools (Kiagee, Simatwa & Ayodo, 2014). This suggests that perhaps, the lack of boarding fees is one of the factors that contributed in learner enrolment decline. Other financial elements that add to learner enrolment decrease are customary social practices like female genital mutilation, early relational unions, high school pregnancies and inclination to teach young men to the avoidance of young ladies, poor school societies like compel reiteration ugly school eating regimens and poor school Kenya Certificate of auxiliary examination comes about (Kiagee *et al.*, 2014). Robertson (2014) has noted other factors that can contribute to learner enrolment decline, and these are the global economic downturn; youth migration, and the volatility of the primary resource sector.

Grant and Hollman (cited, in Ramulamo & Pitso, 2013, p.756) take note that in "South Africa national information demonstrate that one in five 18-year-old ladies has conceived an offspring and more than 40% have ended up mom-s by the age of 20". This

proposes that various female learners drop out from optional school as a consequence of getting to be guardians in their initial period of tutoring. This clearly shows to me that teenage pregnancy has tremendous impact on learner enrolment decline in other contexts. Since it was clear that learner enrolment decline is a problem, enrolment management has been proposed as a solution to the problem. Enrolment management is a far-reaching process designed to help to accomplish and sustain optimum learning through recruitment, retention and graduation rate (Kongola, 2012).

1.2 Statement of the problem

The phenomenon of learner enrolment decline is prevalent in the Flagstaff rural junior secondary schools. Since I am the principal and I was the teacher in these rural areas I have noticed many attempts being made by SMT members to address learner enrolment decline such as extension of the curriculum, introduction of new codes, invitations of motivational speakers and the organization of extra classes but no visible change has occurred in those schools. Some schools are about to be closed. In terms of South African Schools Act No, 84 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996b), schools that do not meet a certain number of learners enrolled, are closed after consultation has been made with relevant stakeholders by authorities. Noticing the indication of closure of these schools, as a teacher and a principal, I decided to conduct a study in Flagstaff context. Literature I have reviewed has dealt with school decline based on performance of learners not on learner enrolment decline. For instance, a study conducted in South Africa has explored the role of leadership of principals and circuit managers not SMTs (Mthiyane, Bhengu& Bayeni, 2014). I found it necessary to conduct a study to explore the SMTs perspectives of their leadership roles pertaining to learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools. I believe that by conducting such a study the gap in the literature will be closed. Enrolment of farm school learners appeared to be declining in most farm schools.

Farm school educators faced challenges such as migrating of learners to urban area schools because of inadequate sports facilities and lack of educational resources (Maponya, 2010). This implied that the study on learner enrolment decline on farm schools in South Africa was conducted. However, my literature search has not yielded any positive results in terms of the role played by the SMT members in handling learner enrolment decline, particularly in the Eastern

Cape. It is against this background that the study explores the role of SMTs perspectives in addressing learner enrolment decline in rural junior secondary schools.

1.4 Rationale, purpose of the study and significance of the study

The gradual decline of learner enrolment in Flagstaff rural junior secondary schools triggered me to conduct the study. It was first experience in my teaching to see school faced with this situation. The negative consequences of learner enrolment decline also motivated me to do the study since they impacted negatively on the culture of teaching and learning. Redeployment of teachers, transport costs incurred by the parents are some of the examples of negative consequences of learner enrolment decline in Flagstaff rural junior secondary schools.

The learner enrolment decline resulted to redeployment of teachers to other schools where their service were still needed. Bear in mind that the redeployment of teachers was done based on the number of learners enrolled at the school, not on the subjects or learning areas taught at that particular school. This had a negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning because there was a shortage of teacher teaching other subject which have been left so unqualified teachers to those subjects. Teachers are experiencing severe stress because they teach subjects that they were not trained for and they are complaining about excessive workload. Therefore, it was important that we know the role played by the SMT members in dealing with this problem. Hence, the purpose of the study was to explore the SMTs' perspectives of their leadership roles pertaining to learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools.

The study may help School Management Teams (SMTs) to learn and understand the learner enrolment decline phenomenon and to be able to identify schools who are at risk of leaner enrolment decline. School Management Teams (SMTs) are likely to use the findings in this study to develop systems that can minimise and preclude learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools. The study has a potential to be profitable to policy makers by using its findings to develop policies that take into cognisance the context and situation of individuals, schools and communities with an intent to address the challenges and causes of learner enrollment decline.

The study has an advantageous ability to researchers, especially those focusing on the causes of the leaner enrolment decline phenomenon as they may use this study to inform

further research studies and other educational stake holders who are dealing with mechanisms and strategies to address learner enrolment decline. Schools at risk of learner enrolment decline may ultimately benefit from the study since some schools and educational stakeholders might apply some of the findings and the recommendations made in this study.

1.5 Objectives of the study

- To explore factors that contribute to learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary school.
- To investigate initiatives that can be employed by SMTs in addressing learner enrolment decline.
- To investigate the perspectives of SMTs' regarding their leadership role in addressing learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools.

1.6 Research questions of the study

- What factors do SMTs understand as contributing towards learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools?
- What initiatives do SMTs employ in addressing learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools?
- What are the perspectives of SMTs regarding their leadership role in addressing learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools?

1.7 Definition of key concepts

There are a number of concepts that are central to towards understanding the role of leadership in the schools in addressing the decline of learner enrolment. These concepts include leadership, management, role, school management team and rurality. Besides these key concepts, in this section I also provide a brief exploration of the relationship between leadership and management as these two concepts are intricately connected but distinct at the same time.

1.7.1 Leadership

It may be argued that there is no agreement among scholars such as (Kruse, 2013; Zeitchik, 2012 & Yukl, 1994) since they define leadership in different ways. There is a range of emphasis among different scholars with others foregrounding the position of a person while other just emphasise the notion of influencing other people towards the achievement of organisational goals. Despite this lack of a clear definition of what leadership is, there are common themes that come to mind when analysing various definitions offered by these scholars. Three common elements include the fact that leadership occurs between two or more people, one being the leader while the other is led. The second issue is that of influence itself. Leadership is about influence that the leader exerts on the others so that goals can be achieved. The third element is that leadership occurs within an organisational set up.

Kruse (2013) argues that leadership is a procedure of social impact which expands the exertion of others, towards the accomplishment of an objective. As indicated by Zeitchik (2012), administration is empowering others to dog your vision inside the structure you set, to the degree that it turns into an aggregate exertion, an aggregate vision, and an aggregate achievement.

1.8.2 Management

Management is the other side of the same coin. According to Smith (1995), the way toward working with and through staff, learners, and assets, to accomplish hierarchical objectives is management. There are four key management elements of the management procedure, which are as per the following: arranging, sorting out, persuading and controlling, in this way the SMTs need to guarantee that they are clung to since they are the basic skills of any association. It might be proposed that the SMTs, to address the learner enrolment ought to hold fast to, the four mainstays of management.

Management is the hierarchical procedure that incorporates vital arranging, setting targets, overseeing assets, sending the human and monetary resources expected to accomplish goals, and measuring comes about. Management additionally, incorporates recording and putting away realities and data for later utilise or for others inside the association. Management capacities are not constrained to directors and administrators. Each individual from the association has some management and reporting capacities as an aspect of their responsibilities (Hissom, 2009). Delineating from these definitions, the

normal words underscored are procedures, arranging and control. In this review, the premium will be to look at the procedures and practices received by SMTs in applying administrative capacities to address learner enrolment decline.

1.8.3 The relationship between management and leadership

According to Bolman and Deal (cited in Summary Report, 2003), leading and managing are dissimilar, but both are vital. Institutions, which are over controlled but under directed at the end, lose any sense of spirit or purpose. Poorly controlled institutions with strong magnetic leaders may rise temporarily only to collapse shortly thereafter. The challenge of modern organisations requires the objective perspective of the manager as well as the sparks of vision and commitment intelligent leadership requires. It may be suggested that school management teams should take cognisance of the vitality of management and leadership in addressing learner decline enrolment, although they are distinct. In short, the message I am sharing here is the close relationship between management and leadership. Drawing from the scholars cited above, leadership has to do with maintenance aspects of organisations and focus on controlling and implementing decisions made. Leadership on the other hand focuses on vision creation and influencing people to do what a leader wants them to do (Clarke, 2007). That is why both of them are vital and heavy reliance on any one of them at the expense of the other is detrimental.

1.8.4 Role

Bormann (1990, p.161) describes role “as that set of perceptions and expectations shared by the group member about the behavior of an individual in both the task and social dimensions of group interactions”. Smith and Erwin (2015) propose three basic suppositions in any part, for example, part origination, which they characterise it as what a man thinks his or her occupation is, and how the individual has been instructed to do it. His or her reasoning may well be affected by numerous false suppositions such as deluding titles and preparations received from a forerunner amid his or her last week at work, and so forth. They additionally characterise past desire as what others in the association think the individual is in charge of, and how he/she ought to do those duties. Others' thoughts may likewise be affected by erroneous data (for instance, the way it was at a previous occupation, need changes, suspicions, conflicting messages from initiative and so forth). The part desire is generally in light of the yield of results anticipated from

the part. They likewise portray past conduct as what a man really does in completing the employment.

1.8.5 School Management Team

Based on the manual entitled “Towards Effective School Management”, the term School Management Team refers to the highest management in a school (Department of Education, 2003). In the South African context, school management team consists of the principal, the deputy principal, and Head of Department (HOD). It may be suggested that the enhancement of school management team is vital in addressing learner enrolment dropping.

Post-Level One Educators or teachers, as they are also called, have some roles to play in school such as mediating learning, interpreting, and designing learning programs and materials. They are leaders, administrators, and managers of the school. They play community, citizenship, and pastoral role in the schools and scholars, researchers and lifelong learners (Department of Education, 2003). They further play a vital role in assessing learners and making sure that assessment is taking place in schools, since assessment is the essential feature of the teaching and learning process. In terms of National Education Policy, Act 27 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996), educators are specialists in learning areas, subjects, and in different phases. It may suggested that educators should be well grounded with the seven roles so as mitigate the problem. The SMT members have a potential to utilise leadership roles in addressing learner enrolment decline.

1.8.6 Rurality

The term rural and rurality has many definitions as there is no one conception about what constitutes rural. For instance, according to Hlalele (2014), rurality implies a lifestyle, a perspective and culture which rotate around land, animals, editing and group. Provincial ranges incorporate all traditional collective zones, farmland, peri-urban zones, casual settlements, and little provincial towns where individuals have various potential outcomes to live from the land. Balfour (2008) provides a broader conception of rurality which includes space, land and socio-economic condition of the area. This scholar further states that rurality has to do with "... space, confinement, group, destitution,

illness, disregard, backwardness, minimisation, elimination, conservatism, tribalism, prejudice, resettlement, defilement, entropy, and prohibition" (Balfour, *et al.*, 2008, p.101).

The issue of population density and socio-economic conditions of the area is highlighted by other scholars and sociologists such as Sorokini and Zimmerman (1929). According to these scholars, rurality is characterised by relatively “low population density, isolation, and economic dependence on agricultural or other extractive industries, associated low degree of role differentiation, the presence of a traditional and holy nominative order” (Sorokini & Zimmerman, cited in Tahery & Willies, 1975, p.251). It may be worth noting that the conception of rurality has not changed too much from 1920s as depicted from the work of the two sociologists above to the 21st century. For instance, writing in the 1960s, Bealer, Willits, and Kuvlesky (1965) viewed the term rurality to refer to “areas of low population density, small absolute size, and relative isolation, where the major economic base is agricultural production and where the way of life of the people is reasonably homogenous and differentiated from that of other sectors of society.” Similarly, Hart, Larson, and Lishner (cited, in Christiaens, 2015, p.42) suggest that the term rurality suggests “bucolic landscapes, unique demographics, isolation, low population density, and distinct sociocultural patterns. In the same vein, Franks and Goswami (2010) also suggest low population density as one of the characteristic of rurality.

It is therefore evident that although there is no agreement about what constitutes rurality, there are commonalities about certain factors which may be contributing to the decline of learner enrolment in rural areas. Depicting from the definitions presented in the above paragraphs, the common words emphasised are low population density and isolation. Whilst these conceptions form an integral part of my own conception of rurality, this term is used in this study to refer to those areas that fall within the authority of traditional leadership in terms of Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act, No. 41 of 2003 (Republic of South Africa, 2003). Therefore, all schools that are located in the land which is under the authority of traditional leaders, are regarded as rural, and this is the notion that foregrounds my application of this term in this study.

1.8.7 Decline means falling-off, decrease. This concept has been used in this study since the problem of learner enrolment falling-off has been experienced in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools.

1.8.8 Enrolment means the action of enrolling or being enrolled. The concept has been used in the study since the enrolment for learners was declining in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools.

1.8 Demarcation of the study

The study was conducted in Flagstaff area in the Eastern Cape Province. Two public rural junior secondary schools were chosen for this study. Participants in the study consisted of the SMTs who had experienced learner enrolment decline in their schools. The study focused on seeking an understanding about learner enrolment decline and how school leadership is responding to this challenge.

1.9 Outline of the study

This dissertation consists of five chapters and these are outlined in this section.

Chapter One

This chapter introduces the study as well as the chapter. Chapter One introduces the study by providing a background to the study; the purpose and significance of the study and also by formally stating the statement of the problem. Research objectives and critical questions are also stated in this chapter. Towards the end, the chapter provides operational definition of key concepts that underpinned the study. The demarcation of the study is also outlined, and it concludes with a summary of the chapter.

Chapter Two

Chapter Two focuses on the review of the literature that is relevant for the study. Theories that would help me better understand the problem are presented and discussed in detail.

Chapter Three

This chapter provided a detailed discussion of the design and methodology that was used in conducting the study. Issues such as the research approach, research paradigm; sampling and data generation methods formed part of this chapter. Towards the end the chapter discussed various techniques that were used to ensure trustworthiness of the findings as well as ethical consideration.

Chapter Four

The fourth chapter is dedicated to presenting and discussing the findings that were generated from the analysis of the data. The findings centered on the views of the SMT members about what they regarded as the factors that contribute to learner enrolment decline in their respective schools.

Chapter Five

This is the last chapter and it discussed the conclusions that were drawn from the findings that were discussed in Chapter Four. Based on the conclusions made, recommendations are made. The chapter also highlights some implications for future research.

1.10 Chapter summary

Chapter One was an orientation to the study. As an orientation, it provided an introduction and the background of the study, and also gave an explanation about the rationale for the study to be undertaken. As a researcher, I was interested in understanding why the phenomenon of learner enrolment decline occurred despite the attempts made by the Department of Basic Education in addressing it. Such an interest emanated from my experience as a teacher who worked in the circuits where the schools that experienced this phenomenon were located. Prior to 1994 learner enrolment was in its peak in the area where this study was conducted. Because of that, the issue of redeployment of educators was unheard of. However, after 1994 some of schools in the rural areas in this part of the country experienced difficulties in their attempts to reach their previous enrolment figures.

The chapter also outlined various elements of the research; these include the formal statement of the research problem; the purpose and the rationale of the study. The chapter has also stated the significance of the study, research objectives as well as the critical questions. It further outlined the definitions of keys concepts, outline of the study and the demarcation. The next chapter will review the literature on learner enrolment decline and will also discuss the theoretical framework for the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore learner enrolment decline in rural junior secondary schools and to obtain insights about the role of leadership in addressing learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools. Key concepts that underpin this study were discussed in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, there are other concepts pertaining to leadership that are discussed in this section. These are collaborative leadership theory, adaptive leadership and authentic leadership theory.

2.1.1 Collaborative leadership theory

Collaborative leadership theory alludes to leadership that uses the abilities and assets of all individuals, not just a solitary pioneer or official, to realise the desired change or produce inventive and versatile arrangements (Hickman, 2010). It might also be contended that if School Management Team Members (SMTs) could fill in as a group or mutually that may help in tending to learner enrolment decrease. This suggests that the SMT individuals could change instructors and different partners into accomplices, co-leaders, and long lasting learners and could affect decidedly in tending to learner enrolment decrease in schools. It is further contended that collaborative leadership theory is important in all types of associations (Tapscott & Williams, 2006).

2.1.2 Adaptive leadership theory

Adaptive leadership theory is a theory that produces and maintains a setting where individuals create and utilise their ability to seek after new open doors, meet obscure conditions or dangers, and take care of issues that rise up out of a perplexing, dynamic environment (Hickman, 2010). This theory is relevant for this study mainly because School Management Teams ought to be able to adjust their leadership and ensure that they turn around undesirable situations to more desirable ones. Therefore, they may seek after new open doors in tending to learner enrolment decline.

As indicated by Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky (2009), versatile authority is particularly about change that empowers others with the ability to flourish. New situations and newdreams require new methodologies and capacities, and additionally they need leadership and management to assemble them. It is therefore, contended that the SMT members should be able to adjust in various circumstances in attending to learner enrolment decline.

2.1.3 Authentic leadership theory

Authentic leadership theory positions leaders as individuals who by and large, are oriented towards serving others through their leadership. They are more fascinated by enabling the general population they prompt to have positive influence in realising organisational goals for the good of all rather than for their personal self-esteem. They are guided by characteristics of the heart, by energy and sympathy. Authentic leaders are desperately needed in schools; they have duty to engage the general population they lead as to advance the nature of instruction in all circles of school life. Their energy and sympathy can change the conditions in the school in such a way that the parents and the learner would want to belong there. They can use their savvy decisions in advancing a culture of learning and educating (Wilson, 2014). Clearly when conditions in the school are conducive to effective teaching and learning, learner enrolment is unlikely to drop.

The next section deals with various critical elements that help to address the key questions of the study. The literature reviewed focuses specifically on the factors contributing to learner enrolment decline, initiatives to address it and the role of leadership in addressing learner enrolment decline in schools. Furthermore, at the end of this section, there is a robust discussion of what is learnt from literature and conceptual gaps are identified.

2.2 Factors that contribute to learner enrolment decline and strategies to address it

The literature I reviewed elicited 8 factors and these are poor administration, migration, socio-economic background, deprivations, paucity of resources, quality of education, access to information and communication technology and security. Each of these factors is discussed below.

2.2.1 Poor administration

Numan , Islam and Sadat (cited in Bishua & Samkange, 2015) mention five contributing factors to the decline in learner numbers. These factors are the delivery system to support student which is not effective; the programs that are not necessarily on the job demand list; there are unnecessary delays in publishing the examinations timetable and publication of results and there is lack of motivation broadcast to reach distant viewers. All these issues are indicative of school administration that is not effective. Yektiningtyas-Modouw (2013) suggests that low quality pre and in-service teacher training, strong teacher absenteeism, supervision of school, serious lack of teaching and learning materials that are relevant, rural environment and materials with no motivation to learners can be considered as contributing factors to learner enrolment decline, especially in rural contexts. It may be argued that if high authorities do not supervise schools, the authorities within the school will relax and the culture of learning and teaching will deteriorate as learners usually end up not being taught. When the situation becomes so dire, parents start taking their children away from the school to other schools where culture of learning and teaching is observed.

Alhassan (2013) suggests that school-based factors such as teacher absenteeism contribute to learner enrolment decline in the sense that it can lead to the parents withdrawing their children from institutions where the rate of teacher absenteeism is high and take them to other places where the culture of learning and teaching is embraced. It is further pointed out that some of the parents are curious enough to take notice of the institution where teachers bask in the sun not teaching. It is noted that the curriculum plays a vital part in every school as it shows when and how the school programmes are to be arranged systematically for harmonious or united action and who should take part in the programme. Gideon, *et al.*, (2015) suggest that human resources, school physical and financial resources have the most important relationship with the performance of students in certain subjects. It is evident that teacher absenteeism, lack of commitment to teaching and curriculum coverage are influenced to a great extent by the type of leadership and management that exists in the school. This section deals with poor administration and that term has been used in this section specifically and the study generally to refer to management and leadership. When leadership is ineffective,

teaching and learning and learning situation tends to follow suit. No parent wants to send his or her child to a school where there is no effective teaching and learning.

2.2.2 Migration

Migration has to do with the movement of people from one place to another for an extended period of time (Mafora, 2013). Clearly, if parents move from rural areas to other places, that is likely to destabilise the profile of the local population (Mofora, 2013). Therefore, there are both positive and negative effects to that scenario. Tinkham (2014) argues that the movement of the people from rural communities to the cities, slow pace in terms of economic growth is likely to occur. That is why Tinkham (2014) regards the migration of people from rural areas to the cities as a drawback for those areas losing the population. Cities pose a threat to the survival of rural economies and rural schooling in terms of brain drain (Myende, 2014) caused by attractive working and learning environments in urban areas. Mofora (2013) suggests that learners from rural or townships migrate to former Model C schools in urban areas due to socio-economic disadvantages that negatively affect rural communities. When people migrate to the cities and towns, learner enrolment decline might result.

2.2.3 Socio-economic background

Yucel , Boyaci, Dermirhan and Karatas (2013) affirms that discriminatory laws, direct or indirect economic, social, and cultural problems contribute to learner enrolment decline in the sense that students choose areas or places to learn based on the socio-economic status of their parents. This means that the choice of the school will be influenced by the education or financial standing of the parents. Therefore, learners from poor economic background are not free to move to their school of choice. Therefore, the enrolment of a child depends on the social, economic, and cultural capital level of the parents. If the social or economic level of the parents is high, the child will attend school for high levels parents. If the level of parents changes from low to high, the child will be accepted to school of high level parents. This means that there will be a learner enrolment decline from the school where the learner was previously enrolled.

Views of Aldana (2016) are shared by Yucel, *et al.* (2013) that economic and social complexities can contribute negatively to learner enrolment decline. Parents may for instance, withdraw their children from school where drugs are the meal of the day. When

parents withdraw their children from a particular institution, such a move can lead to learner enrolment decline; particularly if parents do so in greater numbers. Economic complexities can also contribute to learner enrolment decline since learners will leave the school which suffers from a lack of resources and prefer to attend the well-equipped ones. Political complexities can easily impact different communities negatively in the sense that some community members may take their children where there is political instability to places where there is peace and stability.

South Africa's Basic Education is still struggling in addressing the historical and systemic imbalances. It is also argued that most of the policies implemented have not yet made progress in addressing education transformation. I am saying this because the previously disadvantaged schools, especially in rural areas cannot be compared with former Model C schools in terms of socio-economic conditions. Chikoko, Naicker and Mthiyane (2015) argue that the context of education in South Africa is unique in that it comprises both the developed first world and the developing third world features simultaneously. The first world comprises top class education environments comparable to nay in the developed world. On the other end of the continuum we have dysfunctional schools with minimal or no culture of teaching and learning (Chikoko, *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, if parents take their children from the third world part of our country (rural) and send them to the first world part, the former suffers and experience decline in enrolment.

2.2.4 Deprivation

Ngwaru (2010) points out that poverty can also be considered as one of the factors that can contribute to learner environment decline especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. That is due to the fact that some parents may withdraw their children from impoverished school and go to other places to look for jobs and enroll them there. High incidence levels of HIV and AIDS is viewed as another factor that may negatively contribute to learner enrolment decline. De Wet (2013) suggests other factors such as widespread poverty and the impact of HIV/Aids that are more prominent in poverty-stricken areas may contribute to this phenomenon. This is due to the fact that poverty may force learners to leave school prematurely in order to find jobs and help their families to survive (De Wet, 2013). Some

learners might be directly affected and infected by HIV/Aids, and as a result they might end up leaving school.

Teenage pregnancy might be seen as another factor that may contribute to learner enrolment decline since others might willingly leave the school due to pregnancy although the law permits pregnant girls to stay in school during pregnancy. Teacher absenteeism might also force other parents to withdraw their children from such schools and prefer to take them to schools where this behavior does not prevail. Furthermore, De Wet (2013) suggests that school related violence is another issue that might contribute to learner enrolment decline because other parents might not keep their children where violence is rife. Quality education cannot be achieved under such circumstances.

According to Mulama (cited in Ochili, 2013, p. 59), “high levels of poverty in the have had an adverse effect on the Adult Education Programs as learners give priority to looking for food and other basic requirements; hence, basic requirement of the learners, for much outweigh their intellectual needs.” Furthermore, high poverty degrees have a negative impact on the health of learners from poor backgrounds and this negatively affects schooling. It is affirmed that economic constraints are likely to push learners from schools since some are far away from their homes and there is no money to transport them. That might force them to withdraw from schools and might result to learner enrolment decline. The discussion above was based on a whole range of issues that constitute deprivation. A variety of issues have been highlighted in this section because deprivation has a number of components and many of them manifest themselves in (a) income and material deprivation (b) employment deprivation (c) education deprivation and (d) living environment deprivation (Barnes, Wright , Noble & Dawes ,200). In the rural areas some or all of these could be at play at the same time.

2.2.5 Paucity of Resources

Onderi and Makori (2013) note that where principals are faced with serious challenges such as inadequate funds, inadequate resources and lack of qualified teachers, interference from sponsors, the provision of quality education is negatively affected. Onderi and Makori (2013) further note other serious issues such as teenage pregnancy, bullying, alcohol and drugs, violence and truancy can also contribute to instability and

dysfunctional schooling. Obviously when the school life is chaotic parents will withdraw their learners from a school thus resulting in the decline in enrolment. It is therefore advisable that school leaders should equip themselves with skills and strategies to deal effectively and efficiently with these challenges. The stakeholders should also play a vital role in assisting leaders to push away these challenges. Gutuza (2015) agrees with Ngwaru (2010) that the low social economic background of the learners can be one of the factors that contribute to learner enrolment decline in rural secondary schools. They echo Aldara (2016) in affirming economic and social challenges as the other factors that may contribute to learner enrolment decline. Gutuza (2015) further argues that the school environment might also be considered as another factor that can also be highlighted. Lack of facilities and resources in rural based schools is mentioned when there is serious learner enrollment decline.

Gutuza (2015) agrees with Yektingtyas-Modouw (2013) that the lack of materials and equipment for teaching, inadequate supervision and teacher incompetency among other things might be considered as sources of learner enrolment decline. Gutuza advises educational authorities to embark on a huge infrastructural development to provide enough classrooms and subject specialists for rural secondary schools. Gutuza (2015) also suggests that teachers should be highly motivated as to enhance their morale and parents should be stimulated to enhance the learning of their children.

According to Dorman (cited in Gedion, *et al.*, 2015, p. 58), “school physical resources refer to school’s physical structure, equipment and other teaching and learning resources, class size among others.” Seemingly, if the physical resources are not adequate, that would lead to poor performance and that might result to learner enrolment decline. According to Harwing (cited in Keper & Rugira, 2013, p.4), more emphases should also be put on poor educational resources and infrastructure since these play a vital role in boosting the quality of education. Based on research view, it is vivid that no parents are willing to keep their children where the resources and infrastructure is not conducive to teaching and learning. This can be characterised by few classrooms, no toilet facilities, one or two teachers schools, long distances travelled by the learners (Muir & Hartwig, cited in Keper & Rugira, 2013). All these factors make life uncomfortable for the learners and make learning conditions unfavorable, and may contribute to the decline in enrolments.

Ncanywa (2015) affirms that the Eastern Cape is one of the poorest provinces in South Africa. Since this province is poor, that might negatively affect the learner enrolment in the rural parts of the province, and as the result parents might enroll their children in other well equipped schools in the province or migrate to other provinces altogether. In addition, inefficient use of available resources and insufficient supply of resources might be regarded as another factor that could contribute negatively in the situation due to the fact that parents might not be eager to take their children to schools that are under-resourced (Ncanywa, 2015).

2.2.6 Quality of Education

Modi (2013) suggests that the lack of quality education is one of the factors that might contribute to learner enrolment decline. It may be noted that the lack of enough and professionally qualified teachers; teaching and learning materials and teachers who are not motivated might lead to lack of quality in education. Obviously where there is lack of effective teaching, there is lack of quality education and both the learners and the parents are not likely to want to send their children to such a school. Therefore, it may be suggested to the education authorities that by employing professionally qualified teachers, the challenge of incompetent teachers can be minimised.

Sikuku (2015) shares similar sentiments with Modi (2013) that physical facilities such as insufficient classrooms and desks in schools might have negative effects on the morale of both the learners and the parents. Both Sikuku (2015) and Modi (2013) suggest that relevant institutions should employ more teachers that are qualified and provide sufficient teaching and learning materials since the scarcity of qualified teachers and insufficient teaching and learning materials might also contribute negatively on learner enrolment.

2.2.7 Access to Information and Communication Technology

Sey (2013) suggests that access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure by educators and students is insufficient. It is also noted that students of urban schools are more able to find information that has been stored in a computer as compared to those of rural schools. Teachers of urban schools are more likely to find information that is stored in a computer when compared to those that in rural schools.

There is a likelihood that students from rural school might migrate to urban schools where there is more access of ICT infrastructure and more teachers who are able to find information that has been stored in the computer. Seemingly, that might result to weakening learner enrolment in rural schools.

2.2.8 Security

According to Chege (cited in Rasto, 2015, p. 15),

long distances between home and school might make parents to withdraw their children because they could not trust the security of girls especially girls along the way. Several children were found raped and murdered along the way to school. Given such incidents, parents in public primary schools tend to develop fear of allowing their children to continue learning due to perceive or the unexpected along the routes used daily.

Long distances might result in late coming to school and learners may get exhausted which may impact negatively to their learning Mutau (cited in Rasto, 2015). It has been pointed out that rural schools face problems related to isolation, poverty and limited job opportunities for school leavers. Seemingly, poverty might contribute to learner enrolment decline. It is also suggested that insufficient supply of a variety of other things such as desks, tables, maps, pictures and posters might have a negative impact on learner enrolment as the result some parents might end up pulling out their children from those particular schools to urban schools where there are adequate resources that might benefit them.

2.3 Strategies to address learner enrolment decline

There are a number of strategies that can be used by the SMT members in making their schools known and efficient. One of the ways is to adopt aggressive marketing strategies; paying special focus on recruiting well-qualified teacher; promote parental involvement in the affairs of the schools and the promotion of the involvement of other stakeholders in the life of the school. These strategies are discussed below.

2.3.1 Marketing strategies

Marketing strategies can play a vital role in boosting learner enrolment. Some strategies include quality programmes, social media/website, and infrastructural development,

face-to-face talk, media adverts, public address system, prints (Chika, *et al.*, 2015). Kotler and Fox (cited in Chika, *et al.*, 2015, p. 215), suggest that schools that fail to think strategically about their marketing to portray the values of their institutions to be public often find themselves struggling with a range of issues such as poor enrolment, shrinking operations budget and image confusion. Schools can use marketing strategies such as word of mouth, effective use of the school website/social media, customisation, pricing, adequacy of infrastructure and advertising.

An interesting view was expressed that “it is not enough for a school to be effective; it must also project an effective image to parents and stakeholders” Sharrock (cited in Chika, *et al.*, 2015, p. 215). An interesting view was expressed by Kotler and Keller (cited in Chika *et al.*, 2015) that there are three noteworthy characteristics of word of mouth that can be stated as a means of awareness or marketing a business. The first is that it is credible because people trust others they know and respect. Secondly, the word of mouth may be a very intimate dialogue that reflect personal facts, opinion and experiences and it occurs when people want it to and when they are most interested, and it often follows noteworthy or meaningful events or experiences of customers.

A fascinating perspective is communicated by Uchendu, Nwafor and Nwaneri (2015) that not all marketing methodologies will be utilised at the same time. Directors ought to discover the match between what is realistic in the general public with the procedure they will adjust to guarantee that it will viably yield the craved consequence of boosting understudy enlistment. It is in any case, kept up that since the present status of the general public is Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) driven. They ought to receive techniques that are ICT-based such as online networking and site facilitating; media adverts and programme communicate to transmit projects and accomplishments of the school as wide as possible. Mass informing, daily paper adverts and productions of school projects and accomplishments, TV and radio notices and communicate of schools' most appealing projects through some medium, will guarantee that they contact immeasurable gathering of people to broaden the extent of their prospects. This, to a huge degree will empower increment in understudy enlistment for the schools.

2.3.2 Teacher Qualifications

According to Handa (cited in Haugen, *et al.*, 2014), school quality, measured by the number of trained teachers in the administrative post, has a positive and significant effect on enrolment. There are some narratives which suggest that gender composition of the teaching staff has even more importance in determining the household decision to send children to school. Both the simple proportions of the teachers who are female, as well as share of trained female teachers among all teachers are important positive determinants of enrollment rates. However, it is clear if such factors play any role in increasing learner enrolment particularly in the context of rural communities. It may be argued that school quality depends on the availability of well-trained teachers.

2.3.3 Parental involvement

The involvement of the parents in the education of their children has been credited for enhancing the quality of education their children receive. In line with this view, Nel, Kistner and van der Merwe (2013) argues that associations with schools and educators ought to be continually encouraged and upgraded. The favoured medium of correspondence can be the use of the web and the utilisation of online networking.

Nel, Kistner, and van der Merwe (2013, p. 93) conclude that it is important to note that the promotion of diversity is a complex process and that is not the responsibility of a single person or one person only. All the staff members of the institution have a role to play. Everything that happens in the institution has a direct impact on the perceptions of the feeder market and ultimately affects enrolment. It is further suggested that “one of the most important factors in school growth is the overall quality of the experience. Parents are university significant resources to provide the very best education for their child and because of this, they expect the best” (Verma &Yadav, 2015, p. 115). Verma and Yadav (2015) expressed an interesting view that staff should be the primary connection that a family works with your school. These educationists will be the ones to teach and mentor students. When they deliver a high quality educational experience and personally connect with the students in a positive way, this experience will impact enrolment.

2.3.4 The involvement of stakeholders

Newton and Wallin (2013) further expressed an interesting view that you cannot just walk in, no matter who you are, or how much experience you have or how charismatic you are; you cannot just walk in and say, 'Ok this is the way it is'. The reason for this is that this is a whole community that existed before you were even there. Therefore, one needs to give it its due respect and then one needs to help nudge and guide it in the direction that one wants by using all those people that are involved, figuring out what they are good at and trying to make things happen as a group. At the core of wanting to involve stakeholders is the notion of transforming institutions from undesirable situations to more desirable ones. The role to be played by leadership in the school is important. One of the important aspects to this is to ensure that stakeholders know where the school is going in terms of its vision and goals. A variety of strategies for informing stakeholders should also be used. The roles and objectives need to be clarified to the people so that it can be clear about what to do and what not to do (Wallin & Newton, 2013), and the role of the principal and management becomes important.

2.3.5 The school principal's collaborative leadership style and teacher's self-efficacy

According to Arbabi and Mehdinezhad (2015), the application of collaborative leadership style by school principals can intervene in promoting and developing the school. There is evidence in the literature that when the staff feel part of the school life, they tend to participate actively and work as a collective in identifying, analysing the problems as to arrive at the solutions (Arbabi & Mahdinezhad, 2015). Collective leadership becomes important in that regard and the esteem of individual members of the teaching staff is enhanced. When the morale is high among the professional staff, they tend to perform at a higher level than when it is low. Therefore, if there is effective teaching, the chances of learners leaving the school for the other school may be minimised, thus arrest learner enrolment decline.

Habibi (cited in Arbabi & Mahdinezhad, 2015, p.125) argues that "Increasing cooperative leadership in the organisation leads to higher organisational commitment and lower resistance against changes." The principal accelerating the participation of teachers in planning for the school can maximise its development and minimise the chances of learner enrolment decline in the sense that clear and reasonable programmes

would be formed and individual commitment to these programmes would be accelerated and would lead to a decrease of decision-making focus and complexity in the school (Arbabi & Mehdinezhed, 2015). Collaborative leadership style makes teachers to be able to produce the results that are desired by the school and the nation at large and that can minimise the manifestation of decreasing enrolments since people will be highly attracted and interested to take their children to that school due to its high productivity. Mehdinezhad and Arbabi, (2015) infer that agreeable initiative assumes a positive part, so it is important to execute it in association with a specific end goal to take care of issues and dysfunctions and persistently enhance authoritative exercises. Since the educators' self-adequacy has an essential influence in instruction, expanding inspiration and instruction advancement in understudies, self-viability appraisal while utilising instructors in recaptured, given the educator's part in dealing with the classroom, self-adequacy instructional classes for should be outlined. The helpful initiative style is valuable, so it is important to utilise traditional leadership in the form of chiefs.

2.4 Theoretical framework

This section emphasises the two theoretical frameworks that underpin the study which are Weitzel and Jonsson's (1989) Model of organisational decline and Transformation leadership theory. Also included are various tables on Weitzel and Jonsson's (1989) Model of organisational decline to help the theoretical framework to be comprehended better. A summary concludes the chapter including all the aspects of the two theoretical frameworks that have been mentioned throughout this section.

According to Lassa and Enoh (2000), a theoretical framework is an evidence that has been put together to give a guideline and parameters for particular views, explanations, and understanding of any phenomenon. A theoretical framework delivers the detector that constantly directs research activity from conception to an end. Lassa and Enoh (2000) further suggest that the theoretical framework restricts the scope of the research, providing a core for explanation of gathered information or emerging meanings and themes; places items in a coherent manner and forecasting conclusions.

2.4.1 Wertzel and Jonson's organisational decline model

Forecasting decline accurately at every stage is hard but decline should be noticed in its early stage by school management teams and corrective measures should be employed as soon as possible before the decline becomes twisted and irreversible in organisations. Wertzel and Jonson (1989) came up with a model of organisational decline that forecasts decline to under-take five stages, after they reviewed literature on organisational decline. The model points out that decline manifest in five stages. The first stage is when organisations cannot detect the commencing of the decline process. The second stage is when organisations recognise the decline but at the same time, they are rigid to adapt to the internal and external factors that trigger decline. The third stage is when organisations misallocate their funds and attempts in trying to limit decline. The fourth stage is when organisations are in a twist of decline and the decline is almost not reversible and too expensive. The fifth and the last stage is when organisations are obliged to vanish (Wertzel & Jonsson, 1989).

It may be argued that the SMT members may not detect learner enrolment decline at an early stage when everything seems to be going smoothly. However, in the second stage, they may also recognise that there could be some problems somewhere, but they may be rigid to adapt to the internal factors and external factors. This may be associated with laissez-faire. School Management Teams may misallocate funds in trying to limit the decline. There will be a time where School Management Teams are unable to reverse the twisted situation due to high costs. The learner enrolment decline continues until the school closed and merged to other schools.

2.4.2 Transformational Leadership Theory

According Heckman (2010), transformational leadership is a meaningful, challenging work and it communicates clear expectations that encourage followers' commitment to the shared work vision and goals. Leaders who embrace and utilise transformational leadership stimulate followers to be innovative and creative. It may be suggested that if the School Management Teams inspire commitment to shared vision, the teachers and other stakeholders can do more than they thought possible. They can persuade the stakeholders to exceed their own self-interest for the sake of the school or team. They can provide understandable, challenging work and communicate clear expectations that

encourage the stakeholders' commitment to the collective work vision and goals. School Management teams can kindle stakeholders to be inventive and artistic by questioning expectations, reframing problems, and confronting old situations in new ways.

The values expressed in the previous paragraph about transformational leadership are also shared by Bass (1999). This scholar argues that transformational leadership refers to the leader moving the follower beyond immediate self-interests through idealised influence (charisma), inspiration, intellectual stimulation, or individualised consideration. It elevates the followers' level of maturity and ideals as well as concerns for achievement, self-actualisation and the well-being of others, the organisation and society. Gunter (2001) defines transformational leadership as the means by which school principals or head teachers and the teachers can respond to the demands of reform to achieve appropriate and effective learning outcomes through turning the school into a high reliability learning community.

According to Van Loggerenberg (2002), transformational leadership comprises four key pillars, namely, (a) Idealised Influencing (b) Inspirational Motivation (c) Intellectual Stimulation and (d) Individual Consideration. The first pillar, Idealized Influence has to do with the leader's ability to create a warm climate that is conducive to the organisational or the school's growth, renewal, change, enthusiasm, openness and participation. It occurs when the leader envisions a desirable future, articulates how it can be reached, sets an example to be followed, sets high standards of performance, and shows determination and confidence. Therefore, it is important that SMT members create an environment wherein stakeholders embrace the envisioned change. The second pillar, Inspirational Motivation is inextricably linked to the first pillar. Central to inspirational motivation is the notion that facilitative leadership should be able to inspire stakeholders that the leadership or School Management Teams work in order to actively participate in influencing change (Van Loggerenberg, 2002).

In the context of this study, change to be influenced is more about transforming schools from mediocre performance to well-functioning schools where parents would want to send their children to. Intellectual Stimulation focuses on the imperative for parties or individuals to be aware, for instance, of policy provisions for schools' need to mobilise local community for the acquisition of resources as an example. It suggested that the

SMT members empowered with transformation leadership can easily inspire, stimulate teachers to do more in promoting teaching and learning. Consequently, learner academic performance can steadily improve. As a result parents will be stimulated to admit their children to the school. Subsequently, learner enrolment will improve systematically. The role that the SMTs are expected to play is to ensure that all stakeholders understand important documents and that their contents are internalised and actioned. In that way, it will be easier to handle the challenges that are posed by the environment outside the schools. That includes dealing with issues that are exerted by poverty such as drugs abuse and other related social ills. Individual Consideration is one of the most important skills for the leader or school management teams have to master. Understanding individual strengths and weaknesses of each team member cannot be over-emphasised, particularly for effective deployment of individual teachers for purposes of effective teaching and learning.

The two models and as advocated by theories Weitzel and Jonsson's (1989) Model of organisational decline and Transformational leadership theory addressed three key research questions. Wetzel and Jonsson's (1989) Model of Organisational decline addresses factors that contribute to learner enrolment decline. Transformational leadership theory addresses the role of leadership in addressing learner enrolment decline in two South African rural junior secondary schools. In that since the two theories become a theoretical framework.

2. 7 Chapter summary

Chapter Two presented detailed international, continental, and national relevant studies regarding learner enrolment decline in rural junior secondary schools, theoretical framework, clarification of key concepts, selected theories, contributing factors to learner enrolment decline as well as initiatives to address learner enrolment decline. Relevant studies displayed contributing factors such as, migration, poor administration, insignificant recruitment, teacher qualifications, and socio-economic background to mention few. Theoretical framework consists of Wertzel and Jonsson's (1989) Organisational decline Model which highlights five stages organisational decline and Transformational leadership theory which suggests motivation, intellectual stimulation and inspiration to subordinates (Bass, 1999; Gunter, 2001; Timothy & Piccolo, 2004).

Selected theories such as collaborative theory, adaptive theory authentic theory and management theory have been presented in detailed.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of school leadership in addressing learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools. The previous chapter reviewed literature on learner enrolment decline and how School Management Teams deal with such issues. The review of literature also touched on factors that promote the decline in learner enrolment and how such a phenomenon can be addressed. This chapter provides a detailed discussion about issues of research design and methodology, as well as how the methods were utilised in generating data that would assist in answering research questions underpinning this study. The way in which data was produced and analysed is also dealt with in this chapter. Furthermore, the research paradigm, research design, selection of participants, data generation methods and data analysis are discussed. The study sought to achieve the following objectives:

- To explore the perspectives of School Management Teams regarding the factors that contribute to learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools.
- To examine the role of school leadership in addressing learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools.
- To investigate the perspectives of SMTs' regarding their leadership role in addressing learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools.

3.2 Research approach

This study was a qualitative one; because of that qualitative approach was used. The study aimed at understanding what the SMTs perceived as factors that influenced learner enrolment decline. Qualitative approaches are renowned for the vital contribution they have made in the field of education and they have a long history in the social science (Henderson, *et al.*, 1989). Since the researcher is in the centre of all the research activities, observing human activities as an insider; therefore qualitative approach was deemed relevant (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992). Since qualitative research is naturalistic, and the researcher is an instrument, the researcher is in the centre of every action of the

participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). According to Babbie and Mouton (2004), qualitative studies try to study human activities from insider's view point. In addition, Corbin and Strauss (2008) contend that the subjective research permits specialists to get at the internal experience of members, to decide how implications are shaped through and in culture and to find instead of test factors. In the context of this study, I was involved in gathering the information from the SMTs pertaining to learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools.

Qualitative research is dissimilar from quantitative research in the sense that the researcher does not manipulate the situation or variables for research purposes. In fact, the researcher studies the phenomenon in its natural setting where a researcher is in the middle as the main instrument (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

In this study I took part in interviewing participants at the selected schools at Flagstaff which is under Lusikisiki Mega District. I took a deliberate decision to select qualitative research method because this was the most appropriate approach to utilise in this study. However, there are also some criticisms that have been leveled against qualitative research despite its rich history as an alternative to quantitative methodologies (Babbie & Mouton, 2004). There is a belief among some researchers that qualitative studies are unsystematic and they equate qualitative researchers to journalists (Mann, 1985).

These critics believe that qualitative research lacks rigor which its quantitative counterparts have. According to them there seem to be no static procedures to be followed in conducting research; they regard it as a hit-or-miss exercise. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth as qualitative research has orderly methods that are well-grounded, rich in descriptions and explanation of the course of action occurring within confined context (Mouton, 1996). Drawing from such positive elements of qualitative approaches, qualitative methods were utilised in the study because they provided opportunities to the individual cases to emerge and to be analysed in order to give meaning within a particular context (Krueger, 1994).

3.3 Research paradigm

Any research is conducted within the frame of underlying worldviews or belief systems, and this is generally known as research paradigms. A paradigm is a fundamental set of

beliefs; a set of assumptions we are willing to make, which serves as a benchmark that directs the research activities (Maree, 2007). There are four basic paradigms for social science research, and these are positivism, post-positivism, constructivist or interpretive and critical theory (Maree, 2007). Each paradigm differs from the other paradigm based on its basic beliefs about ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Ontology: researchers inside this worldview trust that the truth is socially developed and as the outcome there are numerous methods for survey the world (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Epistemology is the presumption that information is socially built by those in the exploration procedure and that it is the obligation of the specialist to comprehend the perplexing encounters from the perspective of the participants (Mertens, 1998). Methodology are methods for getting the required learning (Tuli, 2010). Axiology focusses on the standards and implications in directing research, and the morals that administer these, that is regard and advancement of social justice (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011).

In the context of this study, interpretive paradigm was used. The interpretive paradigm was preferred over other paradigms because it was deemed suitable for this study. This is because this type of paradigm would enable me as a researcher to comprehend how the school management teams (SMTs) make meaning of their roles as the people who are expected to address learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools.

I believed then and still believe that reality is socially created; therefore, each research participant within the two schools may have different interpretation of their world of work. Similarly, the participants will have different meanings attached the manner in which they address learner enrolment decline in the two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools. This is based on my assumptions that knowledge is socially created by those in the research process and it is the responsibility of the researcher to comprehend the complex experiences from the point of view of the participants (Mertens, 1998). Therefore, I had a duty to understand the complex experiences of the SMTs pertaining to learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools. The school management teams (SMTs) answered the interview questions and shared their views and professional experiences. The interpretive paradigm tried to

portray and interpret people's view point and understanding (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

Through this study, I sought to comprehend the meaning that the SMTs ascribed to learner enrolment falling-off as it was within the interpretivist paradigm. I also wanted to understand how learner enrolment decline could be arrested from the perspectives of the participants. Therefore, the aim of conducting a research of this kind was to acquire a well-hidden information of learner enrolment decline.

3.4 Research design

There are many research designs that are used in qualitative research. In this study, the case study design was adopted and there are different definitions used by various scholars for a case study. For instance, a case study can be described as an empirical inquiry with its real life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomena and the context are not clearly evident (Yin, 1984). A case study can be portrayed as an approach in which the researcher investigates one location or one subject or single particular incident, and gathers data by utilising different gathering information methods during a persistent period (Creswell, 1994; Merriam, 1998). A case study is the approach of high quality for investigation mediation or inventions (Lancy, 1997). A case study is also described as a technique of systematising social information and observing the object holistically. Actually, in this study, a case study design was used to acquire profound comprehension of the setting and the people involved (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). The case study was employed because I wanted to comprehend learner enrolment decline in-depth (Yin, 2009). Furthermore, a case study was vital since it investigated contemporarily phenomenon in its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context as such connections may not be evident.

A case study was employed as to achieve rigorous exploration of the setting (Handel, 1991; Runyan, 1982; Yin, 1994). Yin (2012) further notes that case study emphasises the study of a phenomenon with its real-world context, and favours the generation of data in natural settings, compared to relying on "derived" data. In this research, the selected schools were appropriate cases. A case study designs place on emphasis on separate units, in this case the SMTs working at two rural junior secondary schools. This was a multi-case study.

There are some pros of a case study as observed by Descombe (1988). Some of the main pros of utilising a case study is that it emphasises one instance and permits the researcher to deal with understated facts of the setting in social context. A case study emphasises one respect of human action; in this instance, that human action was the actions of the SMTs in two rural junior secondary learners in addressing learner enrolment decline. A case study design permitted the utilisation of different research techniques and it advanced the utilisation of numerous sources of information. The research aims of this study had recognised that numerous techniques must be utilised to accomplish the research objectives. Interviews were conducted in order to obtain insights about the SMTs' perceptions on the factors that contributed to learner enrolment decline.

A case study was deemed appropriate because as a researcher I had no control over the research setting, but I had to contend with whatever challenge that I encountered during the process of conducting research.

A case study was also well appropriate because it met the small-scale research requirement. This study focused on small units such as two rural junior secondary schools in the Eastern Cape Province. A case study was used since it can do more than a survey as it allows researchers to study things in detail (Denscombe, 2003). In terms of this study, the phenomenon of learner enrolment decline cannot be separated from its context. I utilised a case study design because I wanted to obtain an in-depth comprehension and insight into the SMTs' perceptions of learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools. I also wanted to understand how they dealt with the challenges posed by such a reality.

3.5 Sampling methods

Sampling methods can be compartmentalised into two broad sets such as probability and non-probability sampling. Under probability method these kinds of sampling, stratified and cluster sampling which are more suitable for quantitative research (Babbie & Manton, 2004). Under non-probability sampling approach there are various kinds of sampling design such as snowball, convenience, purposive and quota sampling, and these are suitable for qualitative research. Since this research was also a qualitative one, it made more sense that I used non-probability sampling.

In this study both the convenience and purposive sampling methods were used. In purposive sampling a researcher is able to detect, comprehend and acquire insights into the subject (Merriam, 1998). The study was conducted in rural schools where learner enrolment had declined and as the term suggests, the learners were from rural environment. According to Bertram (2010), purposive sampling means that the researcher makes precise choices about which individuals and sites to encompass in the sample. Purposive sampling entails the researchers' hand-picking the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristic being sought (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Therefore, the schools that were sampled for participation in this study were chosen because they demonstrated certain features which other school not. For instance, the schools had to be located in rural areas of Flagstaff and had to have experienced learner enrolment decline. Duku (2006) indicated that sampling and choosing criteria should go through phases such as selection of the site (schools in this case) sampling of research subjects (SMTs in this case). The researcher's experience was that learners were prompted with various factors to leave rural schools.

The other element to the sampling technique is that it was convenient. Convenience sampling has to do with the researcher making considerations about factors that will ensure easy access to the research site (Cohen, *et al.*, 2011). In the context of this study, I chose secondary schools that were easily accessible to me. This study was not funded; therefore, to travel long distances to the participating schools would be difficult in terms of expenses involved. Therefore, it was important that the schools I selected were not too far from where I work so that travel expenses were held to the minimum levels.

3.5.1 Sampling research participants

When choosing the participants the researcher selected SMT members on the basis of being the School Management Team (SMT) and therefore considered to have in-depth knowledge on possible factors that contribute to learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools. It was important for the researcher as a qualitative researcher to understand the setting being studied (Mason, 2002). Therefore, qualitative researchers typically dealt with small purposefully chosen samples that can enrich the data. The SMTs provided the researcher with the relevant information and informative

thoughts that would advance his comprehension of the role of school leadership in addressing learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools.

In this research the sample was school management teams (SMTs) members of two Eastern Cape schools (two principals and two HODs per school). School Management Teams from both schools on assumption that they were the ones who were the most knowledgeable on the phenomenon learner enrolment decline since they were holding management positions in these schools. Sample included the entire population of SMTs. The sample included all SMT members in the participant schools. There were no deputy principals in two sampled schools due to severe learner enrolment decline.

3. 6 Data generation methods

Qualitative research is known for its use of multiple data generation methods and multiple sources of data. In the context of this study, data generation methods were semi-structured interviews and documents reviewed (De Vos, *et al.*, 2005).

There are mainly three types of interviews and these are structured interviews; semi-structured and unstructured interviews and they can take place in many various forms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). For purposes of this study, semi-structured interviews were employed. Goode (1998) describes semi-structured interviews as substantial technique that is utilised to gather information because they preserve the open quality of unstructured but are well-ordered by a list of questions. In short, semi-structured interviews draw from the advantages of unstructured interviews and also from the advantages of structured interviews. When using semi-structured interviews, the order of questions can be changed depending on the direction of interview (Karjonboon, 2005). Semi –structured interviews can help the researcher to stimulate and probe deeper into the given situation (Karjonboon, 2005). They can potentially increase responsive information (Teijlingen, 2014). Semi-structured interviews were employed because they allowed me to utilise a list of prompts I wanted to explore (Taylor, 2006).

3.6.1 Documents review

Nieuwenhuis (2007) argues that the use of documents as a method to obtain data assists the researcher to comb through written data which may illuminate the phenomenon under investigation. In the context of this study, I wanted to check the records that would

provide information about a number of issues such as understanding how leaves for the teachers were recorded and also get a general impression about the size of the school in terms of the number of learners currently and also in the past few years. That was crucial for a study of this nature which focused on enrolment decline. The documents used were teacher attendance register and leave register. The documents gathered were required to expound evidence of learner enrolment decline at the chosen school. They also serve to verify the findings from the interviews (Yin, 1994). These documents could comprise profiles for the selected schools, formal school policy documents such as admission policies, policies on religion, minutes of meeting held with the school management team(SMT) (Best & Kahn, 2003).

Participants were given the freedom to use the language of their choice. There are two languages that dominated that part of South Africa, and those were and still are isiXhosa and English. However, since all of them were fluent in English, they tended to use that language throughout our formal discussion.

3.6.3 Data analysis

Data analysis in a case entailed investigating, classifying, tabularising, (Yin, 1994). The analytic stage of qualitative research is symbolised by the vital role the qualitative researcher plays in the manufacturing and clarification of information (Denscombe, 1998). Data analysis denoted the information that was a negative transmitted significance that the researcher had gained from studying the phenomenon. Data analysis can be described as a technique of arranging information in to more controllable classes (Murdoch, 2002). Furthermore, data analysis is a “cognitive approach with the objective at taking a complicated whole and solving it into its controllable portions ” (Devos, 1998, p. 336). In this study I analysed the data according to De Vos (2010) model which suggests that analysing data involves sorting, structuring and sense making of the generated information. Data manufactured was examined utilising thematic content analysis and encompassed identified familiar themes that appeared out of the data.

I must emphasise that there were a number of activities that preceded the actual qualitative data analysis. For instance, after I had completed the interviews with participants, I transferred raw data in the form of audio recorded information into a computer system with an aim of manually transcribing the data. From the computer, I transcribed the data into Microsoft word documents before printing them for analysis

process. In short, all digital voice recorded interviews were transcribed *verbatim* (Struwig & Stead, 2001; Creswell, 2011). As part of analysis, I had read the textual transcript again and again. The purpose of repeated reading was to ensure that I familiarised myself with the content of what was said during the interviews.

3.6.4 Ensuring trustworthiness

It is important that the findings of any form of research are realistic or credible (Babbie, *et al.*, 2001). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative inquires have developed their own techniques of ensuring that the findings and conclusions that are made can be regarded as truthful. For this study I used Lincoln and Guba's framework of ensuring trustworthiness of the findings. Such a framework has four criteria, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability and these are discussed below.

Credibility

The first criterion to be discussed is credibility which, according to Mutch (2005), has to do with making sure that what the participants have said is true and interpreted correctly. That is done in order to ensure that the study will be viewed as credible. To achieve credibility, I employed multiple data gathering methods or techniques and a variety of data sources. This assisted in achieving triangulation of sources of data and cross-checking their accuracy. The corroboration of the different research methods and data sources in the form of semi-structured individual interviews and document analysis by different categories of participants helped me to verify the perspectives of participants, as well as to obtain thick descriptions and data saturation (Runhare, 2010). Besides these techniques, I also employed member-checking to allow participants to have access to the gathered data before they are documented into a research report (Moore, Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2004; Lietz, Langer & Furman, 2006).

Transferability

The second criterion that I used to enhance trustworthiness of the findings is transferability. In qualitative research transferability refers to the extent to which research findings of a particular study can be applicable to a similar sample of participants and research context and settings (Cohen, *et al.*, 2011). Since this research was a case study of two rural junior secondary schools, it is clear that I cannot generalise

the findings to all the schools in the province of the Eastern Cape or even in the district. Nevertheless, the results could be transferable to schools and participants that match the description of the two research sites and the selected participants. To enhance transferability, I ensured that I made thick description of the process that I followed in the process of data generation. Such processes included the selection of the schools and their socio-cultural contexts. Such descriptions would ensure that the context and the schools can be compared to other similar contexts where a similar study could be conducted.

Dependability

The third criterion is dependability. This criterion can be regarded as a replication of research in which the same conclusions can be repeated if the same research techniques and data generation methods were to be conducted on a similar research sample and under similar conditions (Lietz, Langer & Furman, 2006). Some of the techniques that are used to enhance dependability in qualitative studies inquiry includes audit trail (Lietz, Langer & Furman, 2006). Therefore, I made careful selection, description and application of research methods and data gathering procedures to suit this study's research questions, objectives and the unique circumstances of data sources. The careful selection of relevant research instruments were instrumental in guarding against my personal biases and emotions that could infringe on the accurate presentation of data from the perspectives of the participants.

Confirmability

The fourth and the last criterion that Lincoln and Guba (1985) designed is confirmability. In qualitative research, confirmability is a technique that is used to ensure that what is presented the findings is not based on the researcher's biases and personal preferences. Through the use of confirmability, I had to ensure that I suspend my own assumptions and interpretations and verify them from the participants. Through confirmability, researchers ensure that the generated data and the conclusions reached do not represent that of the researcher but that of the participants' views and perspectives or meanings (Lietz, Langer & Furman, 2006).

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) emphasise that in qualitative data, validity might be addressed through honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and showing no interests of the

researcher. Transcribing exactly the same words from audio-recorded to written scripts of all interview sessions was one way in which I made sure that the views of the participants were truly expressed. In addition, during the interviews stage, I would ask my participants to clarify certain points and thus check if my interpretations were accurate and reflecting the realities of the participants rather than mine. Lastly, after I had transcribed the data from the voice recorder, I gave the transcripts to each participant. In that way, I made sure that the participants confirmed the content of our conversations.

3.6.5 Ethical considerations

It is always important that research is conducted within strict ethical standards. Because of that the University of KwaZulu-Natal insists that all its academic staff and students have to comply with its ethical standards. Therefore, before I conducted this study, I had to apply for ethical clearance and thereafter, I sought permission to conduct the study from the Eastern Cape Department of Education. It is also important that research participants agree to participate in the study as they enjoy their personal autonomy. In response to such a requirement, I requested them to participate in the study and the purpose of the study was explained to them (Denzin, 2000). Once they had agreed to participate, I asked them to sign an informed consent form as evidence that they participated voluntarily and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage of the research without any consequences. Besides the principle of autonomy, there are other ethical issues that have to be considered such as the principle of non-maleficence (Cohen, *et al.*, 2011). This principle has to do with ensuring that the participants are not subjected to any form of harm. One way of protecting them from harm is to respect and adhere to the principle of anonymity and confidentiality. To hide the identities of the individual participant and that of the schools, I used *pseudonyms* (Punch, 1994).

3.7 Chapter summary

Chapter Three explained in detail the research design and methodology that was used in the study. It spelled out the paradigm, sampling, data generation methods which took the form of semi-structured interviews and the documents that were reviewed to explore factors that contributed to learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior

secondary schools. Qualitative approach was used since this study aimed at understanding what the SMTs perceived as the factors that contributed to learner enrolment decline. Towards the end, the chapter discussed the issues of trustworthiness of the findings as well as ethical considerations and the limitations and delimitations of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the design and methodology used in this study. This chapter focuses on presentation and discussion of data. As indicated in chapter three, the main data generation technique used was interviews while documents provided supplementary data. In order to maintain clarity and logic, the researcher presented the perspectives of the participants from one case study school and then moved to those of their counterparts in another participant school. Keeping in mind the end goal to have a coherent presentation, the researcher reports on the responses of HoDs and thereafter the researcher presented principals' perspectives. Informed by the nature of themes, which emerged from the data, the researcher structured this chapter into four main sections. First, the researcher discussed the profiles of the schools and the participants. This was essential in qualitative research where the role of context was emphasised. Thus, the first section was intended to contextualise this study. Having highlighted the context of the study, the researcher then moved to present and discuss factors that contribute to learner enrolment decline. Thereafter, the researcher focused on the initiatives addressing learner enrolment decline in two South African rural junior secondary schools. In the last section, the researcher put together the bolts and nuts of school leadership and learner enrolment decline by dwelling on the issues emerging from the findings.

4.2 Profiling the two researched schools

Yin (2012) notes that case study emphasises the study of a phenomenon with its real - world context, and favors the generation of data in the natural settings, compared to relying on what he describes as derived data. This was a multi-case study comprising two junior secondary schools. Data was generated from three SMT members as research participants from each school. Context is important in this study because it is an influential factor of both the causes and the effects of the phenomenon that was studied. Therefore, the schools and the participants will be described as part of the profiling section.

As I have highlighted in the previous sections, the study was conducted in two rural junior secondary schools in the Eastern Cape Province. The SMTs in the two schools were interviewed so as to obtain an in-depth understanding of learner enrolment decline within its real-world context. Schools that were chosen for this research were situated in Flagstaff which is about 40km away from Lusikisiki Town. These schools were selected because they were located in rural areas that are characterised by a number of socio-economic challenges such as poverty, lack of infrastructure and other deprivations. As some scholars have observed, research on rurality is mostly concerned with issues of space, isolation, community, poverty, disease, neglect, backwardness, marginalisation, depopulation, conservatism, tribalism, racism, resettlement, corruption, entropy, and exclusion, to name some of the characteristics (Balfour, Mitchell & Moletsane , 2008). If the learner enrolment declines, the number of teachers and school management team members decline. The records such as quarterly and annual reports kept in these schools and the District office suggest that learner enrolment has gradually been dropping in the past five years. As part of the profile of the schools, the learner enrolment from 2011 to 2015 is included in order to show the accurate situation. Table 1 below shows learner enrolment of Zithulele Secondary School during the same period of the past 5 years.

THE PROFILE OF ZITHULELE JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL

	LEARNER ENROLMENT IN 2011										
Grades	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total Enrol.
	100	102	100	70	80	85	75	80	92	105	889
	LEARNER ENROLMENT IN 2012										
	70	80	73	60	50	65	60	70	60	70	658
	LEARNER ENROLMENT IN 2013										
	30	40	35	30	29	30	27	30	31	4	286
	LEARNER ENROLMENT IN 2014										
	20	30	30	20	20	21	20	18	17	20	216
	LEARNER ENROLMENT IN 2015										
	14	20	23	17	19	15	20	16	18	20	182

Table 1: Learner enrolment between 2011 and 2015 at Zithulele Junior Secondary School

Table 1. above shows that learner enrolment has declined from 2011 to 2015 at Zithulele Junior Secondary School. Zithulele Junior Secondary School starts from Grade R to Grade 9. That is why the school is known as a junior secondary; it does not have senior classes such as Grade 10 to Grade 12. Perhaps, the mere fact that the school does not go all the way to Grade 12 also contributed to this scenario. As can be seen in the above

table, learner enrolment has steadily gone down from 889 in 2011. By the year 2012, learner enrolment had declined from 889 to 658. It means that learner enrolment declined by 231 learners in just one year. Steep decline was experienced the following where learner enrolment declined from 658 to 286 in 2013. This means that learner enrolment declined by 372 learners in one year. The following year, learner enrolment further declined from 286 learners to 216. The learner enrolment declined by 70 learners. In 2015, learner enrolment had further declined from 216 to 182; learner enrolment had declined by 34 learners. This is a scenario that suggests an exodus of learners, but at this stage, we have come to understand why such an exodus occurred and how it can be prevented in the future.

THE PROFILE OF NOZIQHAMO JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL

		LEARNER ENROLMENT IN 2011										
Grades	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Total Enrol.	
	60	80	90	75	66	91	95	100	80	100	771	
		LEARNER ENROLMENT IN 2012										
	35	40	38	40	44	40	50	40	45	51	423	
		LEARNER ENROLMENT IN 2013										
	30	20	25	22	30	21	35	20	23	30	256	
		LEARNER ENROLMENT IN 2014										
	20	15	20	17	19	15	16	14	16	20	172	
		LEARNER ENROLMENT IN 2015										
	25	14	21	15	17	12	16	11	19	18	168	

Table 2: Learner enrolment between 2011 and 2015 at Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School

The above table shows the learner enrolment decline of Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School as from 2011 to 2015. Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School begins from Grade R to Grade 9, just like its counterpart Zithulele Junior Secondary School. The learner enrolment was 771 in 2011, and it declined from 771 to 423 in 2012. This means that learner enrolment declined by 348 learners. Then, it further declined from 423 in 2012 to 256 in 2013. This means that the enrolment declined by 167 learners in just one year. Further decline was experienced the following year when it went down from 256 to 172

in 2014. This enrolment declined by 84 learners. Learner enrolment further declined from 172 to 168 in 2015, and it was not severe this time because the school lost only 4 learners compared to the previous years where it used to lose tens and hundreds of learners per year. This section focuses on the research participants who were the School Management Team Members only comprising the school principals and the HODs in each school. To protect their identities, *pseudonyms* are used in writing this report. The table below shows the profile of the school management team members that were interviewed.

The table below (Table 3) shows the profile of SMT members of Zithulele Junior Secondary School. It shows the experience, qualifications, age, the number of years of experience as a SMT member, number of years spent in the school for all the SMT members. The names used for the participants are not real names. The SMT for this school is composed of two HODs and one Principal.

Miss Rita, not her real name, has Bachelor of Arts degree and she specialised in History and Geography at University of Cape Town. She completed her degree in 2008. She first obtained Primary Teachers Diploma in 1993 at Cicira College of Education in the then Transkei. She has been serving as an HOD for a period of 10 years at Zithulele Junior Secondary School. She has spent 12 years teaching at the same school.

Mrs. Mnguma, not her real name, has Bachelor of Arts degree and she specialised in English and Xhosa at the University of Western Cape. She completed her degree in 2007. She first obtained Secondary Teachers Diploma Primary in 1988 at Sigcawu College of Education. She has been serving as an HOD for a period of 15 years at Zithulele Junior Secondary School. She has spent 18 years teaching at the same school.

Mr. Mayeki, not his real name, has Bachelor of Science degree and he specialised in Mathematics and Physical Science from the University of Western Cape. He completed his degree in 2005. He first obtained Secondary Teachers Diploma Primary in 1989 at Transkei College of Education. He has been serving as an HOD for a period of 7 years at Zithulele Junior Secondary School. She has spent 6 years teaching at the same school.

What can be drawn from the profiles of the above participants is that all of them are fully qualified as teachers. In fact, they are more than fully qualified if one considers the fact that in South Africa, a teacher is fully qualified if that teacher has 4 years of training as

a teacher. These participants started their teaching careers after receiving professional training in the colleges where they obtained teachers diploma. All of them have proceeded to study at universities for their bachelor’s degrees. Although the profile does not tell us about the other teachers in these schools in terms of their qualifications, it is evident that the participants wanted to upgrade their qualifications. Therefore, one can argue that the learners in these schools were exposed to highly qualified teaching staff members. What follows next is the table that summarises the profile of the participants at Zithulele Junior Secondary school.

Profile for participants of Zithulele Junior Secondary School

	SMT: 1(HOD)	SMT:2 (HOD)	SMT:3 (PRINCIPAL)
Pseudonym	Miss Rita	Mrs. Mnguma	Mr. Mayeki
Qualifications	B.A, PTD	B.A, STD	STD, BSc.
Age	45	50	48
Experience as an SMT	10	15	7
Years in the school	12	18	6

The table below (Table 4) shows the profile of the SMT members of Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School. It shows the experience, qualifications, age, number of years of experience as a SMT member, the number of years spent in the school for all the SMT members. The names used for the participants are not their real names. The SMT for this school is composed of two HODs and one Principal.

Mrs. Ndabalala, not her real name, has Secondary Teachers Diploma (STD) and a Bachelor of Arts degree obtained from the University of Transkei. She specialised in English and Geography. She completed her diploma in 1993. She further pursued her studies and obtained Further Diploma in Education in 2001 at Mfundisweni College of Education. She has been serving as an HOD for a period of 9 years at Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School. She has spent 12 years teaching at the same school.

Mr. Ngcengce, not his real name, has Secondary Teachers Diploma (STD) obtained from the University of Transkei, and Mr Ngcengce specialised in English and History. He completed his degree in 2000. He pursued his studies and obtained the degree Bachelor

of Education Secondary in 2007 at the University of South Africa (UNISA). He has been serving as an HOD for a period of 11 years at Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School. He has spent 14 years teaching at the same school.

Mr. Feji, not his real name, has Secondary Teachers Diploma (STD) which he obtained from the Transkei College of Education. Mr Feji specialised in Mathematics and Physical Science. He completed his diploma in 2001. He further pursued his studies and obtained Bachelor of Science degree from UNISA in 2005 and he specialised in Mathematics and Physical Science. He further obtained Post Graduate Certificate in Education, also from UNISA in 2007. He specialised in Education Management. He has been serving as an HOD for a period of 8 years at Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School. He has spent 6 years teaching at the same school.

What can be observed in this profile of teachers at Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School is that the participants shared similar features with those of Zithulele Secondary School in terms of their professional qualification. It is evident that these participants were not satisfied with their initial qualifications and they studied further to improve their qualifications. Again here, I would not want to generalise this picture and say that it applied to all the teachers in the school. Nevertheless, I can say with confidence that the learners at this school were exposed to the teachers who were highly qualified and the assumption could be that the learners were exposed to good quality teaching. However, it is too early to make any judgement in relation to that.

Profile for participants of Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School

	SMT: 1 (HOD)	SMT: 2 (HOD)	SMT:3 (PRINCIPAL)
Pseudonym	Mrs. Ndabalala	Mr. Ngcengce	Mr. Feji
Qualifications	STD; FDE	STD; Bed	STD; BSc; PGCE
Age	42	40	44
Experience as an SMT	9	11	8
Years in the school	12	14	6

4.3 Factors that contribute to learner enrolment decline

The findings from the interviews with the participants revealed that there are two main factors which contributed to the decline of learner enrolment in the two schools, and these were internal as well as external factors. In this study, internal factors refer to possible causes of learner enrolment decline that emanated within the case study schools while external factors are those which can be traced as originating from outside schools. Below is the discussion of internal contributors from Zithulele Junior Secondary.

4.3.1 Internal factors

The findings from Zithulele Junior Secondary School suggest that within internal factors, there were three major factors that contributed to the decline of learner enrolment. These factors related to the teachers; conflict among school management team members and the quality of leadership and management that prevailed in the school.

4.3.1.1 Teachers

The research findings revealed that the recurrent existence of incompetent teachers and shortage of teachers were the main factors that contributed to learner enrolment decline. Mrs. Mnguma, the Head of Department of Foundation Phase in Zithulele junior Secondary School, had this to say in this regard:

Incompetent teachers replace transferred teachers. The school ended up allocating teachers who are not specialists or competent to teach those subjects. The learners prefer to go to schools where there are taught by competent teachers.

The views expressed by Mrs Mnguma above were also shared by Head of Department of Intermediate Phase from the same school when she said:

Teacher absenteeism is a contributing factor to the learner enrolment decline. Since some teachers have homes far away from the school. Usually, they take three days leave every month, leaving learners not being taught. There is a gap content to learners, which resulted to poor academic results. The parents gradually withdraw their children after noticing recurring poor academic results (Miss Rita).

Documents such as teacher attendance registers and leave register were reviewed in both schools. What transpired from Zithulele Junior Secondary School is that the days for sick leave in teacher attendance register were not corresponding with leave register. This suggests that there was a problem in terms of proper management of leaves in the school. In line with the above responses, Mr. Mayeki, the Principal of Zithulele Junior Secondary School, had the following to say:

The teachers take regular sick leaves due to workload which promote teacher absenteeism. Bear in mind that some of these teachers are incompetent. As a result, poor performance emanates in the school which led to poor results. Parents do not have interest in school which produces such results. They end up pulling off their children.

Members of SMT from Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School suggested similar factors with their counterparts from Zithulele Junior Secondary School. For instance, Mr. Ngcenge Head of Department at Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School had the following to say in his response:

There is a shortage of teachers in the school. As a result, teachers end up teaching subjects, which they have no interest in. The learners lose attention in those subjects; their performance diminishes and that leads to poor academic achievement. Consequently, parents withdraw their children from the school.

The Head of Department of Foundation Phase in the same school had the following to say in this regard:

The school is experiencing a situation where teachers take three-day leave monthly, claiming that their homes are far away from the school. Learners are left without being taught. These teachers do not pay back time lost. Thereafter, there is a content gap, which leads to poor results. The latter factors contribute to learner enrolment decline, since parents pull off their children from the school due to dissatisfaction (Mrs. Ndabalala).

In line with the above two participants, Mr. Feji, the Principal of Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School, said:

As the principal, I am faced with multiple challenges which include incompetent teachers, shortage of teachers, teacher absenteeism and poor results, which lead to learner enrolment decline. These factors persuaded parents to withdraw their children from the school.

When reviewing the documents such as attendance register and leave register from Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School it transpired that the minimum sick leaves per month per teacher was four days and the maximum was five days. The findings from the two schools suggest that some teachers contribute to learner enrolment decline. Consequently, parents withdraw their children gradually due to poor academic performance. Subsequently learner enrolment decline manifests.

Previous studies have found similar trends to the current study. For instance, studies conducted by Yektiningtyas-Modow (2013) and Alhassan (2013) respectively revealed that school-based factors such as teacher absenteeism contributed to learner enrolment decline. Once parents realise that there is chronic teacher absenteeism, they start withdrawing their children from the schools where the rate of teacher absenteeism is high and take them to other places where the culture of learning and teaching prevails. When parents take their children to other school, that has ripple effects on other critical elements to the schools functioning; these include teacher shortage, which also leads to poor academic result because left schools do not have appropriately qualified teachers to teach the subjects left due to rationalisation and redeployment.

In terms of the Employment of Educators Act, No 76 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa, 1998) teacher absenteeism is inconsistent with the spirit of the law, and therefore, teachers are expected to honor all their teaching periods throughout the year. The findings revealed that the shortage of teachers has had negative effects on both schools. When there is a shortage of teachers; what usually happens is that other teachers who are not necessarily qualified to teach the subjects they are tasked to teach, they tend to become incompetent to teach them. Consequently, learners lose confidence to them. This results in academic performance of the learners being negatively affected. As a result, parents gradually withdraw their children from the schools. The end result is the systematic learner enrolment decline.

Teachers in schools are provided according to the learner enrolment. The high the learner enrolment the more teachers are provided and *vice versa* (Republic of South Africa, 1998). The transfer and redeployment of teachers cause the shortage of teachers in these two schools. The Department of Education delays the process of replacing transferred teachers. In terms of the Employment of Educators Act (Republic of South Africa, 1998), the Department of Education redeploys teachers based on the number of learners in the school not considering the number of subject taught at school. This impact negatively in those schools experiencing learner enrolment decline. The discussion moves on to focus on how the SMTs perform their leadership role, especially in the context of the challenges highlighted above.

4.3.1.2 Infighting amongst school management team members

The findings have also revealed that the SMTs also have a role to play in creating an unstable situation presented above. One way in which the SMTs bring about instability in the schools is by their persistent tensions and infighting among them. This scenario was found to exist at Zithulele Junior Secondary School and it contributed to learner enrolment decline. This is what Mrs. Mnguma Head of Department of Zithulele Junior Secondary School had to say:

The fight for the senior posts amongst the SMTs started after I was appointed as an HOD in this school. Since I was not a favorite to the parents and another HOD was, ignited the conflict. I heard about that when there was a conflict between this HOD and another member of the staff. I was forced to intervene in that misunderstanding, since I was an SMT member. Their favorite candidate did not make it during interview process. The infighting resulted in poor work relationship which then spilled over to academic performance. Parents noticing poor academic performance ended up withdrawing their children from the school, which resulted to learner enrolment decline.

The views expressed above by Mrs. Mnguma were also shared by another Head of Department of Foundation Phase in the same school, and this is what she had to say:

In fighting for senior positions amongst the SMT, members affected the culture of teaching and learning negatively. This resulted in poor academic results. Poor academic results led to the gradual withdrawal of learners by their parents from

the school. The provincial Department of Education tried to intervene in different ways for the past five years in resolving this issue, but the problem continues (Miss Rita).

In line with the above research findings the Principal of Zithulele Junior Secondary School, said:

What I have noticed is that most of the SMT members in my school are not patriotic and passionate about the future of the child; but they prefer to serve their own interests. This unbecoming behavior has resulted in infighting amongst them. This has led to poor academic results. Unsound relations displayed bad image to the community. As result parents ended up gradually pulling off their children from the school. Learner enrolment decline started to manifest itself within the school (Mr. Mayeki).

The situation at Zithulele Secondary School seemed to also exist at the other school that participated in this study. For instance, members of SMT from Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School narrated similar stories as those of Zithulele Secondary. For instance, Mr. Ngcengce, Head of Department of Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School said the following in his response:

In my school, there are unsound relations, because of the fight for the senior posts amongst the SMTs. This has led to poor results. Noticing the poor results, parents ended up withdrawing their children from the school, which resulted to learner enrolment decline.

The Head of Department of Foundation Phase in the same school echoed the same view in her response. This is what she had to say:

The school has been experiencing in-fighting amongst the SMTs. Department tried to intervene in different ways for the past five years in resolving this issue. This led to the division within the staff members and slowed down the overall school performance. These unsound relations affected the culture of teaching and learning negatively, which sometimes they failed to issue the school reports to the parents. I think that has resulted parents to lose interest (Mrs. Ndabalala).

In line with the above research findings the Principal of Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School, said:

It is difficult to manage people who are fighting to serve their own interests rather than promoting culture of teaching and learning. This in-fighting has led to poor academic results. Through poor academic performance, the parents noticed that there are unsound relations within the school. This was revealed in a parents meeting convened by the school. The department of education was represented in attempts of solving this problem (Mr. Feji).

The findings from the two schools suggested that there was a lack of effective leadership among the SMT members. The lack of effective leadership can be evidenced by persistent tensions and destructive conflicts among the teachers and school management. Such scenarios usually lead to paralysis which can lead to the lack of confidence in the schools which can further lead to learner enrolment decline. Mthiyane, Bhengu and Bayeni (2014) support this when they categorically state that lack of leadership or strong leadership decides the direction the institution takes. Bush, *et al.* (2011) regard leadership as being similar to influence, the vision, the focus and the direction that organisations take. This displays the centrality of leadership in an institution. Infighting over management positions is likely to be of great detrimental effect at Zithulele Junior Secondary School. The literature supports the view that some schools in KwaZulu-Natal have to be closed temporarily because of infighting over management posts (Mthiyane, *et al.*, 2014). Poor academic performance may be viewed as detrimental in certain cases since some parents are not interested in enrolling their children in such schools. Literature suggests that the decline in learner academic performance influence learner enrolments (Duke, 2008; Hochbein & Duke, 2011; Hochbein, 2012). Some parents are reluctant to enroll their children in schools experiencing poor learner academic performance.

4.3.1.3 The deficiencies in leadership and Management

The success or failure of a school is influenced by the manner in which it is led and managed. Therefore, when leadership is deficient, there is a great likelihood that the school as whole will not function properly. With regards to the nature of leadership and management in the two case study schools, the participants were of the view that the dearth of leadership and management affected learner enrolment negatively. For

instance, Miss Rita, Head of Department of Zithulele Junior Secondary School had the following to say in that regard:

The school management team members lack management and leadership skills; they are unable to manage bullying and supervision of teachers, which are regarded as internal contributing factors to learner enrolment decline. Bullying amongst the learners causes the school environment not to be conducive to teaching and learning. As a result, parents respond to that situation by withdrawing their children from the school.

In highlighting possible negative effects of deficient leadership at Zithulele Junior Secondary School, one Head of Department blamed the principal for failure to promote collective leadership, and she had the following to say:

The principal of the school does not promote collective leadership. There are instances where he refers management issues to be resolved by the school governing body. This leads to school environment not be favourable to the culture of learning and teaching. The lack of collective leadership makes the SMT members to fail managing bullying for example; supervising teachers and motivating them. Consequently, poor academic performance emanates (Mrs. Mnguma).

Reporting on the same issue that was raised by Mrs. Mnguma above, the principal outlined managerial and leadership functions which he believed, were not performed, and as such had a potential to contribute to learner enrolment decline. This is what he had to say:

Failing to manage bullying, supervision of teachers and to motivate them would results to the learner enrolment decline. The bullying, which is not properly managed, results in parents withdrawing their children from the school due to uncertainty about their safety. Lack of supervision of teachers and failure to motivate them would lead to poor academic results. Poor academic results force the parents to pull off their children from such school (Mr. Mayeki).

The participants from Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School also spoke about the absence of leadership and management as well as their impact on learner enrolment decline. To this effect, a Head of Department from this school painted a picture of poverty of

leadership and management by referring to the prevalence of bullying in the school and apparent lack of supervision of teachers. This is what one of them had to say:

The SMT members of the school are partial in handling bullying; they do not involve the parents of the suspected learners. Then, the parents of suspected learners end up withdrawing their children from the school. The SMT members do not supervise the work of teachers; this result in poor academic results. The lack of supervision of teachers, bullying amongst the learners and poor academic results are considered as the internal contributing factors to learner enrolment decline, since they are not properly managed (Mr. Ngcenge).

In line with the above research findings, the Head of Department of foundation Phase in the same school had the following to say:

Unmanaged bullying results in school environment which is not conducive to effective teaching and learning. The results will be the withdrawal of the learners by their parents from the school where there is no proper security and safety (Mrs. Ndabalala).

Sharing similar sentiments was the Principal of Zithulele Secondary School who commented on absence of collective leadership. This is what he had to say in that regard:

Since there is no collective leadership amongst the SMT members, that leads to a lack of supervision and motivation of the teachers. The latter will result to poor academic outcomes. Parents pull off their children from the school. This leads to learner enrolment decline (Mr. Feji).

Unmanaged bullying and failure to supervise the work of teachers are likely to be detrimental in schools if they are not properly managed. They can be detrimental in the since that an environment that is not conducive to teaching and learning might prevail in an organisation. The latter may result in poor academic performance. Consequently, some of the parents may not be convinced by such situation. Their dissatisfaction could have negative influence on the school since they might prefer not to enroll their children to such schools. Consequently, a consistent learner enrolment decline might prevail systematically. The latter situation is a result of dearth leadership and management in SMT members.

The research findings revealed that the SMTs were not supervising teachers in their care. They were not managing bullying among learners. As a result, some parents felt that there was no safety and school environment was not conducive to effective teaching and learning. Parents from both schools ended up pulling off their children. As a result, learner enrolment declines systematically. Weitzel and Jonson's (1989) Model of organisational decline indicates that failure is featured by taking no action in spite of indications of declining results. Working within the concept of schools as organisations, these signs can include absenteeism, poor conduct, decline in academic achievement of learners, deteriorating of school buildings and properties. The members of SMT may notice a decrease in student enrolment.

The findings revealed that there was a lack of effective leadership and according the participants, effective leadership is evidenced in collective leadership which they regarded as the key determinant of learner enrolment in both schools. Leadership is the key in turning around unpleasant situation in different organisations. Collective leadership among the SMTs can make dysfunctional schools vibrant and achieve optimal goals. According to Kruse (2013), leadership is a process of social influence which maximises the effort of others towards the achievement of a goal. The findings suggested that the SMT from the two schools have been noticing teacher absenteeism which resulted to teacher incompetence. The findings also suggested that nothing was done within the schools to deal with such challenges. The problematic situation spiraled out of control and was a major contributing factor towards learner enrolment decline for the past five years. Weitzel and Jonson's (1989) Model of organisational decline seem to back this. Corresponding to their theory the stage two of failure is featured by taking no action, in spite of indications of declining results. In schools, these signs can include high absenteeism, poor conduct, decline in learner poor academic achievement, deteriorating of school buildings and properties. The school may notice a decrease in student enrolment.

4.3.2 The external factors

The previous section discussed internal factors. This section discusses the responses of the participants from the two schools where they give their views about external factors that they believed contributed to the decline in learner enrolment. Their responses

suggested that there were 9 factors and these included poverty, migration, demarcation, unemployment, lack of resources, drug abuse (dagga), parental involvement and other stakeholders' involvement, post provision norms and the shortage of teachers.

4.3.2.1 Poverty, migration and demarcation

In discussing external factors, I have combined issues of poverty, migration and demarcation as if they constitute just one factor. In fact, the discussion indicates that poverty and migration are intricately linked and can be very difficult to extricate one from the other. Poverty can be referred to as socio-economic conditions that are not conducive to acceptable standard of living. Poverty can be characterised by unemployment and lack of resources (Ngwaru, 2010). Ngwaru (2010) points out that poverty can also be considered as one of the factors that can contribute to learner environment decline especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Ngwaru (2010) argues this way because some parents may withdraw their children from impoverish school and go to other places to look for jobs and enroll them there. This point raised by Ngwaru (2010) already indicates how poverty, unemployment and migration can be connected and negatively affect the livelihood of some people, particularly those in rural areas. To add to this argument, Tinkham (2014) suggests that migration is the drawback of the population in rural communities in the sense that the movement of people from rural areas to get jobs in other areas like cities can slow down pace of economic growth. Therefore, migration can be one of the factors that contribute to learner enrolment decline in rural areas. The participants from the two schools reported that poverty, migration and unemployment contributed to learner enrolment decline.

With reference to unemployment, the Head of Department of Foundation Phase in Zithulele Junior Secondary School had this to say:

In this community, most people are not employed, and as a result, they move to towns to look for jobs so as to alleviate poverty. They move with their children to those places. This results to learner enrolment decline to our school (Mrs. Mnguma).

Sharing the similar sentiments, the Head of Department of Intermediate Phase of Zithulele Junior Secondary School had this to say:

Our school is located in deep rural areas, where there are no factories, where community members can get jobs to support their families. This forces them to move with their children to places such as urban areas to look for jobs. As a result, learner enrolment decline emerges gradually (Miss Rita).

In line with the above responses, the Principal of Zithulele Junior Secondary School, said:

In trying to push away the frontiers of poverty, most parents go to cities to look for jobs since the employment rate is high in rural areas. In cities, most of the schools are well equipped as compared with rural schools. As a result, some parents move with their children to those schools. This migration of parents together with their children leads to learner enrolment decline.

Members of the SMT from Zithulele Junior Secondary School shared different sentiments with their counterparts from Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School. For instance, The Head of Department of Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School had the following to say as a response to my question about this problem:

Unemployment is rife and is ravaging rural areas where our school is situated. The community members are swimming in poverty. Since there are no adequate job opportunities, most members prefer to look for jobs in big cities. Most of the schools in these places are well resourced. This encourages these parents to take their children to such schools (Mr. Ngcengce).

The Head of Department of Foundation Phase in the same school had the following to say:

The government is to alleviate poverty in rural areas where my school is based by providing grants to community members. That does not assist completely in meeting the needs of the people. As a result, most people leave rural areas and look for job opportunities in industrialised areas, where most of the schools are well built. They take their children to such schools. This impacts negatively our schools since learner enrolment declines systematically (Mrs. Ndabalala).

In line with the above research findings, Mr. Feji, the Principal of Noziqhamo Junior School, said:

Learner enrolment decline scares me as the Principal of this school. Sometimes I sleep sleepless nights. There are instances where I fail to play with my wife during the night. The movement of parents from rural areas to look for jobs in urban areas as to alleviate poverty is one of the contributing factors. Parents ended up taking their children to schools near to places where they work. These factors persuaded parents to withdraw their children from the school (Mr. Feji).

Poverty pushed people to move away from rural areas and look for jobs in urban areas. Some people move with their children to those places as to attend well-equipped schools. This movement negatively affects some rural schools since their learner numbers declines steadily. Ngwaru (2010) points out that poverty can also be considered as one of the factors that can contribute to learner environment decline especially in Sub-Saharan Africa in the sense that some parents may withdraw their children from impoverish school and go to other places to look for jobs and enroll them there. Previous studies found similar results to the current study. Similarly, Tinkham (2014) suggests that migration is a drawback to the population in rural communities as the movement of people from rural areas to get jobs in other areas like cities slow the pace of economic development in their areas. De Wet (2013) suggests other factors such as widespread poverty and the impact of HIV/Aids that are prominent and might result in learner enrollment decline in the sense that poverty may force learners to find jobs without first acquiring any knowledge or skills. Mofora (2013) suggests that learners from townships migrate to former Model-C schools due to socio-economic disadvantage and that might affect learner enrollment. Unemployment can also be regarded as one of the factors that contribute to learner enrolment decline, especially in Eastern Cape. Previous studies found similar results to the study. For instance, Ncanywa (2015) affirms that the Eastern Cape is one of the poorest provinces in South Africa. Since this province is poor, it is likely that such poverty might negatively affect the learner enrolment, and as a result parents might enrol their children in other well-equipped provinces as to get better quality of education.

4.3.2.2 Lack of resources

Lack of resources such as furniture, electricity, water and sanitation were regarded as factors that contribute to the decline in learner enrolment. The findings suggest that the lack of resources and infrastructure are factors that contribute to learner enrolment

decline. This is what the Head of Department of Zithulele Junior Secondary School had to say in this regard:

In our school, there is no electricity, water and sanitation, yet these are the basic needs in any school. There is no access road to my school. When it rains learners are unable to cross the river nearer to the school. There is no scholar transport either as there is no access road to school. This environment is not conducive to teaching and learning. Teachers come late to school when it is raining. The above-mentioned unbecoming situation makes parents to withdraw their children from the school. The consequence is the gradual learner enrolment decline in the school (Mrs. Mnguma).

The Head of Department of Foundation Phase in the same school echoed the same view and said:

The school had toilets in previous years but their conditions are bad. The school is using a generator assists the school in performing some duties. Some schools in villages not far away from my school are well-electrified and well-designed playing grounds for different sports code. Some learners have moved to such well-built schools. As a result, learner enrolment has gradually declined. Those well-electrified schools were demarcated to other ward two years back. That ward is improving gradually; leaving other wards behind, including the one where my school is located. Demarcation is one of the contributing factors led to learner enrolment decline (Miss Rita).

In line with the above research findings from the interviews with the HODs, the Principal of Zithulele Junior Secondary School, said:

What I have noticed is that the Department of Education in Eastern Cape is not patriotic and passionate about the future of the child since it is failing to prioritise basic needs. Our school has no water, no electricity and no infrastructure such as access road. This has resulted in learner enrolment decline since learners are leaving to schools that are well resourced, in another ward (Mr. Mayeki).

Members of the SMT from Zithulele Junior Secondary School reported similar factors with their counterparts from Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School but the Head of

Department of Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School has an addition to them in his response. This is what he had to say:

My school has no electricity, no water and sanitation of good standard. As a result, learners are leaving my school to where schools are well-resourced. Consequently, learner enrolment decline has gradually taken root (Mr. Ngcengece).

The Head of Department of Foundation Phase in the same school echoed the same view in her response, and had this to say:

Water, electricity and sanitation is the centre and the backbone to any prosperous and vibrant organisation. My school lacks the above-mentioned key factors to prosperity and vibrancy. Having experienced the unpalatable situation, learners are steadily leaving the school to well-equipped schools. As a result, the learner enrolment decline is experienced by the school (Mrs. Ndabalala).

In line with the above research findings, the Principal of Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School, said:

Department of Education in the Eastern Cape nearly made me to resign by not providing my school with water, electricity and sanitation. I consoled myself by words, which says, "Wise Captain sinks with ship". This happened after I have applying for water, electricity and sanitation. I tried to instill patience in myself and that assisted me not resign. It was the worst of times when I was noticing learners gradually leaving my school to well-equipped schools (Mr. Feji).

These findings revealed that the lack of resources and infrastructure are factors that contribute to learner enrolment decline. Lack of resources has crippled teaching and learning and this in turn has affected learner enrolment negatively. Previous studies found similar results to the study. For instance, Gutuza (2015) share similar views with Yektimingtyas-Modouw (2013) that the lack of materials and equipment for teaching, inadequate supervision and teacher incompetency, among other things, might be considered as sources of learner enrolment decline. According to Cole (2010), inadequate financial resources to refurbish derelict buildings may also lead to learner enrolment decline. According to Harwing (cited in Keper & Rugira, 2013, p.4), no

parents are willing to keep their children where the resources and infrastructure are not conducive to effective teaching and learning. Teachers working in such bad conditions should be motivated as to turn the tide into palatable situation. Motivation is the key where the conditions are not conducive to teaching and learning (Hickman, 2010).

4.3.2.3 Drug abuse (dagga)

There are other social ills such as easy availability and abuse of drugs such as dagga that are plentiful in their communities. Almost all the participants reported that the availability of dagga in the community around the school hampered the culture of teaching and learning. The Head of Department of Foundation Phase in Zithulele Junior Secondary School said:

The school is located in a village where the dagga is planted in big fields. The learners leave school even before completing Grade 8; sometimes at the age of 12 years. At this age, they do have enough money to buy bakkies, goats and cattle using money from the sale of dagga. This results to learner enrolment decline, since learners gradually leave the school to be self-sufficient (Mrs. Mnguma).

The Head of Department of Intermediate Phase of Zithulele Junior Secondary School, elaborating on this point said:

Learners come with dagga at schools; they smoke it in the toilets; some are caught red handed selling it. Disciplinary actions are taken against them. Some of them are expelled from school after due process. Others are suspended but they do not come back to school after suspension (Miss Rita).

In line with the above responses, the Principal of Zithulele Junior Secondary School, said:

Dagga is really a problem in my school. The location of the school is one of the contributing factors to this problem since towns some dagga plantation. Parents promise to assist the school in solving this problem but they take no actions against their children; instead, they protect them. When the police come looking for them, they hide them and transfer them to other school far away from my school. This unpleasant behaviour of taking them to other unknown school result to learner enrolment decline (Mr. Mayeki).

Members of the SMT from Zithulele Junior Secondary School noted different sentiments with their counterparts from Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School. The Head of Department of Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School had the following to say in his response:

It is assumed that the police are bribed sometimes so that they do not follow the suspects. This encourages other learners to follow suit by doing wrong things and not being followed where they hide. As a result, learner enrolment declines (Mr. Ngcengce).

The Head of Department of Foundation Phase in the same school, said:

The school is experiencing a situation where learners get ill because of smoking dagga. They end up leaving school due to illness. Some parents ended up suspecting witchcraft within the school, forgetting that they used to be called for their children smoking dagga. Suspecting witchcraft within the school, they end up withdrawing their children from the school. As a result, learner enrolment declines systematically (Mrs. Ndabalala).

Mr. Feji, the Principal of Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School had the following to say:

As the principal, I am faced with a situation where dagga related problems are getting out of hand. Where there is no working together between stakeholders. Illness to learners, witchcraft as other parents suspect get out of hand. This might result to the total shut down of the school if other mechanism to solve the problem cannot be found. These problems persuaded other parents to withdraw their children from the school. As a result, learner enrolment declines systematically in my school.

It appears that dagga is detrimental to the learners in many different ways including health related problems. In some cases, dagga seems to be a pulling factor which attracts some Noziqhamo learners to drop out of the school and join a booming dagga business. Subsequently, learner enrolment decline manifests gradually. The use of dagga in both schools increases the chances of leaving the schools prematurely as argued by Mensch and Kandel (1988) that initiation to cigarettes, dagga and illicit drugs increases the probabilities of premature school leaving. Yamada, *et al.* (1996) also notes that the use of dagga significantly lessens the probabilities of high school completion.

4.3.2.4 Lack of parental involvement

Parental involvement in the affairs of the school has been highlighted by various scholars as an important factor that makes a difference in terms of enhancing learners' academic achievement (Bhengu & Myende, 2015). So, parental involvement entails a sustained activity whereby parents dedicate themselves to working with the schools in their activities. Nel, *et al.* (2013) note that in view of the decisive role played by parents in their children's decision making processes, more efforts should also be made to involve parents in the institutions' recruitment activities. Relationships with the schools and the teachers should be constantly fostered and enhanced. Commenting on parental involvement, the Head of Department of Foundation Phase in Zithulele Junior Secondary School said:

The parents are not involved in resolving the problems that affect the school such as dagga to mention few. Even when the school invites them in order to solve the problems of their children, they do not avail themselves. Some learners ended up leaving school because of their lack involvement in their children's problems. This results in learner enrolment decline since learners gradually leave the school (Mrs. Mnguma).

The Head of Department of Intermediate Phase of Zithulele Junior Secondary School had this to say:

Parents meetings are called in my school but the attendance becomes very poor. Letters are written to them to report serious matters negatively affecting the school but those attempts fail. Since these matters are not attended to with the urgency they deserve, this impacted negatively to the school (Miss. Rita).

In line with the above responses, the Principal of Zithulele Junior Secondary School had the following to say:

Parents are promising to assist the school in solving the use of dagga by their children but they take no actions against them; instead, they protect them. Even when the police come for them due to their wrong doings, they hide them and transfer them to other school far away from my school. This unacceptable behaviour of taking them to other unknown schools results in learner enrolment

decline. Stakeholders such as chiefs and counselors are invited but their involvement is very poor.

Members of SMT from Zithulele Junior Secondary school had different views compared to their counterparts from Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School. For instance, the Head of Department of Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School gave the following response:

There is no access road coming to my school. There is no electricity, water and sanitation. Councilors, chiefs and parents take no action in assisting the school. Learners leave the school and go to schools where there is full participation among parents and stakeholders. The outcomes of fruitful participation among parents and stakeholders are well-equipped schools with resources (Mr. Ngcenge).

The Head of Department of Foundation Phase in the same school had this to say:

The school is experiencing a situation where learners get ill because of smoking dagga. They end up leaving school due to illness. Some parents ended up suspecting witchcraft within the school, forgetting that they used to be called for their children smoking dagga. Suspecting witchcraft within the school, they end up withdrawing their children from the school. Parents, stakeholders do not involve themselves in solving the above-mentioned challenges (Mrs. Ndabalala).

The findings have shown that parents take no responsibility for the challenges facing the school such as the lack of electricity, water and sanitation. They take no responsibility for their children who are ill due to smoking dagga. The data revealed that parents do not cooperate with the school when they are requested in assisting their children smoking dagga. The findings from interviews disclosed that these parents have low expectations for the education of their children. Previous studies discovered similar results to current study. It is noted that young people whose parents have low expectations for their educational attainment at the beginning of their schooling, are more likely to leave the school (Alexander, Entwisle & Carrie, 1997). Dropping out of school is linked to parents' non-supportive attitudes towards the education of their children (Fobih, 1987). It is maintained that the parents of these children are more likely to view school negatively; will have minimum involvement with the school; will place slight value on school attendance and achievement (Hale, 2004). The literature further suggests that

rural parents are too hesitant to be involved in the affairs of the school. They believe that they have nothing more to do with their children except sending them to school. They do not attend programmes organised for them (Kabir, 2014).

The findings have also shown that the lack of parental involvement has resulted in poor results in both schools. According to Echaune, Nduku and Sang (2015), parents who are non-supportive of their children's work results in poor learner academic achievement. The data also revealed that at no stage did the SMT members in both schools try to motivate parents to be involved in school activities. Motivation is vital in turning around any undesirable situation in any organisation to a desirable one.

4.3.2.5 Post Provision Norms

Post Provisioning Norms is the post distribution model for the allocation of educator posts to schools. The model is based on the principle that available posts are distributed among schools, proportionally to their number of weighted learners (RSA, 1998). Mrs. Mnguma, the Head of Department of Foundation Phase in Zithulele Junior Secondary School, said:

Post Provision Norms has resulted to the shortage of teachers. Since the Department of Basic Education considers decreasing number of learners, not considering the number of learning areas taught in the school. This result to the shortage of specialised teachers. The school ended up allocating teachers who are not specialists or competent in those subjects. The learners prefer to go to schools where there are enough teachers.

The Head of Department of Intermediate Phase of Zithulele Junior Secondary School, Said:

There is shortage of teachers due to teacher transfers. In this case, the Department Of Basic Education fails to fill the vacant posts. Parents take their children to other schools where such situations do not exist. This obviously results to systematic leaner enrolment decline (Miss Rita).

In line with the above responses, the Principal of Zithulele Junior Secondary School, said:

The shortage of teachers result to low moral to teachers. They take regular sick leaves due to workload, which promote absenteeism. Parents loose interests in our school. As a result, they take their children to other schools, which result to learner enrolment decline (Mr. Mayeki).

Members of SMT from Zithulele junior secondary school pointed out different ideas with their counterparts from Noziqhamo junior secondary school, Mr. Ngcengce Head of Department of Noziqhamo junior secondary school in his response, said:

Post Provision Norms has led to a shortage of teachers in the school. As a result, teachers end up teaching subjects, which have no interest in. The learners lose attention in those subjects; their performance diminishes and led to poor results (Mr. Ngcengce).

The Head of Department of Foundation Phase in the same school, said:

The school is experiencing a situation where teachers take three-day leave monthly, claiming that they are depressed due to overload. Post Provision Norms is the cause of the problem because it affected negatively to the school. Learners are left without being taught. These teachers do not pay back time wasted. Thereafter, there is a content gap, which leads to poor results. The latter factors contribute to learner enrolment decline, since parents pull off their children from the school due to dissatisfaction (Mrs Ndabalala).

In line with the above findings, the Principal of Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School, said:

As the principal, I sleep sleepless nights due to Post Provision Norms, which continuously cut off the number of teachers. This is because of the number of learners, which continues to decline yearly. This has resulted to the shortage of teachers in our school for the past five years. These factors persuaded parents to withdraw their children from the school and took them to other schools. This led to systematic learner enrolment decline.

The research findings revealed that Post Provision Norms (PPN) has a strong and negative influence on both schools due to the decreasing number of learners, which ultimately lead to the schools losing teachers' posts. As a result, some teachers have been

redeployed to needy schools. This means they have been taken to schools where their services are still needed. The literature supports this view. For instance, according to Zengele (2013), redeployment is a process aimed at placing redundant and excess teachers in schools where they are mostly needed. This is what has happened in the researched schools. Redeployment of teachers has caused shortage of teachers in these two schools. The Department of Basic Education redeploys teachers based on the number of learners in the school and it does not consider the number of subjects taught at that particular school. This scenario impacts negatively on those schools experiencing learner enrolment decline. In Terms of Employment of Educators Act, No 76 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa, 1998), teachers in schools are provided according the learner enrolment. The higher the learner enrolment the more teachers are provided and *vice versa* (Republic of South Africa, 1998).

Findings from the interviews revealed that the SMT members from both schools have noticing some of the external factors for a long time but they were ambivalent and did not take action until the situation had become dire. Weitzel and Jonson's (1989) Model of organisational decline support this view. Corresponding with Stage Two of their model is the failure to take action in spite of indications of declining results. In the context of the participating schools, these signs can include high absenteeism, poor conduct, decline in the learner pass rates as well as the deteriorating school buildings and properties. In the end, the school will realise that the process of decline in learner enrolment has taken hold.

4.4 Initiatives of addressing learner enrolment decline

The data revealed that as much as the schools were facing serious challenges that they were really struggling to overcome, the SMT members developed some initiatives aimed at turning the situation around. Some of the initiatives included curriculum enhancement, school management, parental involvement and marketing strategies.

4.4.1 Curriculum enhancement

The data revealed that curriculum enhancement is one of the initiatives that were used by the SMT members to address learner enrolment decline in two rural junior secondary

schools in the Eastern Cape. To this end, Mrs. Mnguma, the Head of Department of Foundation Phase in Zithulele Junior Secondary School, said:

The school has introduced morning classes, afternoon classes, and weekend classes for purposes of covering the content subject (content coverage). This assists in achieving the policy of the school which says 'teach-test-teach'. Consequently, learner academic performance has improved steadily (Mrs Mnguma).

Miss Rita, Head of Department of Intermediate Phase at Zithulele Junior Secondary School, Said:

We have extended curriculum by introducing computer technology. The main objective is to attract learners from other schools. All staff members attend workshops as to equip themselves with content subjects. For long-term purposes, teachers are motivated to enroll with universities, especial those who are unqualified (Miss P Rita).

The views expressed by the two HODs above were also shared by the Principal of Zithulele Junior Secondary School when he said:

Language teachers attend read and write language programmes. Mathematics teachers too, attend 1+4 Mathematics programme. These programmes equip teachers with skills. Subsequently, the school produces good results in critical subjects, gradually (Mr. Mayeki).

Members of the SMT from Zithulele Junior Secondary School noted different sentiments with their counterparts from Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School. For instance, the Head of Department from Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School had the following to say:

Since there is a shortage of teachers in our school, SGB paid teachers have been recruited to assist the school. This is to make sure that teaching and learning is not compromised. The presence of these SGB paid teachers plays a vital role because no subject is left behind not being taught. Subject advisors are invited to develop newly recruited SGB paid teachers but also taking cognisance of developing experienced teachers. There is a light in the tunnel since there is

improvement in learner academic achievement; we hope that such achievements will translate to improving learner enrolment (Mr. Ngcengce).

Echoing similar sentiments regarding curriculum enhancement, Mrs. Ndabalala, the Head of Department of Foundation Phase in the same school, said:

The school has introduced a programme of awarding learners who have performed well in their subjects. These awards are given quarterly. They inspire them to perform well and dedicate themselves to school work. Consequently, learner performance gradually improves quarterly, since awards act as extrinsic motivators to them (Mrs Ndabalala).

In addition, from the same school, Mr. Feji, the Principal of Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School had the following to say about curriculum enhancement:

We organise school activities directed by school vision. We make sure that there is adherence to school plans such as supervision plans. They are monitored continuously. This has resulted to systematic improvement in teaching and learning. This, we believe, will encourage parents to enroll their children to the school.

The research findings suggest that it is vital to use extra-time to cover content gap. This can be achieved through attending morning classes, afternoon classes and weekend's classes. This can enhance curriculum coverage and increase the potential for improved learner academic achievement. The research findings have revealed that teachers attend read and write programmes and 1+4 Mathematics programmes in order to empower themselves. The findings have also revealed that, from the participants' perspectives, the introduction of computer technology plays a vital role in strengthening curriculum since learners are able to retrieve information that empowers them. Participants in their responses showed that awards act as extrinsic motivators and play an important role since the learners dedicate themselves doing their work.

It is suggested that teachers should believe in supervision because that can assist them to change themselves or their teaching practices (Greene, 1992). This suggests that supervision can assist teachers to adapt themselves in different situations in the work place. In addition, Unruh (1977) notes that supervisors accept responsibility for coping with daily crises and dealing with details. This suggests that although supervision can

improve learner academic performance as the research findings reveal but it goes with responsibility. Research findings suggest that curriculum should be enhanced so that schools should cope with improvements. Schools should cope with the beat of societal changes and technological progress (Hagos & Dejarme, 2008; Sey, 2013).

4.4.2 Stakeholders Involvement

The findings indicate that stakeholder involvement is one of the initiatives used by the SMT members to address learner enrolment decline in the case study schools. The SMT made a variety of attempts to solve this challenge of learner dropout which include calling parents meeting to explain whatever strategies the school tended to employ, such as morning classes, afternoon classes and weekend classes. Stakeholders we invited almost all –important events such as heritage day. In that day, diverse cultures were recognized through displaying diverse activities. Unions and departmental officials such as circuit managers were invited in resolving infighting amongst the SMT members. Police, social workers and correctional services officials were invited to address and teach learners about the dangers of using drugs such as dagga in this case. Social workers alerted the leaners about the teenage pregnancy, HIV /AIDS and other health issues. SMT also engaged the youth in the local community about the challenges facing the school.

In that regard Mrs. Mnguma, the Head of Department of Foundation Phase in Zithulele Junior Secondary School said:

Parents are made aware of morning classes, afternoon classes and weekend classes. We call parents meetings to explain whatever strategies the school intends to employ, to give them chance to interact with them (strategies). The school invites the stakeholders almost in all-important events such as heritage day. In this day, diverse cultures are recognised through displaying diverse activities. These activities minimise bullying and dagga. The activities inspire learners to do more in attaining optimal educational outcomes such as high academic performance (Mrs. Mnguma).

Responding to the question about how the SMT tried to address the problem of declining learner enrolment, Miss P Rita, Head of Department of Intermediate Phase of Zithulele Junior Secondary School, had this to say:

The school involves teacher unions and departmental officials such as circuit managers in resolving in fighting among the SMT members. Unions provide us with conflict management skills through conducting workshops after school hours. Circuit managers work hand in hand with unions sometimes when the relations are still fragile. The workshops are steadily assisting in minimising the infighting among ourselves as the SMT members'. As a result we do have a chance of supervising the work of teachers using supervision plans and other management tools.

In line with the above responses, Mr. Mayeki, the Principal of Zithulele Junior Secondary School, said:

Since there is a problem of dagga in our school, we invite police, social workers and correctional services officials to address and teach learners about the dangers of using drugs such as dagga in this case. Social workers alert the learners about teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and other health issues. They motivate learners to be ready for the real world without using substance abuse. Police come to school to do random search and seizure.

The data from Zithulele Junior Secondary School is similar to the data from Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School, pertaining to the issue of stakeholder involvement. For instance, Mr. Ngcenge, Head from Department of Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School had the following to say:

We talk to the parents, the SGB, and other stakeholders in solving this problem of learner enrolment decline in the school. The meeting resolved that at least each parent should have child attending to this school as to avoid its closure due to declining learner numbers (Mr. Ngcenge).

Mrs. Ndabalala, the Head of Department of Foundation Phase in the same school, said:

There are sessions where members from department of correctional services, department of police, department of health and department of social development come to school to do awareness campaigns on use of drugs, HIV/AIDS and other health issues. The school has developed an annual awareness plan, in which the school adhere to in inviting these departments. Consequently, there is a steady

decline in the use of drugs such as dagga. Bullying and teenage pregnancy is observed as declining gradually.

In line with the above narratives, Mr. Feji, the Principal of Noziqhamo Junior Secondary School, said:

In most of the problems the school is faced with, it involves the SGB and all other stakeholders such as Headman, councilors, local churches and other NGOs. The school engages the youth in the local community about the challenges facing the school. It also involves other departments like social development, department of police, and department of health. I can say the school applies interdepartmental approach. Random searches by the police have reduced bullying, abuse of drugs such as dagga and other illegal substances that are harmful. This promotes an environment which is conducive to teaching and learning. The stakeholders have recently demonstrated an interest in enrolling their children in the school.

The findings have also revealed that parents and stakeholders meetings are convened. Decisions that are binding are taken, and such decisions include committing to going an extra time in terms of supporting the schools' programmes. The recognition of diverse cultures makes all the parties involved to own the school. For instance, the findings have also revealed that engagement in diverse activities minimises bullying and chronic abuse of dagga. This further inspires learners to put more effort in educational activities so as to attain their outcomes optimally. The study has also shown that the involvement of teacher unions and other departments minimises infighting for senior posts among the SMT members and makes the school environment to be conducive to teaching and learning. Awareness campaigns conducted by different departments have the potential to reduce extensive use of dagga by the learners. Consequently, learner academic performance was said to be improving steadily. However, I did not follow up on the issue of improved learner academic achievement in terms of soliciting recorded evidence of these claims. While the participants claim that learner enrolment decline improves systematically, it is too early to assess the credibility of those claims. I am saying this because the enrolment of 2015 was the lowest on both schools.

Parents are fundamental resources to provide the very best education for their children and for that reason they expect the best (Verma & Yadav, 2015). Since involved parents

will be providing their resources to make their school better, the responsibility of the SMT members is to deliver the best services to their children. In order to build strong partnership between the parents and the schools, programmes such as introducing progress report, note book system, consultation programmes, home visit, and annual gathering and cultural programmes, need to be developed further (Kabir & Akter, 2014). The literature provides more insights for this study by noting different programmes that can be employed in strengthening parental involvement in schools. For instance, literature suggests four types of parental involvement, namely, basic obligations, school-to-home communications, parent involvement at school and parent involvement in learning activities at home (Fan, 2001). The details about different types of parental involvement fall outside the focus of this study. Nevertheless, one can use them to assess or understand the manner in which parents participate in the schools' activities. The attempts made by SMT seemed not to succeed given the fact that there is no tangible evidence to show that enrollment decline was curtailed.

4.5 Emerging issues

This study was concerned with the discussion of the two broad issues of learner enrolment decline and the kind of school leadership that the SMTs provided in dealing with the problem facing the two schools in terms of the decline in learner enrolment. The current chapter in particular, provided evidence regarding the nature of these two issues.

The findings have indicated that the problem of learner enrolment decline could be attributed to a multitude of factors. Nevertheless, there are two broad factors have contributed to the decline, and these can be termed as internal and external factors. Among the internal factors highlighted were the shortage of teachers, teacher absenteeism and also the existence of incompetent teachers to mention few. It transpired from the study that the school principals blamed the HODs and the HODs blamed their principals. In this study, Principals and HODs are blaming SMTs as if they are not part of it. One of the signs of learner enrolment decline is finger pointing among the SMT members; each one shifting the blame to another category of management structure. Writing about profit making organisations, Kreitner and Kinicki (2007) argue that one of the signs of organisational decline is blame shifting. This study also found that blame shifting is also applicable to schools as organisations. The details of this can be found in the section 'Infighting amongst the school management team members' where the

principal is blaming the HODs as being not passionate and patriotic about the future of the school. He further stated that they prefer to serve their own interests. Similarly, in the section called 'the dearth of leadership and management', the HODs were putting the blame on the principal saying that he was not promoting collective leadership, and, as a result, he referred management issues to be resolved by the SGB. By referring managerial functions to the SGB, that implied that there was clear dearth of leadership. The SMT members have highlighted scapegoating as a sign of dearth of leadership. Instead of setting the direction, the principals heaped the blame on the HODs. That in itself is a sign of dearth of leadership.

It is argued that the principal should stimulate and inspire the HODs to be creative and innovative in resolving management issues (Bass, 1999; Gunter, 2001; Timothy & Piccolo, 2004). Furthermore, the SMT members should inspire and stimulate one another and teachers as their subordinates to be more creative and innovative. They fail to apply principles of transformational leadership, which are inspiration, individualism, intellectual stimulation, and idealised influence (Gunter, 2001). Principals should be expected to motivate the HODs as their subordinates, focus on the individual needs of the HODs, influence thinking and imagination of the HODs and their communication and building of an emotional commitment to vision should be promoted (Bass, 1999; Gunter, 2001; Timothy Piccolo, 2004).

This study has also found that there are also external factors that are directly contributing to learner enrolment decline. The SMT members view people from outside as creating problems. Empirical evidence suggests that many government departments were invited to do a number of things in terms of that particular department's competence. Parents and Ward Councillors were also invited to assist where they could and where it was within their ambit to act. Drawing from the theme 'lack of resources', the SMT members in two schools seemed to view themselves as powerless. I say this because they seemed to be looking anywhere and everywhere for assistance, yet they did not appear to have any vision or plan about where they wanted to be. Preoccupation with survival was uppermost in their thinking and actions. They also highlighted that there were things which could be done by external people.

Overall, it is evident that effective leadership was lacking in both schools. For instance, the SMT members were aware of the learner enrolment decline, but they were busy blaming each other instead of giving the direction. Although there were generally signs of lack of leadership, there were instances where the principals and the HODs demonstrated leadership; for instance, where they initiated workshops. The main finding in this study was that there was an absence of strong leadership. As rightly observed by Makhasane and Chikoko (2016), change cannot occur in a school without direction setting by the top school management. I argue that enrolment decline of the learners is likely to continue if members of SMT in the two schools fail to provide effective leadership.

4.6 Chapter summary

Chapter Four has focused on the presentation and discussion of findings from the SMTs and documents reviewed as explained in the previous chapter. This chapter has presented the views of the SMT members pertaining to the factors that contributed to learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools. As part of that discussion, initiatives that the SMT members employed in addressing learner enrolment decline were also discussed. This study was concerned with two broad issues of learner enrolment decline and the issue of school leadership provided by the SMTs in addressing the research problem. The next chapter focuses on the conclusions that were generated from the findings discussed in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented and discussed the findings generated through semi-structured interviews and documents reviewed. Drawing from those findings, this chapter presents conclusions and on the basis of those conclusions, recommendations are made. In addition to the recommendations, implications for future research are also highlighted. However, before conclusions are discussed, a summary of the study is presented.

5.2 Study summary

Chapter one provided an introduction and the background of the study. Through such a background to the study, I was able to express my interest in the topic and what worried me about the issue of learner enrolment decline. The chapter also outlined the statement of the problem; the purpose and the rationale of the study. Other key research components such as the significance of the study, research questions, key concepts and demarcation as well as the limitations of the study were discussed in that chapter. Chapter Two presented detailed discussion of the literature that was reviewed on the topic. Research conducted and debates held locally and internationally were discussed as part of the review. Theories that frame the study were discussed in that chapter. Chapter Three explained the research design and methodology that used to generate data that would help in answering the research questions. The discussion of findings is done in Chapter Four and the final chapter presents conclusions and makes recommendations.

5.3 Conclusions of the study

The objectives of the study were to explore the factors that contributed to learner enrolment decline in two rural junior secondary schools. Furthermore, it sought to understand from the SMT members' perspectives, what their experiences and views were regarding the phenomenon of learner enrolment decline and what they did to address that problem. In Chapter Four I discussed the findings that emerged from the data analysis.

In discussing the conclusions made, I use the key findings as a way of providing the structure of the presentation.

5.3.1 Factors contributing to learner enrolment decline

The findings have revealed that there were internal and external factors that contributed to the learner enrolment decline in the two rural junior secondary schools. Based on the findings, I can conclude that the conduct of the teachers and that of the SMT constituted major factors that contributed to the decline of learner enrolment. Teacher apathy dominated the discourse and such apathy was characterised by chronic absenteeism, lack of commitment to teaching and unwillingness to go an extra mile in terms of lesson preparation and supervision of the learners' work. Although the issue of the shortage of teachers was a reality, the low morale of the teaching staff seems to have contributed more to the conditions that undermine effective teaching and learning. It is not surprising that all the participants talked about teacher incompetency. The issue of teaching out of the field has become dominant in South Africa, particularly in rural areas where many of the teachers are either unqualified or underqualified (Bhengu & Mkhize, 2013). However, drawing from the findings, I am convinced that the teachers in the participating schools could do much better than they did. I am saying this because, the profiles of the schools suggest that the teachers were largely properly qualified, yet the issue of teacher incompetence dominated our discussions with various research participants.

The second internal factor is about the lack of leadership in the schools. The findings clearly indicated that there was no leadership direction taken by the SMTs in addressing teacher absenteeism and the resultant teacher incompetence. Instead of focusing on supervising teaching, they focused on finger pointing and counter-finger pointing. The findings highlighted that school principals blamed their HODs for most if not all the challenges internal to the schools, and *vice versa*. There were times when principals would direct all the blame to the SMT and the same happened with the HODs who also blamed the SMT. Such a state of paralysis raises questions about whether these HODs and school principals understood who they were and what their respective roles are or should be. With these findings, it made more sense to me that there was learner enrolment decline of such magnitudes.

The third internal factor had to do with instability within the SMT members. In-fighting was highlighted as demoralising school management let alone the teachers in their care.

I am convinced that the SMT members have a greater responsibility for the human resources deployment within the school. The findings clearly show that very little was done to supervise the teachers and to make them account for their behaviours in terms of teaching the learners. It does not appear that the SMT has skills to deal with conflict situation; it is not clear whether they have direction where they lead the school to and also whether the teachers had any buy-in to the school vision. In short, the two schools were evidently dysfunctional to say the least.

Besides internal factors there were also external factors and issues of poverty, lack of infrastructure, migration and the rural nature of the location of the schools were dominant contributors towards the decline in learner enrolment. The findings of the study have shown that there was a lack of electricity, water and sanitation, and that these infrastructures contributed to learner enrolment decline as both the parents and the learners preferred schools with better facilities. Poverty and migration combined made a huge contribution to the decline of learner enrolment. Poverty enticed parents to move away from the area to the cities where there are better job opportunities. Their move to the cities implied that if or when they settle in those areas, their children come with them, thus depriving schools in the rural areas of sustainable learner population.

At the same time, by settling in the cities, it means that migration has occurred. While it is evident that a combination of poverty, migration and rurality played a role in pulling the learners away from the rural schools, I am persuaded into concluding that enrolment decline was driven more by pushing factors rather than the pull factors. I am saying this because the findings clearly demonstrated that although there were external factors that negatively affected the school and its performance, there was no evidence that the SMT made any efforts to minimise these effects. For instance, there is no evidence of any attempts by the SMT to engage the community regarding infrastructure and the issue of access to the schools. The conclusion was that no vivid initiatives were employed by SMTs in addressing learner enrolment decline in these two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools. There was clear lack of leadership within the school and leadership is the most critical element which can make the school to survive even when the environment around the school is turbulent.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions discussed in Chapter Five as well as the findings discussed in Chapter Four, recommendations are made and discussed below.

The findings and the conclusions made were divided into categories, that is, those that were internal to the schools and those that were external to the schools. Evidently, the SMT had control over those factors that were internal to the schools, at least in theory, but there is very little (if any), that they could do with those factors that were external to the school. My view is that although the schools could not control what happens outside it such as poverty, the lack of amenities and infrastructure, depending on the type of leadership that exist, the effects and severity of those factors could be minimised. The first conclusion made was that the conduct of the teachers and the SMT members was questionable. There was teacher apathy which was characterised by the lack of commitment to teaching. Similarly, the prevailing leadership did not seem to be interested or willing to act on the challenges posed by the teachers' unwillingness to do their work.

It is therefore recommended that the SMT need to urgently seek assistance from the Circuit managers. The main aim of seeking support is to find a way of starting from scratch in terms of basic functionality of the schools. Evidently, the school principals and their HODs are incapable of working their way out without vigorous intervention from outside agencies or stakeholders such the Circuit officials. What is clear is that these schools can be categories as 'Sinking' to use Stoll and Fink (1998) characterisation. Alternatively, these schools need to be closed down and only be reopened under new leadership. In any case, literature suggests that declining organisations end with death.

The second recommendation is also directed to the SMT members and school principals in particular. The conclusion I reached was that the two schools had very weak leadership characterised by indecisiveness. When leadership noticed that enrolment was declining it did nothing. Instead of doing what effective leaders may call 'reflection' on what may have gone wrong, the SMT members in this study did nothing and kept on fighting among themselves and shifting the blame from group to the next. It is therefore, recommended that a turn-around session should be organised. This is the type of training where organisations do reflections and develop a new vision with the direct oversight of an external facilitator who works with the institution as it finds its footing. I am mindful

that undertaking such an initiative is itself an indication that leadership is able to identify its weaknesses and strong points. At the end of this research I had not got that impression that the prevailing leadership was ready to undertake such an initiative. Nevertheless, with the intervention of the Department of Education at the district level, I am convinced that something can be worked out. In short, the challenges facing these schools are not unsurmountable.

No recommendations can be made about those factors outside the school. Nonetheless, it is clear that with the leadership inside the schools making a serious decision about where it wants to do, some of the externally generated problems can be minimised. There is no way that any school can address issues of poverty in the community or broader society, but I am sure that they can find way of dealing with its effects on schooling; but that calls for a very strong leader who is transformational, and therefore, who has a vision about the future of the school.

5.5 Recommendations for future research

The study used the qualitative research methodology to get a deeper understanding of two broader areas learner enrolment and school leadership. This does not give a holistic perspective about the factors that contribute to learner enrolment decline and initiatives that can be employed to address it, but it was confined to two rural junior secondary schools. I would have liked to interact with some SMT members in the General Education and Training Band as well. Furthermore, I wish to state that there is a need for a study to cover more schools in the district or even in the whole province of the Eastern Cape. In short, I am proposing that a large scale quantitative study is needed so that we can obtain an understanding about the spread of this phenomenon and how people who are affected think about it. It can happen that the findings of this study are just a tip of the iceberg; in the meantime, more damage might continue unnoticed.

5.6 Chapter summary

Chapter Five has focused on the conclusions and recommendations of the study. As highlighted in the introduction of this chapter, it was necessary to begin by providing a summary of the whole study before embarking on the discussion of the conclusions and making recommendations. The objectives of the study were to explore the factors that contributed to learner enrolment decline in two rural junior secondary schools.

Furthermore, the study sought to understand how the SMT members dealt with the challenges posed by enrolment decline. Based on the findings presented in Chapter Four, conclusions were reached and recommendations made. In addition, implications of the study and its findings for further research were highlighted.

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APPENDIX A



Province of the
EASTERN CAPE
EDUCATION

LUSIKISIKI DISTRICT
Old Lusikisiki College of Education • R61 Flagstaff Main Road • Private Bag x1010 • Lusikisiki • 4820 • REPUBLIC
OF SOUTH AFRICA • Tel: +27 (0)39 253 1946 / 039 253 6647 • Fax: +27 (0)39 253 1422/ 086 514 3697 • Website:
www.ecdoe.gov.za

Enquiries: V.E. Matwasa

Cell: 083 275 0709

Email: emomatwasa@gmail.com

TO: DESMOND MONDE GOGO – MED RESEARCH STUDY

**FROM: CHIEF EDUCATION SPECIALIST – INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT
AND GOVERNANCE (IDS & G)**

SUBJECT: CONSENT TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN LUSIKISIKI DISTRICT SCHOOLS

DATE: 29 JANUARY 2016

In response to your letter dated the 22 January 2016, the Education Office at Lusikisiki gives consent to you to conduct the research towards the MED (Education Management, Leadership & Policy) qualification at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and look forward to the outcomes of the study to assist us improve in the management of our schools. We really take pride at the academic advancement people like you aspire for.

We wish you all the success in your study.

V.E. Matwasa

CES – IDS & G



APPENDIX B

LETTER TO ZITHULELE JUNIOR SECONDARY PRINCIPAL



University of KwaZulu-Natal

Edgewood Campus

Private Bag X03

Ashwood

3605

Dear Principal,

.

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

My name is Gogo Desmond Monde a student reading for a master's degree in Education Management, Leadership and Policy at the University Of KwaZulu Natal South Africa.

My research study is titled: The role of leadership in addressing learner enrolment in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools: SMTs perspectives. A Case of two rural junior secondary schools in Flagstaff. Flagstaff is a small town in Eastern Cape Province in South Africa. The study seeks to explore the perspectives of SMTs regarding their leadership role in addressing learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary schools. The purpose of the study was to explore SMTs perspectives of their leadership roles pertaining to learner enrolment decline in two Eastern Cape rural junior secondary school.

I hereby seek your permission to conduct my research at your school in 2016. Data will be collected from SMT members who decide to participate in this study. They will be required to complete a consent form. Their participation in this study is voluntary. Sir, you are kindly requested to fill in the attached declaration and consent form which acknowledges the permission granted to undertake my research in your school.

I guarantee that the information gathered will be used for the purpose of the research only. For further information regarding this research you may contact either myself 0734753097 or my supervisors Miss P Mthembu 0845817544 /Dr Makhasane/0787093752

Your cooperation will be appreciated

Desmond Monde Gogo

I _____, the Principal of Zithulele Junior
Secondary School Flagstaff Eastern Cape

Signature of Principal

Official Stamp

Date

APPENDIX C
LETTER TO NOZIQHAMO JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL
PRINCIPAL



University of KwaZulu-Natal
Edgewood Campus
Private Bag X03
Ashwood
3605

Dear Principal,

.

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

My name is Gogo Desmond Monde a student reading for a master's degree in Education Management, Leadership and Policy at the University Of KwaZulu Natal South Africa.

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Your cooperation will be appreciated

Desmond Monde Gogo

I _____, the Principal of Zithulele Junior
Secondary School Flagstaff Eastern Cape

Signature of Principal

Official Stamp

Date

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE TOOL

Profiling of the school questions

1. What is the size of the school in terms of learners, teachers, and school management team members?
2. In which quintile does this school fall?

Learner enrolment decline questions

3. How was the learner enrolment decline in past five years? If it was declining
4. What are the reasons that lead to decline?
 - 4.1 Do you think are there any things that happen within the school (internal factors) or external factors?
5. Are there any programmes or initiatives that are in place to address the problem?
 - 5.1 If yes what are the programmes or initiatives?
 - 5.2 How does it impact the school?
 - 5.3 Who are involved in these programmes or initiatives?
 - 5.4 Are the programmes effective? Elaborate
If no, what are the challenges or what school management teams could do differently?
6. What is the vision of the school?
7. Does the school management team work as a collective?, if yes elaborate
If no, what are the challenges or what could be done differently?
8. How does the school management team function to accomplish its goals?
9. Before we close, is there anything that you want to add which was not highlighted in the interview process?
10. I thank you for the time you spent with me!

APPENDIX E

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Honours/M.Ed | Dissertations/theses/Papers - DUE 31-... | Roadmap | Paper 16 of 18

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THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN ADDRESSING LEARNER ENROLMENT DECLINE

BY MONDE GOGO

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THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN ADDRESSING LEARNER ENROLMENT DECLINE IN TWO EASTERN CAPE JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS: SMT'S PERSPECTIVES

NAME OF STUDENT : Mr.D.M Gogo

STUDENT NUMBER : 215079876

YEAR : 2016

CAMPUS : Edgewood

CHAPTER ONE: OREINTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The researcher was interested about what looks strengthening learner enrolment decline despite the attempts made by the department of basic education in addressing it. This was based on

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