INSIDE THE LIVES OF TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL WORKING LEARNERS

By

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A NOTE about this thesis

This doctoral thesis was examined posthumously.

Thembikile Christina Nomali Mncwabe died in a tragic accident together with her husband in April 2006. It was especially heart wrenching as this happened soon after she had submitted the penultimate version of her thesis before being sent for examination.

There were a number of reasons for pursuing the finalising of the thesis and completing the examination procedures. Although her laptop and data were destroyed in the accident, a draft thesis existed representing 6 years of rigorous and hard work. This was an important study with rich data that only a researcher of Nomali's disposition, activism and intellectual integrity could have generated. Her outstanding dedication as teacher, researcher and guidance counselor evident in the thesis, show her deep empathy and commitment to learners throughout the study unveiling the painful and sad histories of young lives that need be read and must be known. Yet another reason is the low number of African women research students completing doctoral studies. There were a number of times Nomali considered dropping out of the programme because of the strain of the study. Supervision sessions where often intense and deeply moving as the hardships of learners' lives were revealed to her and affected us. Whilst it might have been possible to publish some of the key findings in journals or as chapters, successful examination of the thesis provided an opportunity to give due recognition to Nomali for the considerable and keenly insightful work she had done. It was also important to be awarded a PhD for her family and children, and the school - the learners and teachers and all who were touched by her life.

This study was supervised by Dr S Singh as the main supervisor and myself as co-supervisor. We worked closely with Nomali over several years until Dr Singh left the university in 2006 and later withdrew as supervisor. Her significant contribution is recognised and acknowledged.

A number of academics in the Faculty of Education contributed selflessly toward the successful examination and completion of this thesis and are gratefully thanked and acknowledged:
Dr S Manik created the first electronic version of the entire thesis from the only hard copy available and edited the electronic version.
Dr D Govinden undertook independent internal examination and review of the thesis on behalf of the Faculty before submission for examination. She is also acknowledged for advice and assistance with finalising the thesis.
Dr E Mqashu completed the language editing.
Dr N Amin made all the final corrections and editing as required by the examiners, completed the referencing, and printed and bound copies of the thesis both for the examination process and this final version.

While I take responsibility for much of the supervision in finalising the thesis and its examination, this was done in consultation with various senior academics and leaders. Prof R Moletsane (Deputy Dean in the Faculty of Education for Research and Postgraduate Education), Prof F Mazibuko (Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Head of College of Humanities) and Prof J Jacobs (Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research) are thanked for their advice and support.

It has taken almost three years since the passing of Nomali to bring this thesis and its examination to conclusion.

This effort is especially dedicated to all Nomali's children –
her own, and those in this study.

Prof Renuka Vithal
Supervisor

7 January 2009

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own and that all sources used and cited have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

T.C.N. MNCWABE

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late parents: Muntukathenjwa and Makhosazane Shongwe, my late brother, Dumisani Shongwe. Mantimande Bobhambolunye, Zingabambili ngabe navela kwa Mlandakazi. I cannot leave out my late father-in-law: Mfulathelwa Mncwabe. Mthimbatholeni Khathini, Nina enageza umuntu ngegazi, nimgeza esefile.

LALANI NGOXOLO ZIHLOBO ZAMI

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ABSTRACT

Learning thrives in conducive and supportive environments, and where a culture of learning is cultivated. There are many factors that distract learners from devoting themselves wholeheartedly to learning. This study takes a critical look at such factors, and the involvement of high school learners in the informal sector of the economy is identified as the focus for an in-depth interrogation. More specifically, the focus is on the reasons for learners' involvement in informal work, the type of work they do, as well as the impact of such involvement on their academic performance.

I have chosen to use the case study method in order to understand this phenomenon in one township high school, with a focus on Grade 11 learners as the study participants. Data was collected through a multi-method approach. This entailed a survey questionnaire, letters written by learners, and group and individual interviews. The life histories of learners were developed drawing from the data, and my own autobiography. Five learners, two boys and three girls, were selected to represent the voices of working learners through life histories.

The findings of this study reveal that the kind of work activity engaged by learners is gendered, poorly paid, and makes them vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, and that poverty, education needs, culture, family structure, and size are the main reasons for children's involvement in the economic activities of the informal sector. Noting the magnitude of the problem, the study concludes with some recommendations whilst conceding that there are no quick-fix solutions to challenges of this nature.

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THE ECONOMIC ROLE OF CHILDREN IN SOUTH AFRICA

"Child labour has serious consequences that stay with the individual and with society for far longer than the years of childhood. Young workers not only face dangerous working conditions. They face long-term physical, intellectual and emotional stress. They face an adulthood of unemployment and illiteracy." *United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The challenges facing today's learners are far more complex than they were 20 years ago. The high unemployment rate, poverty, HIV/AIDS, high failure rate in school, and family instability, have created a special type of learner who is plunged into the harsh realities of survival at an early age. Such circumstances render formal learning as of a secondary importance, if not irrelevant, to younger minds still in need of education. Quite disturbingly, learners miss school deliberately in order to set aside time to perform *"odd jobs"* to supplement their parents' meagre incomes. At best, such inevitable yet unfortunate tendencies, by younger members from economically disadvantaged contexts in South African schools, adversely affect school performance. At worst, these tendencies result in huge drop-out rates. In extreme cases, some of the learners who drop-out of school become the source of income when individual families' breadwinners fall ill and/or die. The dwindling numbers of learners over the years among disadvantaged communities provides stunning evidence of this phenomenon. The chilling possibility exists that if these conditions persist, South Africa may end up with a generation that lacks the requisite skills to be integrated into the formal sector of the economy. This may in turn lead to high levels of crime. It is on the bases of these observations that my study asks the following questions:

- Who are the learners that work, and what kinds of activities are they engaged in?

- Why are learners involved in informal economic activities whilst at school?

- What is the relationship between learners' economic activities and their schooling?

It is not my intention in this study to unravel the complexities of the lives of today's learners. Instead the study is confined to the investigation of the involvement of township[1] high school learners in the informal sector of the economy. It is within this context that I explore reasons for their involvement, the types of activities they engage with, as well as the impact such participation has on their academic performances.

1.1 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

A number of observations and inquiries inspired this study. First, when I was conducting a case study on truancy as part of reading for a B.Ed (Hon) degree in1996, I focused on what drives township pupils away from school. A key finding emerging from that study was that some pupils absented themselves from school in order to sell their goods, with the frequency of absenteeism higher on certain days of the month. Interviews with children from families living in one-room homes in Clermont, for a masters study (Mncwabe, 1999) for example, confirmed that absenteeism from school was related to economic activity. Learners indicated that they provided financial support to their families (Mncwabe, 1999). The second inspiration for the study came from a surprise finding when some township schools invited pupils to come with those who are responsible for paying their school fees for discussions. A number of pupils represented themselves in such discussions because they were responsible for their own school fees. Third, every morning when I drive through Clermont

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[1] Townships are locations for black South Africans created by the apartheid government as part of the Group Areas Act (1950) which was designed to segregate people according to race profiling. Whites, Indians, and Colored stayed in their own separate locations.

Township where I live, I see a group of teenagers with plastic buckets. They sell cakes to workers in the nearby New Germany industrial area. In Kwa Mashu, where I teach, cigarettes, matches, sweets, and stolen items are frequently sold. Additionally, girls earn money by braiding hair during lunch breaks. These insights and experiences reveal a vibrant informal economic sector established by school-going learners.

The informal sector is characterised by small-scale production units with extremely low levels of capital. People working in the informal sector have little access to credit from formal sources. Income is seasonal and varies from day to day. The labour force responds to extreme insecurity of employment and income by being very flexible. Many people have multiple income sources such as selling goods on the street during weekends and working in construction during the week (Boyden, 1985). In the Durban Metropolitan area alone, for instance, more than R500 million is spent on informal sector outlets, street vendors, shebeens and spaza[2] shops. In Russell Street[3] more than R170 million is spent on raw materials. About 28 tons of cooked mealies (corn on the cob) are sold every working day during peak periods. This translates into a turn over of about R200 000 a day and R1 million per five-day week (Von-Fintel & Buhur, 2001).

Over the last 30 to 40 years a system has grown almost entirely unnoticed by educationists (Krige, 1995), which has quietly been producing hundreds of artisans with basic craft skills. Most township high school learners come to school with the experience of some informal sector activities gained in the street as well as within the school premises. What the schools are doing for such learners is to prepare them for work in the formal sector, which, however, absorbs very few learners. What is done about the skills of the sector with no capital to start a

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[2] Shebeens and spaza shops are informal bottle stores and mini-grocery shops, respectively. These form part of small business enterprises and they are part of popular establishments in black townships to supplement meagre salaries in their households.

[3] A very busy street in the business district of central Durban, KwaZulu-Natal

business, which is usually aimed at making a basic living, that is, the sector with a great deal of money flow?

On the bases of these observations, it is my hope that this study will influence educational planners to consider the issue of helping children involved in the informal sector to get some basic skills. It is important to note that informal sector activities generally, and skills formation within the sector specifically, have received comparatively little attention from researchers (Barasa, 2000). Most researchers have a tendency to examine the nature and relevance of skills required for the informal sector at formal sector institutions. By focusing on working learners, this study will contribute by informing policy on skills developed in the informal sector. Furthermore, literature on vocational training in the informal sector is totally lacking in South Africa. This study is, thus, a contribution towards filling the gap. Lastly, this study provides a critical understanding about children who work to survive but, significantly, who also choose to continue their education despite facing enormous challenges and hardships.

1.2. CHILD LABOUR AND CHILD WORK

The foregone discussion indicates that learners are deeply involved as child labour in the informal sector of the economy. The notion of working children has a long history and in this section I consider children's involvement in the economic sector as both labour and work, and provide reasons for using the term children's work in this study.

Child labour is a phenomenon that has reared its ugly head in many parts of the world, though in varying degrees. Indeed, it is a very old practice. Children of the poor were seen as workers long before the industrial revolution (Seabrook, 2001). It has been an important social and economic phenomenon. For example, as early as 1861, 36.9% of boys and 20.5% of girls in the 10 to 14 year age group in England and Wales were labourers (Basu & Van, 1989). Fyfe (1989) suggests that

not much has changed since then because as many as 20% of African child labour constitutes as much as 17% of the total work force in some African countries. Recent figures provided by the International Labour Organisation is that there are about 218 million working children aged between 5 and 17 (2006). In South Africa, 2 out of 3 children are involved in child labour (Lorgat, 2001).

Various mechanisms have been put in place to combat child labour world-wide. The North Americans have demonstrated strong disapproval of child labour through their own history and current movements to boycott imports from countries where child labour is rife (Bachman, 2000). According to Wasserman (2000), there are parallels between historic patterns of the decline in child labour in the United States and situations today in developing countries. Eradicating child labour using such mechanisms, however, has its negative effects. Boycotting exports of goods produced by children, for instance, actually worsens the welfare and well-being of those children and their families: first, by lowering their living standards and survival, and secondly, by pushing children into dangerous endeavours such as begging and prostitution (Bissell, 2004). There is a notion that the greater the extent of poverty in a country, the greater the numbers of children engaging in child labour (Wasserman, 2000).

Poverty is a universal phenomenon to which children all over the world are, to a lesser or greater degree, subjected. Poverty in South Africa is structurally related to, and has been exacerbated by the policy of apartheid. The Group Areas Act (1950), the migrant labour system, and influx control have, amongst other things, placed constraints on people's freedom, and separated men from their families by preventing them from migrating to the cities with their families. This has resulted in social dynamics such as widespread illegitimacy. By the 1970's illegitimacy ranged from 26% to 60%[4] in African townships (Hellmann, 1971). Many street children reported that they have never known their fathers (Chetty, 1997; Le

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[4] This wide band of illegitimacy figures represents conjectures rather than accurate research percentages, symptomatic of the way research was conducted and mobilised during the apartheid era to create a negative image of black people.

Roux, 1995; Richter, 1989; Swart, 1988), and those alternative caretakers such as grandmothers or other extended family members were not available to them in the absence of their mothers.

Evidence that large numbers of poor black parents have difficulty providing for the physical needs of their children is clear (Richter & Swart-Kruger, 1999; D'Souza, Mashinini, Pongona & Mashinini, 1987). The HIV/AIDS pandemic has exacerbated emotional and psychological injury to children. There were 300 000 HIV/AIDS orphans in South Africa in 2002 (Desmond & Gow, 2002) and this number has risen to 1 400 000 by 2007 (Avert, 2007). They end up with relatives where they are treated as unpaid domestic workers (Levison, 1991). Half of the people of this country live in poverty, with the province of KwaZulu-Natal having the highest number at 41,8 % (Posel, 1997). Some of the contributing factors that may cause or exacerbate poverty are unemployment, interrupted income cycles, and the death of breadwinners. The unemployment rate has risen from 33% in 1996 to almost 38% in 2001. It is estimated that in 2002 about 11 million children under 18 years of age in South Africa were living on less than R200 income per month, and hence, are desperately in need of income support (Streak, 2000). The problem is exacerbated when the head of the family fails to find a job and sends his wife and children out to work (Patrinos & Psacharopoulos, 1995; Cain & Mozumder, 1980; Siddiqi & Patrinos, 1995).

Though poverty may be a determinant of child labour, it cannot be examined in the absence of cultural and social factors such as education, culture, and urbanisation. Culturally, gender plays a very important role in determining the type of activities girls and boys are involved in. In Kano (Nigeria), a vast majority of girls engaged in street hawking are performing an activity that is a culturally prescribed as a prerequisite for marriage (Schildkrout, 1973). According to studies conducted in Bolivia (Cartwright & Patrinos, 1999), girls work additional (unreported) hours taking care of siblings and performing household chores. It is also a cultural practice for parents to send their children to work. They fear that

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they will be idle if they do not work (Delap, 2001). For many girls, serving as maids in households prepares them for their future as wives and mothers (Amin, Quayes & Rives, 2004).

Family structure is also a predictor of the likelihood of a person working at a younger age. Many working children are from female-headed families. These women are divorced, single, or widowed. The birth order of a child is also an important determinant of child labour, which is often neglected in most research on child work (Emerson, 2002). Children from large families seem to be more likely to work and the larger the family the higher the average of working children. In particular, one study found that most working children come from families with more than 4 children (Myers, 1991). The greater the number of siblings, the more likely it is that the child combines school and work (Patrinos & Psacharopoulos, 1995). Fyfe (1989) explains that children living in rural areas contribute to family income, and this can have a positive impact in terms of fertility as children are viewed in terms of the work that they can perform, hence larger families.

Lastly, the programmes imposed on the economy of developing countries by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have meant cuts in social spending that have hit the poor disproportionately in comparison to its lesser effects on upper income bracket earners. Cuts in social spending have affected education, which is an alternative to child labour. In all regions, spending per learner for higher education fell during 1980. In Africa and Latin America spending per pupil also dropped for primary education. A unit increase in the cost of schooling increases the likelihood of child labour by 6%, as highlighted in a study conducted in Bolivia (Myers, 1991). The school system in developing countries is rigid and uninspiring in their approaches to children who work, coupled with a curriculum that is irrelevant and far removed from children's lives and the world in which they live.

Child labour can thus be regarded as a consequence of a number of factors, the most important being a response to poverty. Other factors connected to poverty are: the need to contribute to and supplement the income of poor families; sustaining self in the absence of adult caretakers and the exploitative use of children as cheap labour.

Although much research about children's involvement in the economic sector has traditionally been conceived as child labour, in this study *children's work* or *working children* is preferred for two reasons: as a broader conception incorporating child labour; and so that the phenomenon can be studied afresh from the viewpoints of the children who see themselves as engaging in legitimate economic activities. Child labour has a pejorative connotation from an adult perspective, and this study challenges such conceptions with a view to recommending curriculum considerations to include the needs of children who work.

1.3 CHILDREN IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR

Krige (1985) details a story of 2 children younger than 10 years of age who barter vegetables for used clothes which their mother later sells in the township. The contacts that they make continue to sustain their small business. Many similar stories of children in the informal sector of the economy are told in South Africa (Griesel, Swart-Kruger & Chawla, 2002; Krige, 1985b). Many studies have been conducted on the informal sector in this country but the involvement of children is largely ignored (De Kock, 1987; D' Souza, Mashinini, Pongona & Mashinini, 1987; Posel, 2001b; Rogers & Hart, 1989). This is despite the fact that children are mentioned in statistics and, together with women, they constitute the highest average as participants in the informal economy sector. There are 1.2 million individuals in the sector of which close to 80% are Africans (Bhorat, 1999). According to the Central Statistics Service (1990), 1027 blacks out of 1094 who fall under the informal sector were housewives and learners. The study by De

Kock (1987), on garbage collectors, lumped children together with women. The only, rather dated, study on the informal economy sector undertaken by Zarenda (1980) in Soweto indicated the involvement of children. The findings of this study indicate that a substantial number of manufacturing, as well as service organisations, employ children on a full-time basis. In most cases children were not paid (see Krige, 1985:35-41).

Most of the world's working children are found in the informal sector. The majority of studies conducted on African as well as Western countries do not include any information on child work, except for some data on apprenticeships. In some instances, the available information is incomplete because children are not usually the main focus of the study. It is as though the problem of child work does not exist for those engaged in research on the informal sector, and this also explains why much of the literature in this study appears to be dated. It can be deduced from the foregoing discussion that worldwide, literature on child work in the informal economy sector is scarce or hard to find. Children are involved in activities such as selling, washing cars, prostitution, minding children, and herding cattle. They provide their services for free in exchange for food, shelter, and education. Though some are in paying jobs, they earn very little for their services. When a Guidance teacher in one of the schools in Clermont Township (in Durban) asked her Grade 12 learners to draw a pie graph of all their activities in 24 hours, Figure 1 provides an illustration of what she got from one of the female learners.

The graph indicates the disproportionate mix of school and economic activities. The learner spends 15.5 hours working and only has 3 hours of sleep per day. She has a meagre one-hour per day for homework. It is apparent that economic activities take precedence in her life. The situation of many children in township schools it seems forces them to combine school and economic activities. This occurs all over the world as most children focused on in studies on children's work and the informal sector indicated that they also attended school. The group

of children with the highest propensity to be involved in the informal economy is of those found in the street (Oloko, 1988).

Figure 1. *Pie Graph of Township Learners' Activities in 24 Hours*[6]
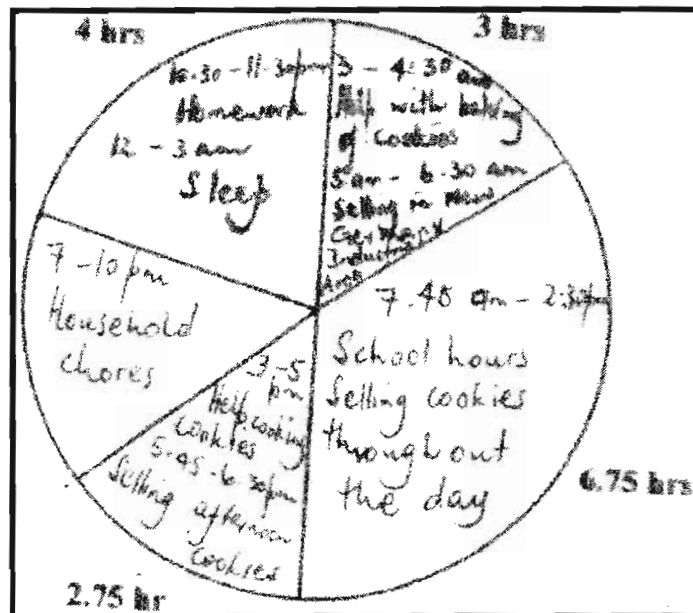
N.B. Time spent in economic activities was not originally given but calculated by the researcher
to highlight the amount of child work

Just like in Brazil, most of the children *on* the street in South Africa are workers who have family ties and homes, but work on the street to supplement the family income and simultaneously, attend school (Levenstein, 1996). Children *of* the street, that is, those who are permanently in the street with no family ties, on the other hand, are very few when compared to those who have family ties. Figure 2 provides recent estimates of these two categories for Namibia and South Africa.

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[5] The pie graph accounts for 19.5 hours. When queried, the teacher's remark was that 4.5 hours was not accounted for and this is not important for this study.

Figure 2. *Incidence Estimates for South Africa and Namibia*

Children's Circumstances	South Africa	Namibia
Children *of* the street (have no family ties and homes)	10 000	100
Children *on* the street (have family ties and homes)	1000 000	2000

Source: Ministry of Local Government and Housing, Namibia, (2005).

Though there are South African studies on street children, not much has been reported about those combining school and work. During a one-day study skills seminar, organised by the Department of Education in September 2000, a Grade 12 learner in a high school in Kwa Mashu was asked where he was going to be the following year. He answered that he would be at his table selling vegetables, something he does every afternoon. His answer concurs with reality: statistics state that only 10% of matriculants (those who pass Grade 12 and are ready for tertiary education) are able to get jobs in the formal economic sector. The pupil is aware that there is no job for him out there. He will continue with his informal economic activities.

This raises the question of the necessity of attending school when he might end up in the informal economic sector anyway. One wonders what is the relevance of and response to the present school curriculum is addressing such a situation. According to Krige (1985), schools do not give anything positive to their learners with regard to the informal economic sector. Rather, he argues, it is the process of failure in the school that produces the wave of recruits to the sector. In this country it is usually African learners who end up in the informal sector as they may have difficulty getting formal sector employment (Newson, 1996).

1.4 THE IMPACT OF CHILD WORK ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Research in America (Patrinos & Psacharopoulos, 1997) confirms that working children attain lower levels of education than non-working learners. Working 12-

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years-old were found to be a year behind the average, and working children 17-years of age were found to be 2 years behind. The same applies to girls as domestic work may be a barrier to girls' schooling attainment (Levison & Moe, 1998). There are conflicting findings from other studies, indicating that though street trading diminishes school performance, this is sometimes exaggerated. The study on the effects of street trading by Oloko (1988) challenges certain assumptions. According to the study, working stimulates the development of positive qualities of personalities and leadership. Ennew (1985) established that children in largely home-based occupations had a higher level of attendance rate than those working outside the home at fixed locations such as market stalls. Newspaper vendors are apparently able to sustain their studies, and working girls put a higher priority on education than do boys. It is against the background of such contested research findings that this study explores the lives of working learners.

1.5 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY: THE CONTEXT

Children combining school and work are found all over South Africa. Though they are mostly visible in urban areas, there are children in rural areas working on farms. This study is concerned with those children mixing school and work in urban townships. Kwa Mashu, an African township in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, is an example of this category. This study is concerned with learners combining school and work in one high school in Kwa Mashu. A full background of Kwa Mashu, as well as that of the school, is given.

1.5.1 History of Kwa Mashu

This study is located in Kwa Mashu, an apartheid created township located 25km north-west of the metropolitan zone of Ethekweni (Durban). Like any other African township, it was designed in terms of influx control and racial zoning, instead of appropriate township planning and land zoning (Urban Renewal

Report, 1998). Originally, the development of Kwa Mashu was a solution to the problem of a shortage of housing for black workers. In 1953, the city council acquired 2620 acres of land through the urbanisation of sugar-cane plantations. It was named after Sir Marshal Campbell, a sugar-cane baron. In 1956, Kwa Mashu was proclaimed a municipal housing scheme for 12000 Africans. These people were forcefully removed from their Cato Manor shantytown in the city. This inspired one of the ANC struggles led by women to defy the move out of the city. As Dorothy Nyembe explained, "We want to get all that KwaMuhle was building in Kwa Mashu and put them in Mkhumbane (Cato Manor)". This did not transpire and, soon, people were seeking homes in Kwa Mashu. One of the conditions of getting a house in Kwa Mashu was that a couple had to be married. A number of unmarried couples were encouraged to marry to get a house. Thomas Shabalala recalls:

> You had to get married otherwise KwaMuhle (Bourquin) would not let you go to Kwa Mashu. Every Saturday all you could see were people getting married quickly. They hold up this paper, which says, 'This is my house I am there' (cited in Maylan & Edwards, 1996).

Failure to get married resulted in men being relocated to a hostel, whilst women were expelled from Durban. There was no place for widows or single mothers. Though this happened a long time ago, it might be one of the reasons for overcrowding and single parenthood, which is highlighted in this study. In 1977, Kwa Mashu was handed over to the KwaZulu provincial government. The Inkatha Freedom Party[7] openly dominated it. The existence of highly politicised youth supporting the United Democratic Front[8] during the 1980s resulted in conflict with Inkatha leaders from the neighbouring squatter township of Lindelani. Political violence erupted during this period claiming a number of lives. This

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[7] This is a political party formed by Dr Mangosuthu Buthelezi, a former member of the African National Congress (ANC). He broke away from the ANC due to specific policy disputes.

[8] This was a civic movement formed by the ANC members who were not in exile during the apartheid years. This movement was led by the late Archie Gumede, a lawyer and political activist who represented (without a fee) many youth accused of treason and violence during the apartheid years.

conflict was further perpetuated by the 1980 nationwide black school boycotts. In April 1980, pupils in Kwa Mashu joined the boycott. The IFP leader, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, responded with a rejection of the boycott and he ordered the learners to go back to school. Force was used to carry through this order. The significance of this episode has been well documented in a paper by Paulus Zulu:

> Open physical confrontation between Inkatha and the extra-parliamentary opposition first broke out in 1980 when organised amabutho[10] sjamboked[11] boycotting pupils back to school in Kwa Mashu (cited in Minnaar, 1991).

A number of learners were killed because of these conflicts. Another conflict broke out between learners who were mostly comrades (members of the same political party) and a group called Amasinyora (members of a notorious criminal gang from K-section, where the school is situated), who carried out a reign of terror, almost with total impunity, robbing, looting, raping, murdering, and extorting money. The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), the South African Defence Force (SADF), and the KwaZulu Police, (with some members who were gangsters), committed housebreaking and robberies. They also supported the Amasinyora (Reeds, 1994). The Amasinyora forced other youth to join their ranks. Their favourite targets were families who had evacuated their children from K-section to other places of safety. Originally these were youngsters who did not want to join the comrades in their activism against racist authorities. Meanwhile, schoolboys in the area were pressured by their comrades into joining the Learner Representative Council (SRC) at local schools. Young brothers of Amasinyora members were abducted. Most of the gang members were not interested in politics or the discipline of the struggle. They wanted to protect their younger brothers as they did not understand anything about the SRC's political agenda. Many learners who were comrades were killed during this period by the Amasinyora, who were well-trained and supplied with guns by the IFP and

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[9] A common name referring to a group of men armed with spears, shields, kieries (canes) and, at times, axes.

[10] Being whipped with a tapered leather thong.

SADF. This resulted in some families moving to informal settlements like Siyanda and Richmond Farm, where people supporting the same political party resided.

1.5.2 The Demographics and Socio-Economic Profile of Kwa Mashu

According to the 1991 national census, the total population of Kwa Mashu is 142386, of which 52% are males. It is divided into 11 units. Houses consist mainly of 4-roomed units, some 2-roomed units, and a small number of larger, smarter houses have been constructed. Most households consist of extended families of multiple generations, and many houses have shacks (informal, overcrowded housing) in their back yards. The total number of inhabitants per dwelling range from about 8 to 14. The houses are very small, resulting in overcrowding and a lack of privacy, with further negative social consequences (Urban Renewal Report, 1998). Many people register with Kwa Mashu's local authority to be able to use their schools and other facilities, but actually live in neighbouring shack settlements like Richmond Farm and Siyanda.

Research shows that most of the existing business enterprises in Kwa Mashu serve local or domestic markets such as shops, auto-repairs, and workshops, whilst many specialised business activities run from home (Moller, 1992). Kwa Mashu has the highest number of self-employed people when compared to other townships in Durban, as well as when compared to two other big townships in South Africa (Moller, 1992). Kwa Mashu has a functional literacy rate of 48%, which is lower than the surrounding areas. Only 17% have achieved matriculation (Grade 12) as the highest level of education (Urban Renewal Report, 1998). Of the potentially economic active population, 48% are functionally illiterate and 10% have a secondary school education. These low levels of education and literacy are also mentioned in this study since they act as serious constraints to

economic opportunities. They limit employment to low skilled, low paying positions, with little potential for improvement.

The percentage of residents with a tertiary education in the following sectors are as follow: (i) teaching, nursing and police diplomas (40%), (ii) business college certificates/diplomas (16%) and (iii) technical diplomas (12%). Income levels in 1994/95 were calculated as R964 per month. More disturbingly, 23% of Kwa Mashu's residents fell below this level. Kwa Mashu has lower income levels than the surrounding areas such as Newlands and Ntuzuma. Almost 25% of households live below the subsistence level (Urban Renewal Report, 1998).

More female household members were employed than male household members (Moller, 1992). Some households live below the poverty line, relying mainly on a single member's pension grant. Such households also rely heavily on the assistance of younger household members for survival. These were demonstrated in Kwa Mashu's youth snapshot (Jefferson, 2001), where the youth generally showed a heightened sense of responsibility towards supporting the household. These were youth under the age of 18. In response to the question posed, namely: "What does looking after the family involve?" There were a number of responses:

> "Whatever I get I bring home to my family" - Female involved in illegal activities.
> "It involves doing domestic work like cutting grass, planting trees and flowers, cleaning surroundings as such… and contributing financially if one is doing casual work" - Male, ordinary young person (source: Jefferson, 2001).

Kwa Mashu is one of the townships in South Africa with serious crime and firearm-related problems. Kwa Mashu has the highest rate of violent crime, the highest level of victimisation and gang activities, as well as the highest frequency of gunshots heard by residents when compared to two other townships falling within the same category, namely, Tsolo-Qumbu and Lekoa-Vaal. There is a great

increase in firearms as compared to the other areas (Jefferson, 2001). Most prevalent violent crimes involve murder and mugging. There is a greater increase in the number of firearms than previous statistics indicate (Jefferson, 2001).

1.5.3 The School: The Study Site

The school, the site for this research study, was named after a local businessman who donated a site for the school. Part of the site is covered with reeds, as there are small rivers surrounding the school. According to the older members of the community, this was a spot where most of criminal activities took place during the 1970s. It is situated in K-section of Kwa Mashu Township. This is one of the three sections in this township with the highest number of abandoned houses (Urban Renewal Report, 1998). It was also one of the projects of the community aided by the Urban Foundation. It first opened its doors to learners in 1986.

The physical appearance of the school tells a story. Though it had a good design, it has been looted to such an extent that it is a shadow of its original plan and construction. A number of windows are broken and there are no doors in some of the classrooms. All electrical fittings were vandalised to such an extent that there is no electricity in the school. Ever since I joined the school in 1987, toilets have been out of order. The school had enough furniture when it was still a junior secondary school. No extra furniture was provided for, even though 7 new classrooms were added in 1991 when the school was upgraded to a senior secondary school. According to the 2001 records, there are only 123 desks for 1050 learners. In Grades 8 and 9, most learners spend their entire day standing. They only get a chance to sit down when examinations are written. Examinations are written in the morning and afternoon with only 2 Grades writing per session.

Though school fees are very low when compared to other schools in the area, very few learners can afford to pay. According to school records, less than 30% of learners have managed to pay R100 per annum school fees for the past 4 years. Most learners are from the two surrounding informal settlements, and this puts

KwaZulu-Natal in the spotlight because of violence in the early 1990s. K-section was the home of the notorious Amasinyora group. The two informal settlements became the home of many people who ran away from KwaZulu-Natal's rural areas because of political unrest. A few kilometres away from the school is an orphanage founded by a community worker in the early 1990s. This was a sequel to political violence where breadwinners and parents were killed. Children were left on their own. This home now also caters for HIV/AIDS orphans. Some of the learners from this school were raised in this home.

Returning to the issue of violence, the first principal of the school was killed by a mob in December 1989. After his death, the school was taken over by SRC members who victimised both teachers and learners who were not politically active. Learners skipped classes and there was a "*pass one pass all*" campaign by learners. This state of affairs remained in the school for 5 years. Mr. Mandela (the president of SA from 1994 to 1999) only restored order with the help of local ANC political activists in 1994 after the *"back-to- school"* campaign was initiated. The school inherited learners who were not equipped for the Grade they were enrolled for. The school has a history of poor Grade 12 results since it was upgraded in 1991. Results have been anything less than 30% up to 1995 when a 50% pass-rate was achieved. After that, results dropped again to a low of 23% in 2001. Most educators are from other areas of Durban and only 9 educators out of 30 are from Kwa Mashu. None of the teachers live in the area where the school is situated.

1.6 THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY

121 Grade 11 learners participated at the beginning of the study in 2001. This study used what I refer to as a funneling technique (beginning with a large number of participants which was gradually decreased) as a participant selection process. 61 working learners (42 girls and 19 boys) were identified through questionnaires. 36 of these were interviewed and 5 (2 boys and 3 girls) were

selected to relate their life histories. These learners were selected because of their gender, they mixed school and work, and because they work within the school premises, as well as outside the school.

Data collection was done through a multi-method approach. It was initiated by a survey questionnaire, followed by interviews (group and individual), life histories, and finally, my biography. The analysis was done in 3 stages. The first was data from surveys, letters, (14 learners had included letters when responding to the survey questionnaire) and individual interviews. The second was done with life histories, where each story was developed and analysed, and this was followed by a summative analysis of all 5 stories. The cross-analysis of all data collected, with all the different techniques, was done. Lastly the analysis of my biography was included.

1.7 REVIEW OF CHAPTER ONE AND PREVIEW OF FORTHCOMING CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 orients the reader to aspects such as the intentions and rationale for the study, child labour, informal sector, children in the informal sector of the economy, school and child work, impact of child work on academic performance, the context of, and background to, the study. It deals with "THE ECONOMIC ROLE OF CHILDREN".

Chapter 2 outlines the literature related to both critical questions of the study. Child work research is reviewed from both African and international perspectives. A gap, which results in the exclusion of children in research, is identified and responded to. Learners' participation and the types of activities in which they are involved in the informal sector of the economy are revealed as a connection between "CHILD WORKERS AND SCHOOLING".

Different "PERSPECTIVES ON CHILD WORK" in the literature is explored in Chapter 3. This chapter provides the theoretical framework for the study.

Chapter 4 outlines the research "METHODOLOGY". This is a detailed account of the choices and their justification that informed the process of data generation and analysis.

The first part of the analysis using data produced through the use of questionnaires, letters, and short interviews commences in Chapter 5. Then the data is presented, analysed and discussed to respond to the question ARE CHILDREN "CONSUMER" OR "INVESTMENT GOODS"?

Chapter 6 reveals that working children are treated as if they do not exist in school. They are also not seen in the informal economic sector where they claim to be working. This chapter is aimed at letting "THE VOICES OF THE INVISIBLE" be heard through their life stories.

Chapter 7 develops themes from the cross-analysis undertaken of all data collected at different stages of the study, and is presented in this chapter called "LEARNING FROM WORKING LEARNERS".

Chapter 8 theorises the experiences and explanations of working learners. Its focus is located "INSIDE THE LIVES OF WORKING LEARNERS".

Chapter 9 is titled "FORGOTTEN ROOTS". The invisibility of working learners has been very powerful, and even the researcher herself has been blind to her own early childhood as a working learner. This chapter presents my biography, which was awakened by learner's voices, remembered and entered into the analysis.

CHAPTER TWO

CHILD WORKERS AND SCHOOLING

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Learners have transformed school from a primary centre of learning into a hive of economic activities. Some of the developments leading to this shift in focus have already been explored and analysed in the previous chapter. This chapter presents an overview of literature on child work. It explores ways in which problems of working children are currently being approached in different parts of the world. The literature, however, may not appear to be current because working learners are not the focus of most studies, their plight and conditions emerge as subsidiary findings of studies on children in the labour sector. This literature, in general, exemplifies the marginal positions of working learners in research. There is silence and invisibility about personal stories and children's perspectives of what it means to be a formal school-going child whilst working in the informal economic sector. The silence is broken in this chapter divided into four sections.

Section one argues that it is not enough to say that children are involved in economic activities without understanding the reasons for such involvement and this is dealt with through critical engagement with literature. This engagement shows there is a need to go further to know about the type of work they do and their remuneration. Part two discusses the type of work learners are involved in and this shows the extent to which learners are involved in the informal sector of the economy. This study is not about any working child but those who combine school and work and the consequences thereof. It is against this background that part three focuses on the impact of learners' involvement in their academic performance. In part four, the conclusion, the strands raised in the foregoing parts are linked.

2.1 LEARNERS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR

According to the available literature, there is an extensive list of reasons to explain children's involvement in the economic sector, and some appear to be dominant in most countries. These are poverty, family structure, size and parental level of education, and the educational system, as well as gender and culture. Each of these will be discussed in the following sections.

2.1.1 Poverty

Poverty is more than merely income insufficiency. It is the "inability of individual households or communities to command sufficient resources to satisfy a socially acceptable minimum standard of living" (Guthrie, 2003:17). Researchers, by contrast, have created multidimensional measures of poverty and deprivation which consider access to goods and services (such as shelter health, education or sanitation), physical safety or vulnerability, social inclusion, as well as income-expenditure and income variability. Other socio-economic indicators such as health (death rates, infant mortality, and malnourishment) are also considered. It is the educational levels and access to services that provide a picture of the overall degree of development in a country. In South Africa it is also defined by selecting a cut-off point of income to identify the poorest. An adult earning less than R301 a month, for instance, is regarded as living below the poverty line (RDP, 1995).

It is estimated that almost half of all people in South Africa live in poverty, and 95% of those with resources less than the poverty line are Africans (May, 1997). Poverty, across population groups in South Africa, as exemplified by figures when apartheid was displaced by democracy, and which has changed only marginally (Taylor, 2002), as indicated in Figure 3. The poor are trapped in a cycle of poverty, which Chambers (1983) calls the "deprivation trap". It encompasses poverty, physical weakness, isolation, vulnerability, and powerlessness.

Figure 3. *Poverty Across Population Groups in South Africa*

	African	White	Coloured	Asian
People	60,6%	0,7%	27,5%	2,0%
Households	48,2%	0,3%	23, 0%	1,2%
Poverty Share	95,2%	0,1%	4,5%	0,2%

(Source: World Bank, 1994:10)

Both income and wealth must be considered as dimensions of poverty (Ray, 2004). For example, in some families parents sit at home while their children feed them. According to Murtedla (2001), a human rights activist and labour expert, such a reversal of duties is an economic, social, and human calamity. Additionally, literature (Cartwright & Patrinos, 1997; Myers, 1991) indicates that in most African countries young people are also likely to head poor households in need of income from children's work.

2.1.2 Unemployment

The level of unemployment in African countries often results in poverty, is very high and is estimated to rise in the near future. In South Africa in particular, poverty is caused by chronic structural unemployment, interrupted income cycles due to social contingencies such as unemployment, sickness or disability, death of breadwinners, lack of capability, the legacy of apartheid and inequality, and institutional failure in providing basic services to citizens. It is estimated that by year 2010 South Africa will have more than 8 million unemployed people, a shortage of 200000 skilled workers, and 1.6 million more children at school than any other developing country of comparable size. The reasons for these can be traced to the mechanisation of the economy, which is proceeding at a very alarming rate (Gouws & Kruger, 1994; Cronje, 1996). To complicate the situation, more than a 1000 job-seekers who cannot find work enter the labour market everyday. It is also estimated that more than 5 million people will remain permanently unemployed. Only 7% of job seekers will be able to find employment and many graduates will be unemployed (Gouws & Kruger, 1994).

There are many reasons for this state of unemployment: South Africa is rated internationally as "developing" but has low productivity and the population growth is amongst the highest in Africa. Poverty is also critically linked to the labour market. According to the Taylor Committee of Inquiry (2002), unemployment has risen from 33.0% in February 2001 to 41.8% in September 2002. The Taylor Committee of Inquiry warns:

> Existing levels of poverty have reached unsustainable levels and left unattended have the potential to reverse the democratic gains achieved since 1994. The urgent need to address deepening social exclusion and alienation of these households living in destitution cannot be ignored (Taylor Committee of Inquiry, 2002:16).

Since the Taylor Report, unemployment rates have risen further to 38% as indicated by the *Labour Force Survey* (SA Stats, 2007). This high rate of unemployment also means that children may be regarded as an essential source of income for hard-pressed families (Griesel, Swart-Kruger & Chawla, 2002). Furthermore, children have to work because child poverty rates have increased as well, as evidenced by Figure 4:

Figure 4. *Child Poverty Rates in South Africa*

Source: Streak (2000), October Household Survey: using R400/month, adjusted toR490 in real terms

Province	Child poverty in 1999 (%)	Estimated number of children in 2002	Estimated number of poor children in 2003	Child poverty share in 2002 (%)
Western Cape	46.8	1 518 692	712 114	5
Eastern Cape	88.4	3 462 084	3060 483	21
Northern Cape	72.9	365 358	266 565	2
Free State	77.2	1145368	885 913	6
KwaZulu-Natal	80.0	4 1106547	3 286470	23
North West	78.7	1 521 258	1 197 230	8
Gauteng	55.4	2 465 114	1 366 659	10
Mpumalanga	78.7	137 7431	1 084 438	8
Limpopo	84.3	2 965 484	2 500200	17
RSA	75.8	18 928 319	14 360 072	100

The data as presented in Figure 4 shows that child poverty rates have probably increased due, most likely, to the increasing unemployment and the impact of HIV/AIDS on breadwinners in households. Poverty is described as follows by poor children themselves at a National Children's Forum on HIV/AIDS in 2000 is illuminating:

"... Waking up with nothing to eat. You go to school hungry" (Boy 16, Western Cape).

"I do not have parents. They are chasing us away where we are staying ... we do not have food or money to rent" (Tsakane, 10 years).

Absolute poverty is the main reason children enter into circumstances which place their entire development at risk. This is the reason 44% of South African children aged between 5 and 17 are working to earn money. This is to put food on the table for themselves and their families. According to Mehlomakhulu (2002) of the Department of Labour, of the 13.4 million children in this country, 6 million are engaged in economic activities. Her figures are based on figures released by Statistics SA (2000). In South Africa children are driven to the street due to the deaths of their parents and other members of their families as a consequence of AIDS-related illnesses (Mathambo, 2000). As investigative journalist, Cullinan, reported in the Sunday Times (18 March 2001):

Hundreds of youngsters are negotiating lives alone as disease claims their parents and a bureaucracy struggling to adjust to orphan householders keep them penniless.

Most orphans lack birth certificates which they need so that those who care for them can apply for child support or foster care grants. Grants of R450 per month a child are also available to people caring for children that are not their own, but these are notoriously difficult to access. All grants are available for foster parents over the age of 21, which excludes child-headed homes. Cullinan (2001) relates the woeful tale of 16-year-old Bongiwe who heads the family, helped by 15-year-

old Khanyisile. The girls walk the two-hour journey to school, barefooted. They are part of the 50 HIV/AIDS orphans who cannot pay the annual R30 school fees at St Phillips School at Ingwavuma. The plight of these children is exacerbated by the failure of the legal system to rise to the challenge posed by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Information from the Thandanani Children's Institute in KwaZulu-Natal (2004) indicates that child-headed families are not catered for in the law, and this indicates failure to keep abreast with times. As a result, the most deserving families are excluded from state subsidies, resulting in child-headed families dying of famine (Cullinan, 2004).

2.1.3 Demography of Working Children

Family Structure

A review of the literature from developing countries suggests that family structure is a predictor of the likelihood of a person working while young (Myers, 1991). Working children are mostly from incomplete households where only one adult is available or is able to work. Most families worldwide are now female-headed (Ruwanpura & Humphries, 2004). Many women are divorced, neglected and widowed. Studies also point out that some women choose not to marry, but instead to raise children without forcing permanent attachments with fathers of their children (Preston-Whyte & Zondi, 1989). Families in general face difficult decisions in allocating their time to care-giving and income-generation. It is a double blow for female-headed families because the adult who must do both is a woman. She will generally earn less than a man, compounding the difficulty further (Albelda, Humelweit & Humphries, 2004). The economic reliance of female-headed households on children often results in premature entry by children into the world of work. Their schooling is often interrupted or terminated. It is important to note that this economic argument does not convey the bitterness many women feel when they are forced to burden their children with such a responsibility. The pain felt is well explained in the following story:

For me educating children is important, because otherwise they suffer like me. I feel that I had very little choice with Shivaithi. My husband had died and not even a year after this I met with a motorbike accident, which led to my hospitalization for a couple of months. During this time Shivaithi's education got disrupted because she took over the responsibilities of looking after her siblings and caring for me. After I was discharged and came back home I had to make a very difficult decision. I needed Shivaithi's help in both household and cash crop cultivation. Therefore I had to discontinue her education and to this day, I wish I could have done things differently. I do think educating children is important – Durga[12] (Albelda, Humelweit & Humphries, 2004).

Disorganisation of families, whether caused by death, divorce, or emigration, results in children being taken by relatives specifically to provide unpaid labour. Studies done by Ennew (1985) and the ILO (1992), found that there is a correlation between children who work and children living with step-parents or adult relatives, than when they stay with their parents. There is also a contradiction on this issue as Oloko (1988) found that most working children were from families with both parents. These findings do not support widely-held beliefs that children are put to work by townsmen and distant kinsmen, or that they are products of broken families (Myers, 1991).

Family Size and Educational Level of Parents
Most studies (Rogers & Standing, 1981; Myers, 1991; Blanc, 1994) conducted on working children found that they are from big families with many siblings. Child work also depends on the sex and birth order of the child (De Graff, Bilsborrow & Herrin, 1993). According to the findings of the study conducted in Nigeria, young people who seek authorization to work from the Ministry of Labour are either the oldest and are responsible for young siblings in the family, or the youngest responsible for maintenance (Myers, 1991). Another group of working children

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[12] A 49-year-old *de jure* female head and mother of four children.

come from large households where both parents are generally old and, even though the parents work, there are many children to support, requiring the older children to work (Blanc, 1994).

Ignorance also plays an important role. In many poor families in countries such as India, parents intentionally produce more children on the assumption that children are considered assets (rather than being a liability) as they furnish additional income to the family, thereby ensuring financial stability (Varandani, 1994). Such tendencies result in serious problems such as the increase in population faced by developing countries. Lastly, poorly educated parents increase the probability of children having to work. In most cases the mother's level of education determines whether the child will work or not (Rogers & Standing, 1981). Girls in better living conditions with more educated mothers spend more time at school than at work.

2.1.4 Gender and Culture

Gender biases in certain societies may lead to a difficult kind of specialisation, with boys being sent to school and girls sent to work (Lloyd, 1994). The sex of the child determines whether s/he will work or not. It also determines the type of work the child would be involved in. It was indicated earlier that household size increases the probability of child labour, but its magnitude is also influenced by economic and cultural factors. The social aspect contributes materially to this element as it also reduces parents' investment in schooling (Lloyd, 1994). Such a household demands that the child should work.

A recent review from developing countries suggests that large family size reduces children's' educational participation and progress at school. Lloyd's (1994) review found that the magnitude of this effect is determined by 4 factors: the level of socio-economic development (the effect of household life is stronger in urban or more developed areas); the level of social expenditure by the state (the effect of

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expenditure is weaker if state expenditure is high); family culture (the effect of household and of household size is weaker where extended families exist, e.g. through the practice of child fostering) and the phase of demographic transition (the effect of household size is stronger in later phases).

Cultural factors also play a part in issues relating to gender. In India, for instance, families from urban slums in Tamil Nadu discriminate against girls in order to provide boys with quality education (Basu, 2005). When mothers go to work, girls are more likely to stay at home. Children of mothers who work are more likely to combine work and school, than to work full-time (Lloyd, 1994). There is an income effect from mother's earnings: child work increases as girls will be pulled out of school to take over domestic work. Income increases the substitution effect and child work (Rogers & Standing, 1981).

On the other hand, some boys are sent to work by their parents, not only because of financial constraints, but cultural beliefs. Some parents fear that if boys do not do work they would be idle. In a study done in Bangladesh, Delap (2001) reported that the majority of parents indicated that it was improper for children not to engage in work, especially for older children. Idleness was deemed especially harmful to poor, urban boys as parents feared they would become involved in illegal activities like smoking dagga and taking drugs. Contrary to this, some studies indicate that youth who have engaged in certain behavior may be likely to work. Joyce and Neumark (2001), for example, found that youth who have smoked cigarettes or used marijuana may be anxious to enter the adult world which includes working. Though there are beliefs that play is important for children's development, for some families work is a substitute for play. Daytime play is culturally regarded as a meaningless activity that can breed sloth and irresponsibility in young people (Rogers & Standing, 1991). Parents who were traders claim that they were translating an aspect of their own cultural heritage to their offspring in street trading (Myers, 1991).

2.1.5 Educational Systems

Education Internationally

Bonnet (1993) argues that the failure of the educational system in Africa had led many parents to view work as the preferred option for their children. This is a situation where survival is a priority and the educational method does not offer the best prospects for the future. As one African commentator puts it: "Education broadens your mind but it does not teach you how to survive" (Agiobu-Kemmer, 1992:9). Childhood employment perpetuates the cycle of poverty into which so many are born, but poorly educated parents may not see the eventual benefit of education as compared with the immediate advantage of income from child work. Keeping children in school is difficult, especially in circumstances where education may cost the family dearly and is of poor quality with overcrowded classrooms and a lack of books and learning material. School seems forbidding, alienating, and unconnected with the realities of some children's lives. School fees may require one single lump-sum payment, often unaffordable for the family when added to other expenses like school-wear (uniforms). Interviews, during Blanc's (1994) study, with families from countries such as Kenya, India, and Brazil, indicated that parents are aware that schooling is valuable, whilst parents of working children in Brazil placed education second only to health on their list of concerns for children.

The Philippines has free public education up to Grade 6, but only 60% of children complete primary school. Parents have difficulty meeting the costs, (for example of food and transportation), of sending their children to school (Cartwright & Patrinos, 1999). In Ghana, on the contrary, a learner who does not pay school fees is excluded from school. Some children see school in a negative light, perhaps because of violence against them at school (Boyden, 1995; Myers, 1989). Generally though, in many schools children have to sit in one position for long periods of time. They are subjected to mental abuse especially where corporal punishment is also administered. The educational situation in Africa leaves much

to be desired. This continent experienced high population growth, which resulted in a failure to provide adequate educational facilities. These educational failures have far-reaching implications created by a high number of repeaters. Children who have failed previous academic years occupy some of the scarce places in school. In some countries, up to 30% of learners are repeaters. Figure 5 shows how serious the failure rate is in the primary schools of selected African countries:

Figure 5. *Repeater Rates in Primary Schools in Selected African Countries*
Source: UNDP (1997:156-159) Primary pupil-teacher ratio

Country	Primary repeaters (as a % of primary enrolments in 1990)
Botswana	5
Ethiopia	9
Lesotho	22
Malawi	21
Mozambique	27
Tanzania	5
Sub-Saharan Africa	17

It is also important to remember that it is not only the number of children that present challenges. In some countries half of all children between the ages of 6 and 11 do not attend school. In such countries, the parent's main priority is first to feed their children. They simply do not regard education as their first priority (De Beer & Swanepoel, 2000). There are few teachers who, understandably, are not properly motivated. Poor salaries, coupled with a lack of resources and motivation, result in teachers voting with their feet. In 1993 in Sudan, teachers were paid less than R500 a year (De Beer & Swanepoel, 2000). This has led to high absenteeism rates as teachers have to supplement their meagre salaries with second part time jobs. The teacher-pupil ratio is also demotivating as teachers have to teach in classrooms filled beyond capacity. Figure 6 shows how high the pupil teacher ratio is in Africa.

Figure 6. *Pupil-Teacher Ratio at Primary Level of Selected African Countries*
Source: UNDP (1994: 156-159)

Country	Primary pupil-teacher ratio (1990)
Botswana	32
Ethiopia	30
Kenya	31
Lesotho	55
Malawi	64
Mozambique	55
Nigeria	39
Tanzania	35
Zimbabwe	36
Sub-Saharan Africa	40

This ratio is a recipe for failing to identify learners with learning problems, to set written homework because it would entail too much marking, as well as to maintain discipline. Problems such as these contribute to a lowering in the standard of education for poor children in particular.

Education in South Africa

Schooling in South Africa has many positive changes. Since the end of apartheid in 1994, South Africa has promoted education as an antidote to poverty and conflict. The government spends 8% of its national gross domestic product on education (Maharaj, 2004). This is a higher percentage than the United States or Britain and it is recognised as having the best school system on the continent (Maharaj, 2004). However, teacher failure is destroying the educational system of the country. Teacher failure is the result of lack of monetary incentives, managerial skills, inadequate teaching, and general inability on the part of government to ensure that teachers adhere to the conditions of their employment. A remuneration structure that is inadequate and highly ignorant of the basic principles of supply and demand has seen many talented and highly educated teachers leave the profession. Their exit was exacerbated by lucrative packages through right-sizing. In fact, right-sizing was aimed at redistributing teachers from privileged to under privileged schools, *inter alia,* by forcing all schools to achieve certain pupil-teacher ratios. The negative effects of right-sizing, together with the

increase in salaries of black and white female teachers, aggravated the tight budgetary constrains under which the profession operates. This resulted in the inability to provide under-resourced schools with the necessary capital equipment (Black & Hosking, 1997).

Another disturbing phenomenon in South Africa is that of "shirking". The South African Institute of Race Relation (SAIRR, 1996) reported that as many as 100 of about 195 teaching days are lost in practice due to the high absenteeism among pupils, teachers and principals. According to Black and Hosking (1997), although shirking occurs at all levels across the whole spectrum of schools, it is particularly wide-spread among black schools where facilities are absent or not maintained, and supervision and control are wholly inadequate. Shirking is the result of a lack of motivation caused by low wages, unpleasant working conditions, and inadequate monitoring on the part of school principals.

Research conducted in 2003 and 2004 (Peacock, 2004) by primary school educators in some township and rural schools in KwaZulu-Natal reveal that an average of 48-51% of available teaching time is regularly "lost" to children because their teachers are simply not in the classroom when they are scheduled to be there. In ex-model C schools[13], teachers were in the classroom 100% of the time of the school day. Vast numbers of the most needy primary school children are still currently receiving an education that is massively impoverished, both in terms of quality and quantity (Peacock, 2004).

There is also the issue of "surplus" teachers or temporary substitution, especially in Mathematics, Biology, Science and English. This issue is impacting negatively on the educational system. Many schools fill vacancies with under-qualified teachers from other schools. This results in teachers working less productively then they are capable of doing. To complicate educational matters in this country,

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[13] These are schools that were set up for white South African children only, as there were schools for other races too. This was part of the apartheid government's segregationist policies.

the pupil-teacher ratio is high. In 1992 the pupil-teacher ratio at primary school level was 25:1 and at secondary 26:1 (UNDP, 1997). Despite these circumstances, South Africa is far better off than its African sisters. The retrenchment of thousands of teachers has enabled the state to cut down on the salary component of the education budget and increase funding for other educational items. In the meantime, various factors cause uncertainty, which lowers the morale of teachers. The timing and the nature of the process of retrenchment and implementation of the new outcomes based syllabus, known as Curriculum 2005, is a classical example.

The South African educational system neglects career-oriented teaching and over-emphasizes the social academic value system. For a long time schools have not focused on preparing children for jobs. Schools, parents, and communities have concentrated on providing paper qualifications rather than useful skills (Lindhard & Dlamini, 1990). Our school curriculum does not produce people with business management or technical skills. According to Cronje (1996), entrepreneurship should be a vital part of the curriculum and the opportunity should not be lost to nurture potential entrepreneurs in school. Children from indigenous groups may have difficulty getting formal sector employment and have little choice but to work in home production. Some evidence of this hypothesis is provided by Pradhan and Van Soest (1995). Youth households with a low income were less likely to be absorbed in the formal sector. One possible explanation is that they may have lived in areas with less economic opportunities, which renders them less competitive in the open labor market as they have to utilise the unreliable transport system of their area to get to the work place. (National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1997). This is the group which can be easily absorbed by the informal sector (Grootaert *et al,* in Patrinos, 1998). In South Africa, for most Africans, job options lie in the informal sector economy (Newson, 1996). This is borne out by the survey which concludes that whites are more likely to get a job than blacks in the new South Africa. This is attributable to better educational facilities to which learners are exposed (HSRC, 2005).

The situation for South African children appears to be worsening, as evidenced by increasing rates and the depth of child poverty. With the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic being felt at every level of society, children are experiencing even greater hardships than before (Griese, Meintjies, Croke & Chamberlain, 2003).

2.2 TYPES OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES AND REMUNERATION OF CHILDREN

The type of activities children are involved in, according to literature, depends on factors such as age, gender, place of work, as well as the presence of siblings. Children are involved in domestic work, non-domestic work, marginal economic activities, and family enterprises.

2.2.1 Domestic Work

This includes cleaning, cooking, child-care, and domestic chores, which are undertaken by children to some extent in all societies. These are gendered activities, usually done by girls. India is the exception, where more males are found in this field. It is important to note that they usually work for wages, unlike girls who are usually not paid for similar services. Girls generally work for food and lodging and, occasionally, for a small wage to be sent home. Another system involves the wage work of children as domestic servants of distant kin, with the extent of exploitation being inversely related to the closeness of kinship (Dzidzienyo & Casals, 1978). They are treated more like slaves than members of the household. Male members of the families usually sexually harass the children who work for them (Blanc, 1994).

Girls in urban areas undertake domestic work. This contributes to the high incidence of young female rural-to-urban migration in Latin America (Blanc, 1994; Sing, 1990). "Child- care" accounts for a significant proportion of the

working day of children. A study conducted in Bangladesh indicated that even young children under 7 years of age participate in this activity. In Brazil, a teenage girl is likely to take over domestic chores when there is a young child at home and the mother is working (DeGraff, Bilsborrow & Herrin, 1993; Levenstein, 1996). Surrogate motherhood, with access to limited educational opportunities, falls under this category. They act as mothers of the children they care for. Surrogate motherhood is a direct response to the needs of mothers who may be the family's main breadwinner. Surrogate mothers are generally between 6 and 14 years of age, the skills they have acquired relate to their probable future roles as mothers and housekeepers, and are unlikely to enable them to improve their financial and educational circumstances. Lastly, a special type of child-minding is emerging where children are paid for taking other younger children to school. A study conducted in South Africa indicates that some older children have a duty to take children of primary school age to school in the morning and to bring them back to their home in the afternoon (Moerehead, 1987).

2.2.2 Non-Domestic Work

This category of work is a major form of activity in subsistence economies and encompasses farm work in rural areas. Time-use surveys have suggested that in agrarian economies children spend a great deal of time in such activities, particularly those that are highly time-intensive, such as tending livestock, protecting crops from birds and animals, weeding, and other tasks (Rogers & Standing, 1981). In some activities such as herding cattle, certain ages are stipulated for commencing an activity. In Lesotho, for instance, boys are supposed to be older than 10 years before herding cattle (Ministry of Employment and Labour, 2005). A child may be working for him/herself or for a parent or with parents of kin (e.g. as a foster child), or for strangers.

2.2.3 Marginal Economic Activities

This third category includes both legal and illegal activities, such as selling newspapers, looking after cars, shoe-shining, selling sweets and other small items, running errands, and sorting of garbage (Rogers & Standing, 1981). Theft, prostitution, and other activities, which are illegal, tend to fall in a similar category. Prostitution is also widely regarded as socially acceptable and even a relatively well-paid form of work. There are different types of prostitution in South Africa. There are those who work for drugs, those who work for a salary, and there are tertiary learners who maintain multiple boyfriends to pay for their cell-phones, bills, and charge accounts. About 40000 children are believed to be involved in prostitution in South Africa (Richter, Dawes & Higson-Smith, 2004).

2.2.4 Family Enterprises

Both male and female children may operate as unpaid workers in family enterprises. Rag picking, handcrafts, sweet-making, beer-brewing, prostitution, the production of and dealing with illegal drugs, and even stealing for re-sale, are examples of home-based family businesses which utilise children. Though carried out in a family environment, some of these activities may be detrimental to the children's future. In South Africa, this category includes a type of hairdressing called braiding. These are seen as important survival skills being passed from generation to generation by mothers or female relatives to girls in some poor families. They work from home as the following passage (Majola 2001) explains:

> In their home in Diepkloof, Soweto, every person in the 26-member family is skilled in the art of plaiting hair and they all share the three bed roomed house, including a one-room shack outside. On busy days like Saturday all the women have their hands full of hair. Even the youngest of the grandchildren, Tsidi, on reprieve from studying for Grade 12, has a customer to take care of (Mail & Guardian, August 24-30, 2001).

2.2.5 Working Children and their Earnings

Results from a survey (Myers, 1989) of urban working children in Cochabambe in Bolivia indicate that children are poorly paid. They earn less than adults even when performing the same work as adults (Bequele & Boyden, 1988). In Cairo, working children are sometimes paid one sixth of the normal wages (Daily News, 2001). In West and Central Africa, desperately poor parents are sometimes willing to give up their children for as little as 14 dollars (about R120) to smuggling rings that promise to educate them and find them jobs (Sunday Tribune, 2001). Prostitution offered an income of around 500 rupees (US $16.06) per month in 1990 in India (Blanc, 1994). In contract farming in India they are paid 10 rupees per 25kg cotton for de-linting (the separation of cotton from seeds) and 0.05 rupee per pest or worm caught (Sing, 1990). Children's earnings in Bolivia make a substantial contribution to household well-being, contributing an average earning enough to pull one family member above the poverty line of about 220 Bolivians a month (World Bank, 1996; Siddiqi & Patrinos, 1995).

Gender discrimination is also evident as girls earn less than boys. In part-time domestic work, which is remunerated, girls automatically hand over their earnings to parents. In instances where girls live-in as domestic workers, the money they earn is sent to their parents. Boys on the other hand keep their earnings. Working boys in India, for example, kept 17 to 33% of their earnings for themselves (Blanc, 1994). Girls are expected to have a higher sense of filial duty and obligation towards their households than boys are expected to in most societies. While boys progressively explore wage-paid work in different fields, girls were more likely to remain entrapped in unpaid domestic work. By adolescence, and usually after reaching the age of 16, boys have moved, for example, from vending into other occupations.

In many cases, parents, step-parents, grand-parents or other relatives, care-giving adults, exploit children since they depend on them emotionally and economically.

Children work for such people without any payment. An illustration of this is the case of a girl who was given a home by a female teacher (Rogers & Standing, 1981). The teacher gave the girl boarding, lodging, clothing, and most importantly, access to centres of formal education, in exchange for housework, which the teacher herself could not do because she was physically handicapped. Many children give related adults their earnings after working in the informal sector (Ennew, 1985; ILO, 1982). To add to this, in some instances, children have to account for their earnings to unscrupulous businessmen who exploit them (Rogers & Standing, 1981).

2.3 THE IMPACT OF CHILD WORK ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

It would come as no surprise that working tends to be associated with poor academic performance. Concerns about the amount and intensity of learners' employment stem from a conviction that work and school do not go well together as lengthy hours of work impact on the quality of school work (Masako & Moffatt, 2002). Those who believe in this often posit a zero-sum model, where time spent working is time taken away from activities such as homework that could enhance academic achievement (Coleman, 1961). Some children work up to 7 hours after school daily and as a result, by the time they are supposed to start their schoolwork, they are tired (Mncwabe, 1999). Any activity that takes so much time and energy is bound to be detrimental to the ability of children to concentrate during lessons and to carry out their assignments. The education of children who work on farms is threatened because of long hours of strenuous work. It has been estimated that the school dropout rate for children of migrant workers ranges between 50% and 60% nationwide (Martin, 1988).

Numerous studies (Steinberg, Fedley & Dornbush, 1993) have shown that children working between 15 and 20 hours per week during the school year have lower academic achievement rates. In their longitudinal study of working

adolescents from different types of communities, Steinberg *et al* (1983:178) concluded that,

> More than 20 hours weekly diminish youngster's investment in school, increase delinquency and drug use, further autonomy from parental control, and diminish feeling of self-reliance. Across the outcomes studied, inspection of group means indicated that non-workers generally were better adjusted than adolescents.

While a study (Addison, Bhalotra, Coulter & Heady, 1997) posited that in Ghana school attendance is negatively affected when a child works for more than 10 hours per week, a study (Steinberg, Fedley & Dornbush, 1993) in the United States found that academic performance of children between the ages of 12 and 17 is negatively affected by 15 hours of work per week. Somewhat contrasting results for the United States come from D'Amico (1984) who found that while employment for more than 20 hours per week increased dropout rates, whilst employment for less than 20 hours per week correlated with higher grades.

For children engaged in agricultural work before and after school and each Saturday, attending school regularly is a challenge. They also struggle to make progress in school. They hardly do their homework properly. Working children attend school with a number of disadvantages that inevitably lead to discrimination. Some of these disadvantages are lack of materials, deprived environment, poor clothing, and low-status jobs that affect their appearance, particularly scavenging or begging. Uneven school attendance compromises their school performance even further and almost inevitably there are many dropouts (Blanc, 1994). In an effort to earn a living, a working child may sometimes develop bad habits such as stealing, gambling, smoking, and drinking. Some parents reported that working children turn out to be defiant, disobedient, self-centered, and extravagant spenders in a study conducted on working children in Bombay, (Sing, 1990).

Domestic work may be a barrier to girls' school attainment. A study by Levison and Moe (1997) provides evidence for this. Employed children are less attentive at school than their unemployed counterparts (Mathambo, 2000). Street hawking tends to be associated with poor academic achievement. According to a study in Lagos (Oloko, 1988), children who hawked after school hours performed significantly poorer than did those who assist their parents with internal domestic chores. A study in the United States (UNICEF, 2000), also showed that the academic performance of children between the ages of 15 and 17 is adversely affected if they work 15 hours a week. Moreover, if children enter employment prematurely their educational attainment is compromised or stopped. Working girls, however, placed a higher priority than boys do on education (UNICEF, 2000).

There are conflicting findings from other studies, indicating that though street trading diminishes school performance, this is sometime exaggerated. A study (Myers, 1991) found that working stimulates the development of positive qualities of personalities and leaders. In both primary and secondary school, children who hawk indicated that they were class captains, school prefects, or other types of school leaders. That working children come from only the poorest families is an assumption that is challenged. Working children also take an interest in learning new skills at an early age. In this way a child who is curious by nature gradually becomes more skillful in a particular habit, provided his other needs are also met. Work provides a good opportunity for children to be more skillful and efficient in their early childhood. Most children are engaged in work, which combines both positive and negative factors for their growth and development, and complicated situations of this type are far more difficult to assess. If working is as energy-sapping as maintained above, the question inevitably arises as to how some children manage to achieve academic excellence. According to a developmental model, working, particularly in the "right" kind of jobs, may have positive effects on the academic achievement. The belief is that increased involvement in the world of work leads to the transmission of academically related skills and

knowledge and that work also teaches and reinforces desirable adult-like traits such as responsibility and maturity that enhance academic outcomes (Holland & Andrew, 1987).

There are other factors to be considered on the issue of academic performance. Parental involvement in the school contributes to better school performance of working children (Rogers & Standing, 1981). Working children who have mothers and grandmothers who encourage them by attending PTA meetings, monitor class and examination performance; tend to do well at school. Ennew (1985) established that children working in largely home-based occupations like domestic work had higher levels of attendance than those working outside the home at fixed locations such as market stalls.

Work plays an important role in the development of the child if it involves purpose, plan, and freedom. It has been observed in a survey (Parsons, 1974) that in some unorganised sectors, child workers are given light work as compared to adults. This system enables them to learn and pick-up occupational skills earlier than others and this strengthens the child's character and makes him or her a good sober citizen. The study assessed by Parsons (1974) is among the first to empirically consider the role of in-school employment. The study views learner employment strictly as a means of off-setting the direct costs of school instead of the usual skill-enhancing activity conception. Due to the need for money to pay for additional schooling or to finance current consumption, the child may view employment as a chance to invest in income enhancing skills not provided in the classroom. Many young men acquire a substantial amount of schoolwork experience and their commutative experience is positively correlated with schooling attainment.

2.4 CONCLUSION

The literature review in this chapter has provided extensive insight on what has been written about child work. In fact, after compiling the review, I thought that maybe there was no need for my study. But the fact that most studies on the topic were done in other countries creates an imperative to explore it in South Africa. It is not only that there are few studies on child work in the informal sector in this country, but also that in other countries there is very little focus specifically on school-going children who work within the informal sector of the economy. The literature is also silent on the relationship between work and schooling, including how the curriculum acknowledges or ignores learners' working lives within and outside schooling. This study fills some of the gaps in the literature. This is an invitation to researchers, educators, writers, academics, and all other stakeholders in education to acknowledge the economic activities and contributions of children in this country. The next chapter focuses on the theory and perspectives that informed and influenced this study.

CHAPTER THREE

PERSPECTIVES ON CHILD WORK

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Even though children have reasons for working as indicated in chapter two, child work is virtually prohibited in all countries. For example, a first world country, like the United States, uses strategies such as trade sanctions to ban exports from developing countries which use children as part of the workforce. At the beginning of the millennium, the work done by children was viewed as an unacceptable aspect of life in many countries (Anker, 2000). In most developing countries children work to contribute to family survival. In such countries, child work is not only economically important, but it is also morally unquestioned (Fyfe, 1989). While there is a push to ban child work, there are contradictory views on the issue from some countries, especially developing countries. In some sectors of the world, this is perceived as a disguised protectionist device. It is argued that if child work is as bad as is indicated, why do so many parents allow or encourage it. For Karl Marx,

> Every child whatever, from the age of 9 years ought to become a productive labourer ... in conformity to the general laws of nature *viz*: to work in order to be able to eat, and work not only with the brain but with hands too" (Padover, 1978:91).

Those against the ban include some economists who argue that legislation to ban child work, even if it could be enforced, is not the only way or necessarily the best way. They argue that valuable skills and knowledge can be learned through work (Boyden, 1986; Myers, 1989). It is against this background of contradictions that this chapter focuses on different perspectives on child work. The theoretical framework takes on a four-pronged approach. The first section considers conceptual and empirical problems in defining child work and discusses some

recent estimates of its magnitude. Accurate estimates are needed to monitor progress and evaluate programs. Different types of child work according to certain characteristics such as family type, is required to set priorities and allocate resources. The second section focuses on selected issues of measurement, which are explored further in terms of issues of child work divisible into supply and demand. In the third section the welfare economies within which state policy interventions can be analysed. The last section provides an assessment of policy intervention including legislation concerning child work.

3.1 THE CONCEPTUAL AND EMPIRICAL PROBLEMS OF DEFINING CHILD WORK, ITS NATURE AND MAGNITUDE

The question of children's work in the informal sector leads us to the complexity of three terms: work, children and the informal sector.

3.1.1 The Definition of Child Work

The concept of "work" is problematic, for it is often used to refer to many activities in which children are engaged. Such activities range from help with domestic work to work in the household enterprise and wage work. For the purpose of finding a definition of child work, both the nature of work and the nature of the relationship between the child and the employer must be considered. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 1989), child work is an occupation that deprives the child of her/his childhood and dignity, hinders the child's access to educational attainment, and is performed under conditions that are hazardous to the child's health and development. It refers to the paid employment of children who are not physically mature or who are below a legally identified age. Child work, at whatever age it may begin, in both primitive and technologically advanced societies, refers to adult guided activities whose focus is the child's maturation and enculturation into the family and society of which he or she is a part (George, 1990). Child work is developmental in nature, and not

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driven by the impoverishment of the child and his or her family or by market forces. *Child labour* on the other hand, is synonymous with exploitation because the activities may be hazardous, interferes with the child's education, or may be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development (United Nations, 1989:10).

3.1.2 The Concept of the Child

The meaning of the term "child" is central to an understanding of the nature and extent of child work. Differently put, this term is difficult to define objectively. It can have several limits, depending on whether biological, legal, as well as customary criteria are taken into account. In western countries, it is customary to define age by reference to chronological age, whereas in other societies, cultural and social factors became important aspects to be considered when defining the concept (Rogers & Standing, 1981). There is not a universal age criterion because there are different understandings as to when a child becomes an adult. Given the fact that this study refers exclusively to high school learners in which the chronological age criterion is adopted, it should be borne in mind though, that the term high school learner is not entirely co-extensive with the term child, and there may be learners who might be considered adults according to chronological age, such as pupils as old as 27 years in some township high schools in South Africa.

3.1.3 Street Children

Just like the definition of the term "child", there are other definitional problems of the concept "child work". Many programs attending to the needs of working children and children encountered working in the urban streets also define their clientele ambiguously. This carries over into the concept of "street children", a term loosely applied to children and youth encountering work or living in urban streets. Many authors treat "street children" as a sub-category of working children, though it is not clear which children that category includes. Researchers

of street children differentiate between "children on the street" and "children of the street" (see e.g. Amin, 2001). The first group, which is the majority, refers to those children who live at home, but spend part of their time working in the street and usually attend school. The second group, which is the minority, refers to those who essentially live there, having weakened or severed ties with their families.

The *"on-the street / of-the street"* distinction is not useful, as children on the street often become children of the street (Cockburn, 1998; Donald, Wallis & Cockburn, 1997).The phenomenon of street children in South Africa has its roots in the apartheid history of the country in which the migrant labour system, rapid industrialisation and enforcement of the Group Areas Act (1950) legislation contributed to the disintegration of families and high levels of informal fostering of children by relatives (Swart-Kruger & Donald, 1994). The lack of adequate housing, a high level of domestic violence, and a general lack of childcare facilities in black communities, also contributed to family destabilisation. A high level of poverty has been a significant factor in the subtle "eviction" and leakage of children out of the household. The majority of street children in South Africa are African, a further manifestation of the intersection of race and class in this country. Amin (2001) cautions the use of the concept *"street children"*, as it may be a misnomer. This raises the question of what values this confusing and vague term retains beyond its emotional appeal. There is a suggestion that it would be useful to speak of *"urban working children"* who have specific needs. It would also be preferable if their work were regarded as economic activity rather than child labour (Richter & Swart-Kruger, 1999). This study, in a sense, is about "street children", as most of pupils selling within the school premises also sell in the street when they are not in school.

3.1.4 The Informal Sector

Even though there is abundant literature on the informal sector, the term "informal sector" poses many questions. It has acquired various meanings owing to various views held by different scholars and their objectives. Consequently,

informal sector research and policy alternatives available to us are not always comparable. The term *"informal sector"* originated in West Africa with the pioneering work of Hart (1973) in the early 1970's about the structure of urban unemployment in Ghana. The concept gained momentum internationally after a study into employment stimulation in Kenya (ILO, 1972). According to both Hart (1973) and the ILO (1972), there is a great deal of economic activity taking place, even though it is not recorded in official employment and economic statistics. The term *"informal sector"* offers a self-definition almost by exclusion. What is not formal is informal. There is duality between the sectors (Hart, 1973; ILO, 1989) that state that there are two distinct economies: formal and informal sectors, which operate parallel to each other. According to these theorists, under correct circumstances and given the right kind of support and stimulation, the informal sector economy has the potential and ability to facilitate employment creation and act as a stimulus for economic growth. This model can be criticised on the basis that it fails to define exactly what belongs to each sectors and transitional activities are also not satisfactorily categorised.

According to theorists such as Moser (1978), the term *"dualist"* incorrectly assumes the relationship between the sectors to be a benign one. Moser (1978) along with other neo-Marxist theorists such as Bromley and Gerry (1979) began to argue for an alternative approach to the dualist model of the economy. They subscribe to a model based on petty commodity production and its subordinate relationship to capitalism. The informal sector involves co-existing modes and forms of production that are inextricably connected with an unequal and exploitative relation of domination and subordination (Bromley & Gerry, 1979). This model is based on a continuum of different productive activities. This continuum stretches from what is termed *"stable wage"* to true *"self employment"*. Attention was given to intermediate types of work along the continuum, moving away from stable wage to true self-employment. This model is criticised for excluding personal services, gambling, scavenging, transport, and crime.

The informal sector operates largely outside government benefits and regulations. It has neither direct access to formal credit institutions nor to main sources of foreign developed technology like the internet or credit cards. It is a low-income sector, characterised by the poor majority. It employs mainly labour-intensive techniques of production. Many of its agents operate illegally, especially while pursuing activities similar to those of the formal sector. While this sector is clearly a source of livelihood for many, little is known about it. It is also important to note that one rarely finds statistical data that distinguish between the informal sector workers who are self-employed and those that are salaried employees. Included in the issue of self-employment is entrepreneurial self-employment, which is an upper-micro enterprise while the subsistence self-employment is lower, disadvantageous and a survival strategy.

Even though the studies (Bromley & Gerry, 1979; Moser, 1978) show the dependent and exploitative relationship between the formal and the informal economic sectors, this observation and empirical evidence supporting it are usually ignored. Nevertheless, it is important to know whether children are included in the networks which span the two sectors, and to identify their employers. One literature source suggests that children's activities may bridge the two sectors (Rogers & Standing, 1981). Descriptive studies fail to identify the centres of power and capital accumulation and hastily characterise petty activities as improvised and independent of the informal sector. The so-called *"unstructured"* sector is in fact structured in two ways: through submission to the dominant capital mode of production, and through the existence of organised groups within it. Lastly, many small-scale urban enterprises employing numbers of children observe certain rules which, although not necessarily obvious, are more or less strict. Certain characteristics of petty urban activities suggest that cheap, and even unpaid work, is an indispensable element of the survival of many petty activities because of high degrees of competition.

All the given information indicates that a prior scientific and non-empirical definition is necessary for a more profound analysis of the role of children in the informal sector.

3.1.5 The Nature and Magnitude of Child Work

Though child work (and its associated term *child labour*) is an international phenomenon, whose real extent, both globally and locally, is not known, any attempt to estimate the global prevalence of child work immediately comes up against two obstacles. The first is the definition of child work, which makes it difficult to determine even the scope of exercise in terms of ages and activities covered. The second is simply the lack of reliable, let alone comparable, national statistics on the problem. Few countries keep specific statistics on child work because children are legally not supposed to be at work. There is indeed a strong disincentive to keeping statistics that would expose a gap between official policy and actual practice, and risk attracting unwanted international attention. Until recently, governments have been reluctant even to acknowledge the existence of the problem, especially in its most extreme forms. For example, it was only in 1993 that the Ministry of Labour in Brazil formally admitted the existence of debt-bondage and forced labour (United States Department of Labour, 1994:41). Pakistan, a party to the ILO's *"Forced Labour Convention of 1930"* since 1957, and to the *"Abolition of Forced Labour Convention"* since 1960, only passed legislation in 1992 that formally abolished its country's endemic system of bonded labour.

Today, however, the precise magnitude of the problem is not known. There is growing acceptance by governments all over the world that child work does exist on a large scale. Following experimental surveys in a number of countries, the ILO Bureau of Statistics (1996) now estimates that in developing countries alone, there are at least 120 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 who are fully at work and more than twice as many (250 million) of those for whom work is a

secondary activity, Asia has the largest absolute number of child workers, with an estimated 61% of the world total (ILO, 1996).

In most cases, little or no quantitative information is available about those children most deserving of concern, such as those working in conditions hazardous to their health and safety, or those bereft of family support. Children are often inappropriately defined for the purpose of collecting information about them (Myers, 1991). This is true since official statistics on economically active sections of the population often exclude youngsters who work part-time, or in the informal sector. Though census data on the economically active population can provide useful statistics, the very definition of work may be culturally relative. Parents sometimes do not view their children's economic contribution as real "work", and therefore do not report it to census takers. Those who understand that it is illegal may be intentionally secretive about it. Various countries estimated that about two thirds of working children are absorbed by the informal sector. They do not appear in official records as this sector is seldom monitored statistically (Myers, 1991). In respect of census, none of these workers exist so long as they are of school-going age and do not play truant, and are counted as attending school and having no occupation. The informal sector counts for the majority of employed children (Mathambo, 2000). In South Africa, figures supplied by the October Household Survey (1994) indicated that approximately 200000 children aged between 10 and 14 years worked. This was considered an under estimate as activities of children under 10 and those between 14 and 18 were not included.

3.2 SELECTED MEASUREMENT ISSUES

To best be able to provide a measure of child work requires the discussion of an internationally accepted definition of labour force activity and its implications, hazardous and other worse forms of child work and connecting the domains school, learning, and work.

3.2.1 Work-Force Activities

Defining work-force activities is important since official child work estimates are based on this definition. According to an internationally accepted definition, work-force consists of unemployed and all persons of both sexes who furnish the supply of labour for the production of economic goods and services. Goods and services include all production and processing of primary products, whether for the market, for barter, or for own consumption.

Work-force activity includes self-employment and family work as well as unpaid work. Though children are included in labour activity as they help in family work, there is under-reporting of both child work-force and female work-force (Levison, 1991). A reason is that they are more likely to work part-time and as unpaid family workers.

3.2.2 Hazardous and Worse Forms of Child Work

This includes the following types of work: work which exposes children to physical, psychological, or sexual abuse; work underground, under water, at dangerous heights, or in confined spaces; work with dangerous machinery, equipment, and tools, or which involves the manual handling or the transport of heavy loads; work in an unhealthy environment, which for example, exposes children to hazardous substances, agents, or processes or temperatures, noise level, or vibrations damaging to their health; work under particularly difficult conditions such as long hours and during the night or work where the child is unreasonably confined to the premises of the employer (ILO, 1999).

3.2.3 School, Learning, and Work

According Weiner (1991), school is the main alternative to child work. In the rapidly changing technological environment and globalised economy, literacy and

basic mathematics skills are now more important than ever. If one looks at the relationships between school and learning, two contradictions emerge. Firstly, it is usually assumed that school attendance and learning are synonymous. One need not forget the fact that learning in school depends greatly on the quality of the school. Secondly, the returns of education for poor children are often relatively low. The reasons for this are the poor quality of available schools, as well as labour market discriminations.

The issue of poor quality of education is best explained by developmental theories of education. According to reformist theories, many problems are the result of the syllabi that are irrelevant to the specific needs of the poor. There is a paradox created by the shortage of skilled professionals and an increase in the number of educated unemployed (Dejene, 1980). For neoclassical theorists, primary and secondary school systems of developing countries are based on those of wealthy and highly industrialised countries. They often create the expectation that school leavers will be able to get work in the formal sector and yet at the same time the economic system is failing to keep pace with the demands of the formal sector opportunities. According to Bock (1983), formal education is unable to contribute to upward mobility of the poor. There is a low employment rate in the formal sector since labour absorption is low and it has dwindled since 1980 (Mahadea, 2003).

One of the most urgent areas with regard to human capacity building is entrepreneurship. Studies have shown that entrepreneurship in all provinces of South Africa is significantly related to the number of economically active people (Faull, 1990). Schools and other educational institutions should, it is argued, include courses in their syllabi that introduce the culture of entrepreneurship from an early age. This, it is believed, would make education more responsive to the local needs, diversification of supply, including private suppliers to promote competition. This efficiency and diversification of educational practice will enhance individual choice. In the South African context this requires a major

change in the role of the authorities responsible for education (World Bank, 1996).

In developing countries large numbers of school children spend relatively little time in school because they help out on the family business. This phenomenon is not only found in low-income countries. It is also common for children from high-income countries to mix school and work. In the United States, a majority of children have experienced some type of paid work by ages 14 to 15 (Lavallette & Pratt, 2005). Whether mixing school and work is bad or good depends on the perspective from which one is looking. Two models, the zero-sum perspective (Coleman, 1961) and the developmental perspective (Holland & Andrew, 1987) are offered.

The zero-sum perspective emphasises that work and school do not go together. Time spent working is time taken away from activities such as homework (Coleman, 1961). The developmental model stresses that working, particularly in the "*right*" kinds of jobs, may have positive effects on academic achievement. Increased involvement in the world of work leads to the transmission of academically related skills and knowledge, and that work also teaches and reinforces desirable adult-like traits such as responsibility and maturity that enhance academic outcomes (Holland & Andrew, 1987). When children work, they acquire skills and knowledge to become productive adults and citizens. But when they work excessive hours, their development is impaired since it interferes with school attendance and performance.

3.3 THE SUPPLY AND DEMAND FOR CHILD WORK

Child work exists because there is a demand and supply that is simple economics. The supply side of child work is represented by reasons for involvement, which has been discussed in chapter two. In this chapter some of those reasons are explained according to supply side and demand side perspectives, respectively.

3.3.1 The Supply Side

The Fertility Model

The literature review in the previous chapter indicates that there is a relationship between big families and child work. Becker and Lewis (1973), in their fertility model, found that parents obtain utility from both the quality and quantity of their children. This framework yields important theoretical implications that individuals may spend more on quality improvement rather than on increasing the quantity of their children. This correlation between fertility and parental income becomes negative when the role of child work is considered. Implications are that the fertility increases with the wage rate of child work. This model suggests that government interventions not only directly affect the supply of child work, but also influences parents' decisions about fertility, which indirectly determine the involvement of children in labour market theory.

Rural-Urban Migration

As is the case with adults, there is an exodus of children from rural to urban areas. The dismantling of subsistence economies and the advent of export-oriented plantation in agriculture has led to an increase in the urban population. Children's agricultural work is no longer secured, following the destruction of the delicate equilibrium between subsistence economics and commercial production. Poor relatives usually accommodate children arriving in cities. They have no option, but to put these children to work. Income generated by these children, however, is not adequate in situations where several members of the family are unemployed.

Premature School-Leaving

Failure of the educational system in most developing countries results in massive wastage of schooling. Young people who drop out of school turn towards small business and self- employment. The informal sector becomes the only hope for learners who have to work to survive, or to supplement family income.

3.3.2 The Demand Side

Children provide cheap labour. The fact that children do not have a *"right"* to work makes the child work-force easy to manipulate. The illegality of children's work makes their dismissal easy. Whenever the small businessman's production threatens to drop, the child can be under-employed. This can be explained with Marx's concept of reserve army supply (Beechey, 1977). Children's position in the labour market is related to their role as buffer supply, which is drawn upon when there is a high demand for labour and expelled in times of economic down turn. The unspecialised nature of work children does imply that they may be given a wide range of tasks, depending on the production mechanism. Certain tasks are technically well-suited to children and highly profitable from the point of view of the employer as suggested by the case of *"little hands"* in the tobacco and the match industries of the Indian Peninsula (Mizen, 2001). Some juvenile activities are particularly well-adapted to clandestine and illegal operations because of children's physical and psychological characteristics, such as agility, running, hiding and the ability to keep quiet, or to mislead (Rogers & Standing, 1981).

Today's technology can have an ambivalent effect on the demand for child work. It is important to note that in garment production, the advent of fairly cheap multi-function sewing machines has once again made possible home production and much manufacturing relies on subcontracting arrangements, which leads to children's work at home.

3.4 CHILD WORK GENDERED

According to the theory of sexual division of labour, skills specialisation among family members result in different kinds of labour offerings by women and men to the market. Traditionally, societies expect their daughters to become good wives and mothers. Girls start working very early in life doing household work. Boys are sent to school, while girls remain at home working. This is a common

practice in developing countries where poverty brings about financial constraints. In some Eastern countries like China and India, girls appear disadvantaged in large households rather than their brothers. Families discriminate against girls in order to provide boys with quality education (Basu, 2005).

In African rural areas the opportunity of the girl child to claim her right to education is very limited. Girls, for instance, are expected to fulfill domestic tasks, take care of siblings or to work in order for male siblings to complete school. Furthermore, the prevailing gender bias in the education system and learning environment, as well as high levels of sexual violence and abuse that occurs in places of learning, further imply that girls are not in the position to access education on the basis of equal opportunities for all (Kehler, 2000). Globally, African women have been exploited and incorporated at the lowest levels of an international division of labour. It is worse for black women whose oppression is three fold: by virtue of her sex she is dominated by males; by virtue of her class she is at the mercy of capitalist exploitation, and by virtue of her race she is at the bottom of the apartheid ladder[14]. Certain factors in African countries are documented in support of some form of female oppression. These include a polygamous family arrangement, which gives a male member a certain degree of power as head of the family over many wives. This, in many cases, results in bigger households with many children being looked after by girls. Another form of female oppression is the cultural construction of widowhood which continues to subject women to dangerous practices. An example is the forcing of widows to marry the brother of the deceased. Child marriage is another oppression in instances where young girls become victims of rape by husbands-to-be.

Household work, according to Becker's (1992) home production model, is a deterrent to the schooling of adolescent girls (Levison & Moe, 1998). Families choose how much time their children spend in school and in housework. They do

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[14] During apartheid, races were seen as a hierarchy of intelligence and ability. Whites were seen as occupying the upper rung whilst blacks were placed on the lowest rung. Other races were placed in the rungs between the top and the bottom.

this according to the relative returns to education (of the child relative), to productivity in household. One of the household tasks undertaken by girls is care of young siblings. The presence of young children in the household increases the hours girls spend doing household chores. Girls become more productive as they get old: they learn more about cleaning, food preparation and childcare, and the time they spend in school decreases. According to the feminist economist, Waring (1998), household work is not considered as work. It is not part of the labour market as far as the accepted economic system is concerned. Hidden away in the household, out of public sphere, results in girls' economic contributions being overlooked (Waring, 1998).

3.5 THE WELFARE ECONOMICS OF CHILD WORK

It is evident from the ILO's (1989) definition of child work that it must be either reduced or banned. In order to achieve this goal, interventions based on conventional welfare and economics have to be used. Welfare economics attempt to explain how to identify and arrive at socially efficient solutions to the resource problem. The available literature reveals that child work and poverty are linked in that the majority of child workers come from the poorest and most disadvantaged groups in society (UNICEF, 2000).

The question, which inevitably arises in this context, is whether child work should be tolerated until world poverty is eradicated. For those who benefit from child labour such as an employer, a customer, or a parent, the answer would be in the affirmative and a very convenient refuge. Child work and unemployment among adults are inter-related in that cheap child work takes away jobs from the more expensive adult, and this in turn perpetuates the cycle of poverty. Working children grow into adulthood trapped in unskilled and badly paid jobs.

Child work is not simply a neglected public policy issue; it is a human rights concern. Children have the right to protection from economic exploitation at

work. They also have the right to be protected from work, which interferes with their schooling, or damages their health. These rights, referred to as the *"Convention on the rights of the child"*, have been laid down by the United Nations (1989). There are also special international agreements about child work. For many years the ILO has had a child work convention stipulating a minimum age of 15 years for full-time employment. However, it is stipulated that children between 13 and 15 years could be employed for fairly simple tasks, and that children from developing countries may start work as early as at the age of 14 years.

In South Africa, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) (1997), which outlaws the employment of children under 15, became law in 1997. About half a million children are, nevertheless, still involved in the labour market. Any child work practices that were detrimental to the child's health, morale, safety, and well-being were supposed to be eradicated (under BCEA). While the new bill wishes the minimum working age to be 15 it also provides strict protection for working children between the ages of 15 and 18. A number of arguments have been advanced on the issue of age. According to the *"Network Against Child Labour"*, there is a contradiction between the Constitution and the South African Schools Act (1996) on the one hand, and the Basic Conditions of Employment Bill (1997) on the other hand. The former sets a minimum voting age of 18, thereby implying that anyone younger is not adult, whilst the latter prescribes 15 as the minimum working age. The *"Network Against Child Labour"* views this as leading to exploitation. As Keneuoe Mosoang (Mushi, 1998), a researcher at the Farm Worker's Research and Resource Project, states:

> In Europe children are prepared for the world from a very early age and are more comfortable making their decisions around 18. So if you accept the minimum age around 15, you are basically perpetuating the same system that apartheid tried and failed. You are saying to black children that they are only good enough to be educated to primary school level so

that they can become manual labourers like their parents. How do you address inequality and poverty that way? (Mushi, 1998:37)

In response to the above question, Sipho Pityana (The Director General in the Department of Labour) indicated that local children should not be treated differently from their counterparts in other countries, for this would present more disadvantages for them. He urged that children ply their skills in the job market at an early age if conditions prevent them from continuing their education (Mushi, 1998).

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) also disagrees with the suggested minimum age of 16. It regards child work as violating a basic human right and advocates for its banning (Mushi, 1998). Few human rights abuses are so unanimously condemned, while being so universally practiced, as is the case of child work. By any objective measure, this issue should be high on the global agenda, but in practice it is surrounded by a wall of silence and perpetuated by ignorance. One of the reasons for this conceptual opposition to child work is the failure to distinguish between child work and child labour. Those who are opposed to child labour are not opposed to the development of *"world of work"* materials or to employment or pre-employment for disadvantaged teenagers and pre-teenagers. They support private and public efforts to expand entry-level jobs and summer job programs. The manufacturing, mining, domestic, and service sectors find significant short-term profit in the employment of children at sub-standard wages and without the benefits normally provided to adults. Impoverished children and families remain silent about abuse because they fear the loss of any income that is critical to their survival. Parents play into the hands of factory owners in their desire to see their children bringing in even a small sum of money. Financially hard-pressed governments of developing countries often support the immediate benefits that are a byproduct of the availability of cheap, docile, labour of children and their underpaid officials may be bribed (Rogers & Standing, 1981).

In addition, both in developing and developed countries, the compilation of statistics and the conduct of labour inspections are greatly impeded by the employment of many children in the informal sectors of the economy, where they are invisible. For these reasons, the government often considers it embarrassing to admit to the existence of children in the labour sector. In South Africa, when the public recently called for the eradication of children engaged in the labour market, the Department of Labour countered that if they stopped children from working immediately, it would be detrimental to their own welfare and quality of life (Byat, 2000). Laws on child work are seldom adequately implemented. One of the reasons is that they may be unrealistic with their sectional coverage, which is beyond a country's institutional and enforcement capacity. It seems important, therefore, to adopt a pragmatic approach that sets realistic and attainable goals. A low-income country should focus on sectors that exhibit vile forms of abuses of working children. Both ILO (1996; 1997) and UNICEF (1997; 2000) studies reinforce the general view that it is sensible to concentrate on urban areas first. Legislation is likely to be effective only where there is considerable difficulty in concealing the use of children in the labour market and where relatively little advantage is to be gained from child work. Strategies for dealing with administrative and enforcement problems of child work laws need to be revised at government level if they are to be effective. Public awareness and action campaigns are preconditions.

There are two conflicting views concerning child work if one looks at street children. There are those who oppose it on the ground that it is exploitative. They maintain that not only are children neglected by parents who send them to hawk at tender ages, but that customers also exploit them, hardening them, and sometimes setting them on a course of juvenile delinquency and further deviance. Those in favour believe that it is a form of informal education, which fosters attributes such as resourcefulness, perseverance, and self-reliance in young persons who participate in it. One veteran of street trading who began to hawk at the age of 7

and is now a chief executive officer of an industry, employing thousands of workers is reported in a Sunday newspaper as claiming:

> To make it in business you have to start from street hawking. This wisdom can only be acquired on streets, and not from any textbook. On the street; you learn how to avoid losing money, pick packets and to serve your customers (Myers, 199:14).

Because of the foregoing controversy, a small survey was carried out to determine the cultural, social, and economic factors responsible for children's involvement in street trading. Oloko (1988) did this survey in Lagos in 1988 and findings indicated that street trading does not constitute exploitation in the strict sense of the word, especially since children perceive that the proceeds of street trading are expended on their immediate future needs. To take an absolutist stance and say that all child work is *"bad"* is questionable (Myers, 1991).

3.6 POLICY INTERVENTION

Studies (Bequele, 1992; Fyfe, 1989; Myers, 1991; Pollock, Landrigan & Mallino, 1990) on child work agree that it will not be eliminated in the foreseeable future, but that policies and programs can be adopted to reduce and humanise it. Such measures are discussed below.

Sustainable poverty alleviation strategies have to provide economic alternatives to families that are dependent on child incomes for economic survival. A good example is that of municipalities of Macae in the streets of Rio de Janeiro: a project which funds part-time employment for needy children was introduced and children were paid a monthly salary on condition that they attended school (Levenstein, 1996). In respect of children who combine work with schooling, educational reforms have to be linked to labour utilisation patterns. For example, in many countries school calendars are still tied to colonial models, but they could be adapted to suit household labour requirements during the planting and harvest

seasons. In the same way, the children can both attend school during off-peak periods and assist their families during peak labour periods. The same point has been made about urban schools and the needs of street children.

In some countries, school attendance occurs in shifts. For example, in Addis Ababa, some children use their mornings in the dumping site of Koshe searching for food and other items, which can be sold. They then attend classes starting from midday until 5 o'clock (Newson, 1996). In Peru, schooling is offered in three shifts: in the morning, afternoon, and in the evening. Although children are in theory prohibited from attending school in the evening, in practice many do. Methods of instruction do not take into consideration that many school children are experienced for their age and curricula do not include strong practical elements, in view of the fact that many school children will start full time work as youth or young adults (Anker, 2000).

Educational laws are the best child work laws, the single most important instrument ensuring that children under 12 years do not work. Western, industrialised countries have demonstrated the relationship between compulsory education and the reduction of child work. Enforcement problems are particularly severe in the informal sector, away from cities and in agriculture, in domestic service and home based work. Since most children work there, they work where legislation on education and child work is virtually absent (Basu & Van, 1989). The effects of legislative measures against child work cannot be seriously discussed without taking into account the key issue of enforceability, since developing countries do not have the administrative capacity to fully enact child work and compulsory schooling. Many Third World countries, through their lack of political will power and misplaced priorities, spend disproportionate amounts on their military, even if they are not experiencing any external threats. However, countries like Botswana, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Rwanda, and Zambia, have significantly expanded primary education despite comparatively low levels of per capita income. The Asian experience is instructive as well. In 1872, when it

was still a poor country, Japan introduced compulsory primary school education. By 1910, almost all 6 to 13 age groups attended school. In the 1950's, both North and South Korea launched successful campaigns to get all primary age children into school. China and Sri Lanka provide similar dramatic examples of governments giving high priority to primary school education (Wiener, 1991).

The real economic cost of schooling to the poor must be reduced. Education is a social right and the poor should not be disadvantaged by direct (e.g. school fees) and indirect costs of schooling. UNICEF studies in Britain, Burkina Faso, Myanmar, Uganda, and Vietnam showed that the cost to families of supplying uniforms, textbooks, school building funds, parent-teacher association contributions, were relatively high, between 10 and 20% of per capita income (UNICEF, 1997). For most Africans in South Africa, school is a luxury they cannot afford as they live on less than R6 a day. A third of South Africa's children do not make it past Grade 5 (Maharaj, 2004). Schools could provide children with information about their rights and how hazardous work can be eliminated. Such information could prove especially effective for children who perform hazardous work in a family farm or business setting. The exploitation of children (who work as wage earners) can also be reduced if schools armed children with information about their rights (Anker, 2000).

There are two approaches to the study of child work in the informal sector, namely, the libertarian approach and the protectionist approach. These two broad schools of thought consist of those interested in protecting children and those interested in protecting children's rights. If children are given the right to work they, like adults, will require protection from poor and dangerous working conditions, but this should not destroy their autonomy and choice in other matters. Some reformers are pressing for genuinely greater autonomy and self-organisation of working children (Goddard & White, 1982). This can be achieved through the mechanism of self-advocacy in which children with common problems unite to promote their cause (Boyden & Holden, 1998). The libertarian

approach to children's rights stresses that children should not be treated as a special category, but should share the rights adults enjoy. If children work, they should have the right to join trade unions. Self-advocacy should be promoted to unite children with common problems so that they deal with them more effectively. Limited successes have been achieved by street children in Latin America, child workers in India, child rice farmers in Ghana, and school children protesting against child prostitution in the Philippines (Fyfe, 1989).

3.7 CONCLUSION

The framework and discussion in this chapter does not claim to cover all conceptual and definition questions relating to child work. It provides a guide on how these questions can be approached. The review of literature provided in the previous chapter indicates that exploitation of children in developing countries is concentrated in the informal sector of the economy where it is not easily detected. The balance between legal and economic measures needs to be adapted for child work, type and arrangement of prevailing work and market conditions. Gender and cultural biases exposed in this chapter call for programs to protect the girl child by all stakeholders. The argument presented in this chapter favours a gradual solution, which recognises an economic reality and utilises it to help those in an unfortunate situation with the belief that this would contribute to the elimination of child work (Grootaert & Patrinos, 1999).

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

We should combine theories and methods carefully and purposefully with the intention of adding breadth or depth to our analysis, but not for the purpose of pursuing "objective" truth (Fielding & Fielding, 1986:33).

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous literature review as well as theoretical perspectives on child work provided sufficient detail to direct this study. The purpose as well as the critical questions stated in chapter one determined the methodology of this research. The critical questions include investigating the reasons for high school learners' involvement in the informal sector, the types of activities they are involved in, as well as the impact of their involvement in work on their schooling. This chapter discusses and reflects on the procedures that were followed in collecting data. Data was collected through a multi-method approach, which comprised of a survey questionnaire and letters, group and individual interviews and life histories (of learners and the researcher). The chapter commences with a discussion of case study methodology followed by a description of how the research was conducted including a focus on life history, which may be regarded as driving the methodology.

4.1 THE CASE STUDY

This research consists of a case study of one high school, with a focus on Grade 11 learners in the school and selecting 5 case histories of learners. It explores learners' involvement in economic activities and the type of activities they are involved in, how they go about such activities, what they are paid, as well as the problems they are faced with when doing their jobs in relation to education. Like any other case study it attempts to describe the subject's entire range of

behaviours and the relationship of these behaviours to the subject's history and environment (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 1990).

It is in this context that this case study attempts to examine an individual or unit thoroughly. To achieve this, in-depth interviews as well as biographies of learners were used to formulate narratives. These narratives provided insight into participants' present states, past experiences, working environments and, more importantly, how these factors relate to one another. The intensive probing characteristic of this technique may lead to the discovery of previously unsuspected relationships. The critical questions of this study probe the reasons for learners' involvement in the informal sector and highlights important features of a case study. In case studies, the emphasis is on understanding why the individual does what he does and how behaviour changes as the individual responds to the environment. It attempts to understand the whole child or the whole adult in the context of the individual's environment. Case studies arise from endeavours to solve problems and they are frequently conducted with the primary aim of gaining knowledge. For this research, a case study was chosen for its educative potential and not for reasons of the disinterested pursuit of knowledge (Burgess, 1985).

There are different types of case studies, namely, intrinsic, instrumental and collective case studies (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). An intrinsic study is undertaken because the researcher wants to understand this particular case. It is instrumental if a particular case is examined to provide insight on an issue or to draw generalisations. In a collective case study, the researcher believes that he/she can gain greater insight into a research topic by concurrently studying multiple cases in one overall research study. This study is a collective or multiple case designs (Yin, 1994). Cases are studied instrumentally in that the researcher is interested in how and why learners are involved in the informal sector. A case is chosen to develop and/or test a theory or to better understand some important issue.

The key concepts of the case study mode are confidentiality, negotiations, and accessibility. The key justification concept is *"the right to know"* (MacDonald, 1974). The researcher negotiates her interpretations with those involved in the study rather than being free to impose them on the data. Learners involved in this study were given back their life stories for verification. The rights of participants over control of what is published are very important. Confidentiality was reinforced in this study by the use of false names and topics.

I must hasten to mention, though, that no single method is absolutely perfect and that there are shortcomings with case studies as much as there are with other methodologies. Although a case study can be in-depth, it will inevitably lack breadth. The dynamics of one individual or social unit may bear little relationship to the dynamics of the others. The opportunities for insight in a case study are also opportunities for subjectivity, or even prejudice (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

One could also make a separate category for biography. It is case-centered, and calls for special attention to chronological structures and to procedures for the protection of human subjects. The word *"biography"* was coined by Dryen who defined the term in 1683 as the history of life (Denzin, 1989a). It involves peoples' lives as well as another person writing one's life via interviews with relevant people. This study uses life histories as one of its biographical strategies. According to Werner and Schoeft (1987), life history is another form of case study. In the next section I will discuss life histories in greater detail since they provide the main data for the study.

4.2 LIFE HISTORIES

The use of life history is aimed at what Carter (1993) and Coles (1998) refer to as letting the case tell its own story. Learners tell their stories in this research. The ethos of interpretive study, seeking the emic rather than the etic held by people within the case study, is strong. Stories are the closest we come to understanding

experience. The experiences of learners mixing school and work are very important for this study too. In music, the people who sing the songs are more important than the songs themselves. To understand the songs, one needs to understand the singer (Sherman & Webb, 1988). The people who are the subjects of research are more important than any detached analysis of their actions. The use of life history approach enables access to the identities of the research subjects. It is no mistake that part of this research is conducted through the life histories of working learners. The main assumption of this approach involves the study of what and how something happened in the life of one person, one group / one organisation (Denzin, 1989b). It is a retrospective account by the individual of his life in whole or part in writing or oral form that has been elicited or prompted by another person (Watson & Watson-Frank, 1985).

An intensive interview is conducted with one person for the purpose of collecting first- person narrative (Helling, 1988). It can be for famous or ordinary people like learners. In the case of ordinary people, researchers seem to be more interested in how history appears from the point of view of the *"common person"*. Biographical work must always be interventionist, seeking to give an opportunity to those who may otherwise not be allowed to tell their stories or who are denied a voice (Bertaux, 1981). This approach is appropriate for this study as it is about the silent majority in education, namely, learners, especially poor or disadvantaged learners. This type of case study is usually directed at using the person as a vehicle to understand basic aspects of human behaviour or existing institutions rather than history. The subject's life stages are constructed by emphasising the role of organisations' critical events and significant others in shaping the subject. All these involve definitions of *"the self"* and their perspectives on life.

A life history approach is not at all new. It is rather a reaffirmation of the continuing tradition. In the 1920s and 1930s, a number of anthropological life histories were published, for example, Sutherland's (1937) *"Life history of Chic Conwell"*, the story about a professional thief, and Shaw's (1930) *"The Jack*

Roller". But from the 1940s until the present day, the life history approach has been somewhat unfashionable. A parallel trend occurred in sociology. With the use of quantification and rigorous empirical measurement, sociologists in succeeding years turned away from this method. However, there has been a revival recently with studies appearing, for example on the transsexual (Bogdan, 1974) and in post-apartheid South Africa, tracking development in black teacher education through the life of a black teacher educator (Dhanpath, 1999), and success of black scientists in apartheid times (Reddy, 2000). It regained popularity in feminist studies that challenged the traditional authoritarian methodologies characterised in patriarchal and capitalist society (Cole & Knoules, 2001). The voices of the previously marginalised individuals gained entry through life history research. It has been popular in many disciplines where there has been recognition of marginalised voices where the need to understand human perspectives is considered important and valid (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) and where there has been an acknowledgement of the need for an interdisciplinary emphasis. A life history emphasis is about the interaction concerning the researcher's relationships to others.

The life history approach must also be differentiated from other types of biographical inquiry. A life history priority is to gain first hand, retrospective and historical accounts of the individual's personal experiences elicited via the interview (Reddy 2000; Smith, 1994) and supplemented with other expressive forms the participant chooses to admit. It is clearly distinguished from autobiography, which is often written on the basis of questions provided by the subject's own interpretations of his/her life experiences. There are three types of life histories, namely, the complete, the topical, and the edited (Allport, 1947). They all contain the person's own story of his life, the social and cultural situation to which the subject and others see the subject responding to and the sequence of the past experiences and situations in the subject's life. A complete (full life course) approach is used here.

Sparkes (2005) differentiates between life story and life history. Life story deals with fictions, while histories deal with what happened and how it happened. Though they are both telling a story, life history deals with the experiences of not only persons, but also groups and organisations. It studies how these units interpret and relate to a particular body of experience, for example mixing school with work. Life story, on the other hand, provides interpretive accounts of lived experiences, but tends to exclude the social structures and processes, which shaped that experience and have the danger of romanticising the subject's reality. The analysis of the social, historical, political and economic context of a life history by the researcher is what turns a life story into a life history (Hatch & Wisnieski, 1995).

A life history is distinguished from other forms of narratives because of its connection to social circumstances (Hatch & Wisnieski, 1995). It, therefore, goes beyond a personal account. The focus on the individual allows for a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between ideology and culture, the self and society. Life history data is produced in the form of a narrative. Stories as means of accessing subjective experience are never *"just there"* and *"ready-made"*, but are constructed via a dialogic process through which the researcher and participants create meaning. The construction is therefore inter-subjective. In other words, we cannot just get a good story, but rather create dialogue inter-subjectively.

A narrative is defined in different ways, depending on the subject and the purpose of the study. There is no rigid recipe for what counts as a story. To understand the meaning of a narrative, one must grasp its two main components: plot and sequence of events. A plot is an overall structure within which the constituent parts make sense. The plot is constructed out of a succession of events. Narratives can refer either to the process of making a story or to the result of the process in written stories. Following Polkinghorne (1988), in this study narratives are used to refer to both the process and results.

The material used for life histories is divided into secondary and primary sources. Secondary material refers to public archival records, while primary refers to private records. A complete life history will combine as many primary and secondary sources as possible, while focusing the report around the subject's own personal documents. The most important data for a life history are private records or documents. They include autobiographies, questionnaires, interviews and verbal reports, diaries and letters, and artistic and projective materials. In this study, autobiographies, questionnaires, interviews, diaries, and letters were used. While none of these sources is likely to provide a complete picture of the subject's life experiences, a combination of them will approach it closely.

4.2.1 Life History and Truth

Stoll (1998) states that learners have to acknowledge that there are no alternatives to judge opposing versions of events. Analysis of contradictions between narrative and experience need to be explored and examined in any document. However, one wonders if *"truth"* in a life history is to be defined in the manner that Stoll (1998) does, especially in a postmodern world where such terms are inevitably contested and critiqued. Life histories are situated within a series of complex and ambiguous political and cultural relations. Subjects have to be interrogated, but the interrogators at the end should not be the exclamation of a learnedly *"gotcha"* when they find contradictions; rather they should piece together how these multiple presentations account for contested versions of reality (Stoll, 1998). For example, in her text about 5 women, Bateson (1990) states that she has not attempted to validate the narratives apart from attending to issues of internal consistency and checking them against her understanding of individuals. The accounts are shaped by each person's choices and selected memories.

How do self-story researchers know when and if the stories they hear are true? Every storyteller has two options when telling a story: to tell a story that accords with non-fictional accounts about his or her life, or to tell a story which departs

from those accounts. Researchers are seldom in a position to tell the difference between these two narrative forms, for all people tell self-stories. The researcher's task thus cannot be one of determining the difference between true and false stories. All stories are, in a sense, fictions. From a fiction perspective, the researcher's task then involves studying how persons and their group culturally produce warrantable self and personal stories which accord with that group's standard of truth.

Researchers using life history begin with the assumption that it is helpful to remember that narrative documents indicate a past that existed whilst humanity is always in the present. This is true even in an age consumed by the present, where individuals develop historical amnesia. Traditional learners see life histories as important for the creation of a sense of nostalgia. It has been used as fleeting memory by a society that has been deeply absorbed in transformation and renewal (society that existed at the end of the 20th century). The purpose of life histories revolves around portal and process approaches (Tierney, 2000). The portal approach assumes that the author and the reader are different from the person whose story is told. This approach exoticises the *"Other"* and tries to enable the reader to understand the life fantasy. This privileges the researcher to take control over the final production of a text about someone else's life story. Because of its nature as a personal narrative, the process approach to life history fits within a postmodern framework and enables the development and encouragement of texts such as testimonials. The life history text then exists between history and memory. Memory is not a spontaneous word association. Speakers and researchers build memory from a shared perspective of the present.

Memories are recalled for reasons that are important to someone: either the speaker, or the interviewer. They serve to constrain identities. In creating ourselves, we always rely on our memories (Bruner, 1994). The self is always a remembered self. Tutu (2001) points out to the importance of memory in the context of identity formation in a changing world, thus:

And what happens if I lose my memory and forget who I am or to whom I am related? My identity is very intimately linked to my memory, and relationships would be impossible if memory went that is why Alzheimer's disease is such a horrible, distressing ailment. ... Without memory it would be impossible to learn; we could not learn from experience because experience is something remembered.... What I know is what I remember and that helps to make me who I am.

4.2.2 Life History as a Process

Life history research is a process where the researcher examines the cultural scripts and narrative devices that speakers use to make sense of their own life experiences. This makes it possible for the researcher and the reader to reflect on his or her own lives. In this study, for instance, after reading the life histories of learners, I reflected on my own life. This resulted in me writing my story as a former working learner, and this is included in the study. Life needs to be seen as a personal narrative whose nature as spoken interactions between two or more individuals helps create, define, reinforce, or change reality. This process approach to life enables personal development and satisfaction.

If one were to read only formal histories, one might mistakenly presume, for example, that African American Indians, lesbian people, and other marginalised groups, did not exist prior to a generation ago. The mere *"naming"* of silent lives is insufficient. Life histories are, therefore, helpful for enabling societies to come to terms with individuals and groups who have been omitted from official versions of the past. Life histories have the ability to re-fashion and reclaim denied identities (Dhanpath, 1999).

4.3 CONDUCTING THIS STUDY

4.3.1 Access and Permission

Entry to the school was effected through written and verbal communications spanning a period of a month prior to the interview. Two letters were written: one

to the Department of Education and Culture, KwaZulu-Natal, and another to the School Governing Body (SGB). Permission was granted without any delay in the case of the SGB. This was facilitated by the fact that I am an educator in the same school. I enquired from the Ward manager about seeking permission from the Department as we are constantly reminded that educators are not allowed to leave school and go to the Regional Office in town. I was told that the principal represents the Department and that therefore it is his/her duty to grant permission. I decided to write a letter to the Superintendent and asked the principal to pass it to him on my behalf. When I asked for the reply from the principal, I was informed that the Superintendent had asked the same from the ward manager. I wrote a reply. The problem was that the letter I wrote went missing and they were still looking for it. The principal gave me permission to go to the District Office, as she was also tired of asking for the letter. I had to explain the contents of the letter and what was expected of the Department of Education. Eventually I was granted permission.

4.4 PARTICIPANTS

In this case study learners from one high school in Kwa Mashu represent the voice of pupils involved in the informal sector of the economy. Since I also teach in the same school, it proved to be convenient for me to involve these learners in my study. I have been observing their activities within the school for quite some time. As a school counsellor, I listen to learners' problems on a daily basis and in most cases their involvement in economic activities is mentioned. As I prefer to work with more mature and articulate learners, Grade 11 learners were asked to volunteer their participation in the study. I also teach these learners (Grade 11). I wanted to see the transition of working learners from Grade 11 to 12. I was also interested in learners who are really committed to their work. I assume that a learner who is still working in Grade 11 is committed. Usually, learners stop extra-curricular activities in Grade 10 and focus on their academic work. There is a belief that to pass Grade 12 one must start working hard in Grade 11. Under

normal circumstances, most parents relieve their children of work, even from some household chores when they are in Grade 11. Some of the working learners in this study would face their external examinations next year. These are senior learners with long-term involvement in economic activities, making them ideal candidates for the study.

4.5 RESEARCH METHODS

Research methods act as filters through which the environment is selectively experienced and they are never neutral in representing world experiences. The use of one method may prejudice or distort the researcher's picture of a particular slice of reality he/she is investigating. Researchers combine methods to achieve the best of each, while overcoming their unique deficiencies. Case study research methodologists are pragmatic and advocate the use of multiple methods and multiple data sources (Burke & Christensen, 2004). The given information provides the basis of the methods used in producing data for this study, which is used in a multi-method approach. Data was produced in 5 phases, and these included a survey, group interviews, individual interviews, life histories, as well as my autobiography.

4.5.1 The Survey

The study was initiated with a survey where learners were given questionnaires. The purpose of the survey was to:
- identify and provide a profile of the working learners;
- provide a descriptive base for informal economic and related aspects;
- provide "baseline" information in the context of the community as well as a description of economic activity in the broader context of the family;
- select working learners for interviews and

- help in getting a full picture of activities including illegal ones, since the questionnaire is anonymous.

I developed a 3-page questionnaire with 5 open questions. These types of questions were to enable me to understand and capture participants' points of view. Questions were divided into 4 categories: personal information, parental characteristics, household characteristics, and work experience. Personal information was included because the age and gender of a child are expected to be important determinants of the probability to work, while the main characteristics affecting the child's decision to work were expected to be the mother's employment and level of education. Since the mother's employment is considered a substitute for the child's work (Rogers & Standing, 1981), parental characteristics were included in this study. Household characteristics are important because demographic characteristics are captured by the age of the household head. A set of siblings is included to measure the extent to which the child's work is a substitute for the labour of other family members in the household. Contrary to the notion of a quantity-quality trade off, the number of children in the household may have a positive effect on child schooling (Chernichovsky, 1995). Questions were written in simple English.

4.5.2 The Questionnaire

120 questionnaires were given to all Grade 11 learners in the school. There were 4 classes, 2 of about 30 each, and 2 of about 40 each. Learners were told that they did not have to take the questionnaire. Due to their religious beliefs some learners did not take questionnaires. They were given these questionnaires on a Monday to be collected on a Thursday. The reason for this was the fact that learners in this school are usually present each Monday and absent each Friday. This is borne out by unexpected revelations made by learners of this school to the press. In an interview conducted by *"The Independent on Saturday"*, a local newspaper, learners told journalists that they did not attend school on a Friday.

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They absented themselves with impunity, as teachers did not detect their absence. I distributed and collected the questionnaires myself. 81 questionnaires (68%) were returned.

Letters Attached to Questionnaires

The use of such an instrument (i.e. a questionnaire) made it possible to get information even from learners who are involved in illegal activities (which may be regarded as part of the informal sector). Anonymity is sometimes called for if data is of a personal nature or may be threatening to the individual. In fact, it is possible to get more honest answers if the subject remains anonymous (Borg & Gall, 1989). Though questionnaires have been criticised for being shallow and fail to probe deep enough to provide a true picture of opinions and feelings, the questionnaire used in this study had a surprising effect on learners. It served the purpose of opening further inquiry and showed the severity of issues related to learners living conditions in school and in the community. In answering the questionnaire, some learners decided to attach letters. In fact, I received different kinds of letters. There were ordinary letters, notes with few lines, and responses to a particular question in the questionnaire, as well as long descriptions of their lives. In total, 14 letters were received. Participants are not likely to reveal this type of information about themselves in a questionnaire.

As I happen to teach Mathematics in the same Grade, I received letters in various ways: stapled to the questionnaire itself; inserted in my textbooks; pushed under the door of my office; and one letter left in the pocket of my coat. It is very interesting how that particular letter landed in that position. The writer carefully inserted it, as I was busy marking a learner's script during a Mathematics period. Of the 14 letters received, some were written in isiZulu, some in a combination of isiZulu and English, and 2 in English. These letters also showed that learners express themselves more openly and honestly when addressed in their first home language, in contrast to the questionnaire which did not do. The information

contained in some of these letters was shocking as I explain in the next paragraph. I decided to include information from the letters in this study. Letters are certainly the honest records of minds. Writers of letters are not given any direction by the researcher. The subject is not guided into a particular set of life experiences. These letters were an attempt by authors to share their problems and experiences. They, therefore, provide insight into learners' experiences. Letters provide another source of rich qualitative data (Bogdan & Biklin, 1992). It is through letters that we are invited into the secrets of the lives of the writers.

Problems that came to light from these letters ranged from sexual abuse by male relatives to physical abuse by mothers, homelessness, and the exploitation of girls by relatives of deceased fathers, prostitution, illegitimacy and co-habitation of young girls with their boyfriends. Some learners even expressed a wish to commit suicide. There were cases which needed immediate intervention. The problem was that some letters were anonymous. I had a problem of tracing the writers of those letters. I had to interact with social workers from the crisis centre working for *"Nicro"*[15] as well as with a group working for the *"Family Preservation Project"*[16]. These people were asked to talk in general to learners on certain topics mentioned in some of the letters. Some learners joined a 6-week life skills program provided by *"Nicro"* in school. A new field of problems emerged from these letters, which forced me to consult with legal people. I sought help from my acquaintances in the legal profession as well as the *"Street Law"*[17] group from the then University of Natal, Durban. In one instance, I had to pay for a learner to go to Bloemfontein to collect some information for her case.

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[15] An acronym, " National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders" for a South African non-governmental organisation.

[16] Developed to alleviate poverty by involving parents and guardians of children affected by HIV/AIDS in agricultural activities.

[17] Aimed primarily at the youth, Street Law is designed to introduce the law and human rights to people of all levels
of education, providing a practical understanding of the law, the legal system and the constitution to all learners.

4.5.3 Focus Groups

Though anonymity was ideal for getting sensitive information, follow-ups were difficult and ineffective. It was not possible to use it to select learners for life histories, which is the main method for the study. Group interviews were used. The intention was to select subjects by observing learners when they were busy interacting with one another. Focus groups are contrived settings, bringing together a specifically chosen population to discuss a particular theme or topic. Group interviews can generate a wide range of responses (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). Focus groups reduce the distance of the researcher's control over the interview process (because of its unstructured nature). They are a way of listening to people and learning from them (Morgan, 1989). Group interviews can generate a wide variety of responses (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000).

The fact that learners decided to include letters was an indication that the questionnaire did not probe enough information. This time I wanted to be sure of which questions to ask in the interview. I bore in mind what Bogdan and Biklin (1992) stated: namely that group interviews might be helpful for gaining insight into what might be pursued in subsequent individual interviews.

Focus groups reduce the distance between the researcher and the researched. The unstructured nature of focus groups conversations also reduces the researcher's control of the interview process. Participants are able to discuss the issue in question with each other. One person's idea may set off a whole string of related thoughts and ideas in another person. Thus interaction, disagreements or sharing of ideas can produce a much deeper understanding of the problem. Focus groups provide an opportunity for participants to learn from each other and perhaps to resolve important dilemmas which they are confronted with. They make it possible for the researcher to observe the interaction process occurring among participants. They emphasise the collective rather than the individual; they foster true expressions of ideas and encourage the members of the group to speak up

(Denzin, 1986b; Fontana & Frey, 1994). A similar phenomenon can be observed in many African cultures, which make constant use of small groups to address concerns within the community. For this reason, focus groups might turn out to be extremely comfortable for many people.

Data generation began in the first week of September. Unfortunately it coincided with the suspension of all Grade 11 learners for failure to pay their school fees (by the Deputy Principal who was responsible for their suspension). All 40 learners interested in my study were part of the suspended group. Though this is a common practice for the school, learners were very angry this time and they sang freedom songs signalling an intention to challenge the authority of the deputy principal. It was decided that they should be allowed to come back to discuss the issue. 4 of the 40 learners did not come back i.e. 3 boys and 1 girl. I learned later on that 2 of those who did not return found work in the nearby bakery while the third one was looking for a job. No one knows what happened to the female learner. I was left with 36 learners from 4 Grade 11 classes (Humanities (A), Commerce / Accounting (B), Commerce / Business Economics (C) Science (D).

Focus groups were formed using their grade divisions as the criteria. My decision was influenced by the fact that I teach all these learners. I know that whenever they are mixed for some reasons there is a tendency for some groups to be very dominant. The Science group in this school has a history of refusing to be mixed with others. I found it useful to hold conversations with pupils in friendship, all of which indicate that the presence of like minded learners in individual groups assisted in easing possible tension among them (Woods, 1979). On this issue researchers are cautioned to avoid bringing together in a group individuals who have strong disagreement or who are hostile towards each other (Neuman, 2000). There were four groups of 8, 9, 10 and 10 learners from Grades 11 A, 11 B, 11 C, and 11 D respectively. Researchers differ as to the size of the focus group. According to Bless and Smith (2000) focus groups consist of between 4 and 8 participants, while for Neuman (2000) it consists of between 6 and 12 people. The

number of participants per group for this study falls between the limits advocated by these researchers.

These groups were asked to speak about problems faced by learners who mix school with work. This was to stimulate all participants to talk, as they were all involved in economic activities. I facilitated the 4 groups to keep them open-ended yet focused on the topic under discussion. Though there was a great interaction amongst learners, I was unable to select individual learners for the study. The problem was that so much information emerged out of the focus groups that I found myself busy writing notes. Another reason for this inability was the fact that some learners did not want me to use a tape recorder. Some learners dominated the discussion leaving others without contributing anything. Though the focus groups were not as successful as anticipated, they generated very useful information, which helped me in the formulation of questions and probes for the individual interviews. The question regarding when learners work, for instance, was discussed at length during the focus group. Although there are many important advantages of using focus groups there are also potential pitfalls. The researcher must consider carefully the reasons for using the focus group and pay strict attention to the composition and facilitation of groups.

4.5.4 Individual Interviews

In the next phase, I was interested in the information provided by individuals. I used 10-minute semi-structured interviews. In this way unexpected information can be dealt with and the interviewee can respond indirectly perhaps while talking about other things, to the question put forward (Rogers & Standing, 1981). The short duration of the interview was to maintain the participant's interest and attention and to avoid boredom. This was used to elicit information on learner's activities i.e. the type and time as well as their reasons for working. Another intention was to select 5 learners for in-depth interviews in preparation for producing life history accounts. Information from the group interviews helped me

to formulate questions for these interviews. The interview schedule was made of the following short, easily understood, yet specific questions:

- What type of work do you do?
- When do you work?
- What are the reasons for your working?

These questions were arranged in this form for a reason. The fairly routine and uncontroversial questions were dealt with at the beginning. The more personal and intimate questions were asked later. It was expected that by the time intimate questions were asked that rapport would have been established (Ackroyd & Hughes, 1981).

Though a tape recorder was used, not all of these interviews were recorded. Some learners expressed their reservations on the use of such an instrument. I had to take notes thoroughly for ten learners during interviews. I transcribed in 2 phases. Firstly, I listened to all 36 interviews noting their contents, picking out important points. These notes (together with those compiled during interviews where the tape recorder was not used) were used to select 5 learners to participate in life histories.

The information supplied by participants in the questionnaire, letters as well as interviews were arranged in a way to facilitate the analysis. An analysis refers to the ways in which the researcher moves from a description of what is reported to an explanation of what is reported (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). This involves discovering and deriving patterns in the data. Since I am a funnel through which data was received, some form of analysis was already taking place before the formal stage of coding data. The preliminary examination provided me with hunches, ideas and general lines of investigation to pursue during the more formal process of analysis. At that stage I looked for patterns, theories, consistencies and exceptions to the rule. This is done to identify codes and categories from data.

Results were organised around the study's questions and sub-questions namely: "Who are these learners"? And, "Who are their parents?" These questions and sub-questions were added to understand the reasons for learners' involvement in the informal sector of the economy, which is one of the critical questions for this study. The questionnaires, letters, interviews, transcripts and written notes were coded to introduce some order and structure into data. This enabled me to assign meaning to the responses and remarks from the used tools. Findings were represented in either graphs or tables and they were interpreted accordingly. Results were discussed and where possible the findings of this study were compared with other similar studies from this country and other countries.

4.5.5 Producing the Life Histories

Interviews

In comparison to large-scale survey research, life history, as explained earlier, involves a small number of participants. Choices are to be made by the researcher from many potential participants (Plummer, 2000). Out of 36 participants only 5 were chosen for in-depth interviews. This was a purposive sampling guided by the following criteria:

- Learners working in the informal sector within the school and outside school. My concern was to know whether the learners are also working outside school. It was easy to identify those working within the school. During individual interviews it was possible for learners to disclose when they work, which highlighted those who continue to work even outside school.

- Participants were required to be willing participants

The participants were able to sustain a prolonged period of engagement. They had to be willing story-telling participants. It was fortunate that most of the participants were comfortable telling their stories to me. Life history narrative research attracts a particular participant who is willing to share a personal story (Kathard, 2003). To promote this willingness, participants were allowed to speak in their mother tongue, that is, isiZulu. The issue of language is highlighted in a

survey done in townships of Cape Town. This survey found that most of township people do not speak English. In fact, they found it difficult to use any English in interviews (Deumert & Dowling, 2004).

- Types of activities

I wanted to work with a variety of activities e.g. selling alcohol, involvement in illegal activities, domestic workers, child-minders etc. This was to help me understand the experiences of learners in different types of activities i.e. to get a fuller picture of what exactly learners are doing in the informal sector.

- Gender

In literature it has been established that females differ from males in respect of the type of activity they are involved in the informal sector. Both sexes were to be chosen or the study. 5 participants were selected to participate in the study. Figure 7 reflects a summary description of their biographical profiles.

Figure 7. *Biographical Profiles of Learners*

Learner	Gender	Activities within the school	Activities outside school
Thando	Female	Selling sweets	Domestic worker, gardener and selling food at the taxi rank.
Thobile	Female	Selling sweets	Child-minder.
Hle	Female	Selling sweets and braiding	Running a shebeen, selling sweets and braiding hair.
Mandlakhe	Male	Selling sweets	Work in a hardware store.
Sipho	Male	Selling sweets	Selling sweets, chips, and ice-cubes at home.

Interviews are an excellent way of discovering the subjective meanings and interpretations that people give to their experiences (Denzin, 1989a). They allow aspects of social life such as social processes and negotiated interactions to studies that could not be studied in any other way (Daly & McDonald, 1992). While it is important to examine pre-existing theory, in-depth interviews allow new understandings and theories to be developed during the research process. They work well with an inductive theoretical approach and grounded theory.

People's responses are less influenced by the direct presence of their peers during in-depth interviews. Participants may be prepared to discuss sensitive matters such as sexual experiences, rape and drugs. In-depth interviewing can involve a single hour interview with each participant or may take several sessions each of 2 hours duration or up to 25 sessions (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). However, most seem to consist of a single interview of approximately ninety minutes. In examining pre-existing theory, in-depth interviews allow new understandings and theories to be developed during the research process. They work well with an inductive theoretical approach and grounded theory. People's responses are less influenced by the direct-presence of their peers during in-depth interviews. Participants may be prepared to discuss sensitive matters such as sexual experiences, rape and drugs. Some feminists have pointed out that it may be appropriate to offer emotional support in interviews, particularly when the interview concerns difficult topics, such as women's experiences of marital rape (Gelles, 1977). When interviewing people about sensitive issues it is important to arrange for referrals to trained counsellors or request for a relative or friend to be present.

Diaries

I initiated this phase by giving the 5 participants diaries where they were to record their daily activities for 7 days. I made copies of pages from Tuesday 23rd of September to Tuesday the 30th of the same month. I provided extra pages for each day in case there were a lot of entries for a single day. Participants were expected to keep a running record of their activities. They were asked to record all their activities in as much detail as they could, and to make entries daily. They were to focus on their economic activities for 7 days. They were allowed to use either English or isiZulu. They were assured that if they did not know how to use a diary they would be taught by the researcher. I wanted to induce learners to reflect at length about processes which underpin their experiences. These diaries were also to take me through each participant's journey for each day. This diary-interview method (Zimmerman & Wieder, 1977) was to guide the in-depth

interview, which was used for life histories. All male subjects indicated that they were not used to diaries and they regarded them as *"girls' things"*. They made it clear that it would not be feasible for them to use diaries and that it was pointless to teach them how to use diaries. All female participants worked with their diaries.

"Life log" of Work and Related Experiences

In the next phase I asked each participant to prepare a detailed chronology of his/her activities, experiences, important events and people in his/her life. They were to use these in writing the detailed descriptions of their experiences during childhood up to their present developmental stage. They had to include their economic involvement in all these years. Denzin (1989a) reports that this methodology is used to collect life documents that record crucial moments.

4.5.6 Constructing the Life Histories

Although the life history process invites participants to tell their stories, it is not without direction, given the fact that the project addresses specific critical questions (Kathard, 2003). Interview schedules were constructed with the aim of structuring the process and keeping the life history frame as a deliberate orientation. The schedules were structured to trace changing life experiences from childhood to where they are now. A social emphasis assisted with accessing experiences within a social frame, as the influence of society, family school and life circumstances were deemed as important. Personal frames of participants' personal sense of making their experiences and issues of importance to them were critical.

I read each participant's chronology of events thoroughly and formulated questions for in-depth interviews. These were focused and unstructured interviews. In-depth interviews aim to explore the complexity and in-process nature of meanings and interpretations that cannot be examined using positivist

methodologies. They are more like conversations than structured interviews (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). The influence of the interviewer on the production of the interview narrative cannot be ignored. The interviewer is, undoubtedly, a *"co-participant in the discourse"* (Mishler, 1986:82).

An average of 40 questions for each participant was formulated. Interviews took place at school in November 2006 after final exams. I provided the participants with lunch, as we had to remain in school for a long time. Each interview took about 90 minutes. The young women were determined to tell their stories no matter how traumatic, sad and tearful. When one of the girls told her story of how she was assaulted by her step-father, she was not sobbing but crying aloud. There was anger and frustration in her face. I feared that I had opened old wounds. A part of me wanted to stop her, but I decided not to disturb her while she was speaking. She quickly removed her shirt and showed me the horrible marks of candle burns on her back.

I am not sure whether being humane as a researcher is being biased. But at this stage the smiling face of a friendly researcher disappeared when I felt tears uncontrollably running from my eyes. I was sobbing and holding her tightly and we were both crying. This was followed by a moment of silence on my side and sobbing from her. She continued relating her story as if nothing had happened. The resilience showed by these children, who survived maltreatment by their own relatives and the community at large, calls for a greater respect of children. This respect for children is also echoed by Alderson (1994, 1995) who in her own research is at pains to demonstrate the ability of very young children to understand issues that are both complex and painful, and to produce refined judgments on issues.

I had two tapes of 90 minutes for each of the participants. Instead of doing transcripts, I listened to the entire tape using a tape player with a counter. As I listened I noted on a piece of paper the topic of conversation and the changes of

focus against the number on the tape counter. Then I went through again and again this time trying to answer all the 40 questions to fill in the gaps in their autobiographies. I transcribed those parts, which were relevant to the research questions. During in-depth interviews, new information emerged and more questions were asked in addition to the 40 previously prepared questions. The autobiography of each participant, transcripts of important parts of the tape, as well as original tapes, was used to supplement each other in formulating each participant's life history. Every story had to be treated on its own. 3 of the 5 stories were easy to construct as much information from autobiographies were straightforward and their stories were not very long. The stories of Hle and Thobile were very long.

For the sake of consistency, the format of each story was guided by the instructions given to each of the participants when they wrote their autobiographies. I decided to use some important information provided by participants during interviews to provide topics for their stories. My decision was influenced by a number of factors such as how such sentences were stressed, facial expression, body language as well as repetition of such statements.

I also used fictitious names for participants when analysing their stories. The reason for this was to protect the participants since they disclosed very sensitive information about themselves. For many indigenous African cultural groups such as the Nguni, the naming and the meaning attached to names play a role in the definition of a personhood (Guma & Milton, 1997). The names I gave to the participants are my own responses to the difficulties experienced by each of these learners. The names praise the work of children, stressing their importance as human beings with respect and show that they are loved and they are beautiful. These names are in isiZulu as everything was done in their mother tongue. The names and their meanings are as follows:

- Mandlakhe- what he has achieved is from his own sweat

- Sipho- gift from God

- Hle- from Twinkle, which means a beautiful thing

- Thobile- she is humble

- Thando - from Northland, which means the mother of love

One participant was interviewed per day. Since autobiographies and interviews were done in isiZulu, I had to translate them into English as I speak both languages. I asked for assistance from my sister who is an expert in isiZulu to check my interpretation. The edited stories were given back to the participants for verification. Hle asked for the tapes after reading her story. I thought she wanted to pull out of the study. I was very relieved when both the story and the tapes were returned to me. One of the male participants landed in some trouble. He reported that some people wanted to kill him. They were accusing him of stealing car wheels. He had to go into hiding for some time. That left 5 learners to work with.

4.5.7 My Autobiography

I did not plan to include my autobiography at the beginning of the research. But as the analysis of each learner's life histories unfolded, I discovered that I also identified with these learners. I was affected by the stories, which brought up memories of my own life. I was once a working learner too. Likewise, I could answer the critical questions of the study and my family's background was similar to some of these learners. Autobiography is a kind of writing in which you tell a story of yourself as truthfully as you can, or as much as you can bear. It is not thought of as fiction writing but as a kind of history writing (Coetzee, 1984).

Autobiography, as a method, raises some critical points. Both autobiographies and biographies are conventionalised, narrative expressions of life experiences. These convictions, which structure how life experiences are narrated, involve the following presuppositions and taken-for-granted assumptions: the existence of the

other, the importance and influence of gender and class, family beginnings, known and knowing authors, objective life markers, real persons with real lives, turning-point experiences and truthful statements distinguished from fiction.

According to Sayre (1994), rather than defining autobiographies it might be wiser to think somewhat more about what autobiographies reveal: what they tell us that other methods may not. They reveal things that the author has never told before, at least in print or to a wider general audience. I have never discussed my family background with anyone before. An author's defenses and justifications are also revealed. It gives my side of the story. Only one person has the unique knowledge and unique access to it, only one person can distort it in as much as revealing. It is important to note that a person can lie sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously. Memory itself is a very tricky faculty. It often erases or blocks unpleasant experiences. Autobiographies change in more than just content. They change in form, emphasis and audience. A rigid definition of autobiography for one time may not fit in another time. An autobiography not only reveals an author's broad concepts of self but it also reveals more specific modes of behaviour styles, education and vocations, which might be called "*forms of identity*". Autobiography, therefore, may reveal as much about the author's assumed audience as they can do about him/her and is a further reason why they need to be read as cultural documents not as just personal ones.

Autobiography, which speaks of the personal and specific, elaborates on uniqueness, can also be found among the marginalised, evoking common aspects. The reader is invited to recognise similarities, individualistic paradigms of self and ignore the role of collective and relational identities in the individuation process. Autobiographies of women and members of minorities may expose historically generated differences from dominant groups depending on sex and race. Lastly, autobiographies attempt to provide a good understanding of the subjective meaning behind the individual's actions. But a good explanation

depends on relating this action to the economic, political, social, and cultural conditions in which they are constituted.

4.6 VALIDITY

Validity concerns were addressed by creating a good rapport where I used the language of the participants throughout the interview. Also, by giving back transcripts of the interviews to participants for their responses and inputs, I was able to ensure that all data recorded had been correctly transcribed.

The issue of reliability was addressed by carefully selecting participants for interviews, which were tape-recorded. Researchers have challenged the view that information collected from children is less reliable than that collected from adults. This view has now been thoroughly evaluated in relation to the reliability of children as forensic witnesses (Dent & Flin, 1992). Goodman and Schwartz-Kenny (1992) have shown that warmth and positive reinforcement increase children's accuracy and their resistance to leading questions. To this end, I organised working lunches with participants who were asked to choose whether interviews could be done at school or outside of school. Interviews were conducted in a very relaxed atmosphere after exams. I made arrangements for such learners to be included in the year-end *"Street Law"* programmed at the former University of Natal in Durban.

4.7 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH DESIGN

Finally, I highlight in Figure 8 the principle methods of producing data in a summarised form.

Figure 8. *Summary of Research Design*

Figure 8. *Summary of Research Design*

Methodological Tool	Participants
Survey	120 given (81 completed and returned)
Letters attached to questionnaire	14
Focus group Interviews	4 groups (a total of 36 learners)
Individual Interviews	36
Life Histories	5 (chosen from 36 individual interviews)
Diaries	5 given and 4 used
Life Logs	5
Autobiography	1

CHAPTER FIVE

ARE CHILDREN "CONSUMER" OR "INVESTMENT GOODS"?

There are many ways from the field to the text, many ways to inscribe and ascribe experience. Interpretation is an art that cannot be formalised (Denzin, 1994:511-512).

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of the presentation and interpretation of information collected through a questionnaire, letters, and individual interviews. This chapter is divided into 4 parts. In order to get a broad understanding of the context of involvement of learners in the informal sector, it is necessary to establish a profile of such learners. This is presented in the first part. The second part deals with the type of work learners are involved in and their remuneration. The third part explores the reasons for learner's involvement in the informal sector of the economy. To complete the picture the fourth part provides information on the working lives of learners: the age or grade that learners started working, who they work for, as well as when they do their work.

5.1 WORKING LEARNERS' PROFILE AND FAMILY BACKGROUND

Personal information of the learners is explained in terms of learners' characteristics, parental characteristics, as well as household characteristics. The question of who are working learners is addressed.

5.1.1 Learners' Characteristics

As indicated in chapter four, this study was initiated with a survey where all Grade 11 learners were given questionnaires. 81 from a 120 questionnaires were returned. 61 (73.5%) of the 81 learners indicated that they were working

compared to 20 who do not work. It may be that learners who do not work chose not to return the questionnaire. On the issue of gender, there were more girls than boys who combined schooling with work. In fact, 42 out of 61 working learners were girls. Even though the overall information showed that most Grade 11 learners of this school are over-age, it is mostly working learners who are older. According to the South African schools policy at the time of the study, learners were required to complete Grade 12 by the age of 18. This means that they are supposed to be 17 years of age in Grade 11. But in this study, 82% of working learners as compared to 25% of those who did not work were over-age for Grade 11. Comparisons of their ages are represented in Figure 9:

Figure 9. *How old are Working Learners?*
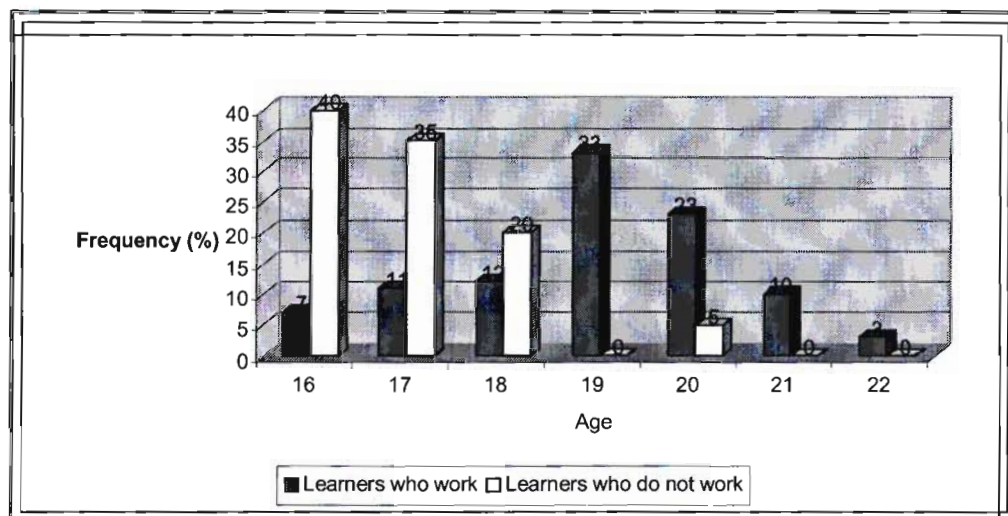
Learners who do not work are either under age, that is, 16 years or are of the correct age, which is 17. In fact, these youngsters form 75% of this group. Most working learners are 19 years and above in terms of age. This makes them 2 years behind the average. The older the learner the more likely that they are working. Research done in Latin American countries confirms these findings as it was found that 17-year old working children were found to be 2 years behind (Patrinos & Psacharopoulos, 1995). It was found that they also attained lower levels of education than non-working children. At the initial stage of the study both the questionnaire and individual interview did not include questions on academic

performance. There is evidence that financial constraints resulted in some participants starting school late and some had temporarily withdrawn from school. They started working as early as 10 years of age and some as late as 12 years.

5.1.2 Parental Characteristics

According to Streak (2000), child poverty results from an increasing unemployment rate and impact of HIV/AIDS on breadwinners abilities to provide for dependents. This study supports this notion as 62% of working learners from female-headed households reported they had mothers who are unemployed. Even in cases where the mothers were working they were in low paying jobs. This is in accordance with Statistics SA (2000), which reports that 44% of South African working children are earning money to put food on the table for themselves and their unemployed parents. A further 10% of working children in this study indicated that they were responsible for themselves as their parents had passed away. Though the study did not focus on the cause of death of their parents, in this country, children are driven to the street due to the death of their parents and other members of their families from AIDS related illnesses (Mathambo, 2000). Lastly, some learners indicated that they were responsible for their families because their parents were too old and could not work. In such situations, older parents rely on the income of working children, which is inadequate to provide for dependents.

5.1 3 Household Characteristics

Family structure

Most working learners were from single parent households headed by females. Figure 10 represents this information from the survey. It reveals that only 3% of working learners have both parents. The rest were from single-parent families headed mostly by females. This is in keeping with the findings of a study done by Tienda (1979) in Peru, which maintains that the circumstances of one-parent

families positively influence children's economic participation (Myers, 1991). Children from female-headed, single-parent households are more likely to work. However, these findings are in conflict with the findings of the ILO (1981) and Ennew (1985) studies. Ennew (1985) found that children from extended families are less likely to work than those from nuclear families. Though most single parents are working, those of working learners are in low-paying jobs such as working in sugar-cane fields and domestic work.

Figure 10. *Which Parent do Working Learners Have?*
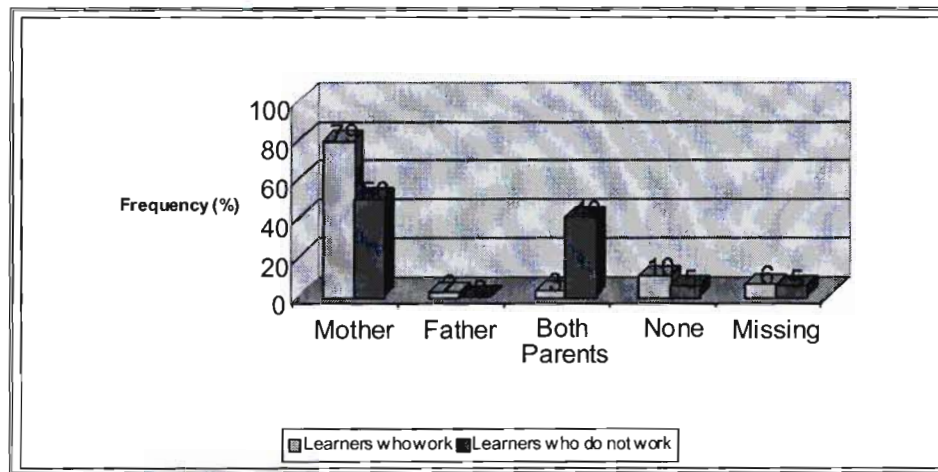
Family size

Working learners are from big families of up to 21 people living together in the same house. The highest frequency is 11, that is, 18% of working learners are from families with 8 people living together. Figure 11 represents these findings:

Figure 11. *The Number of People in Households of Working Learners*

No. of People	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	15	16	21	Total
Frequency	2	5	5	8	8	9	11	4	2	1	1	1	1	61
Frequency Percentage	3.3	8.2	8.2	13	13.1	14.8	18	6.6	3.3	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	100

Further analyses on the relationship between the number of children and adults in these households were made. It was further found that there are more children than adults in these families: 67.2% of working learners are from families where there are more children than adults. The following figure represents these findings.

Figure 12. *The Number of Children Compared to Adults*

Number of children/adults	More adults	More children	Same	Not Declared/ Unknown	Total
Frequency	10	41	7	3	61
Frequency Percentage	16.4	67.2	11.5	6.6	100

This is consistent with the findings of the studies that found that working children were from big families with more than 4 children (Boyden, 1985). Children who do not work are from families where there are fewer children and more adults. There are even older working siblings. According to the study done in the Philippines, the presence of older siblings might decrease the likelihood that younger children will work (Grootaert & Kanbur, 1995).

5.1.4 Parental Level of Education

Working learners come from families with poorly educated parents. When comparing parental level of education for learners who do not work to those who work, the mothers' of those who work have a very low level of education or are illiterate. This is shown in Figure 13.

The figure shows that only 6% of mothers are reported as having reached secondary school, which is to Grade 8 level. In fact, about 56% of mothers in this category were indicated by learners as being either illiterate or as holding a low level of education (Junior Primary i.e. Grades 0-3). All mothers of learners, who

did not work, reached high school or tertiary education. This tends to confirm the findings of a study done in urban Bolivia which highlighted the mother's level of education as affecting child work decisions and employment (Cartwright & Patrinos, 1999).
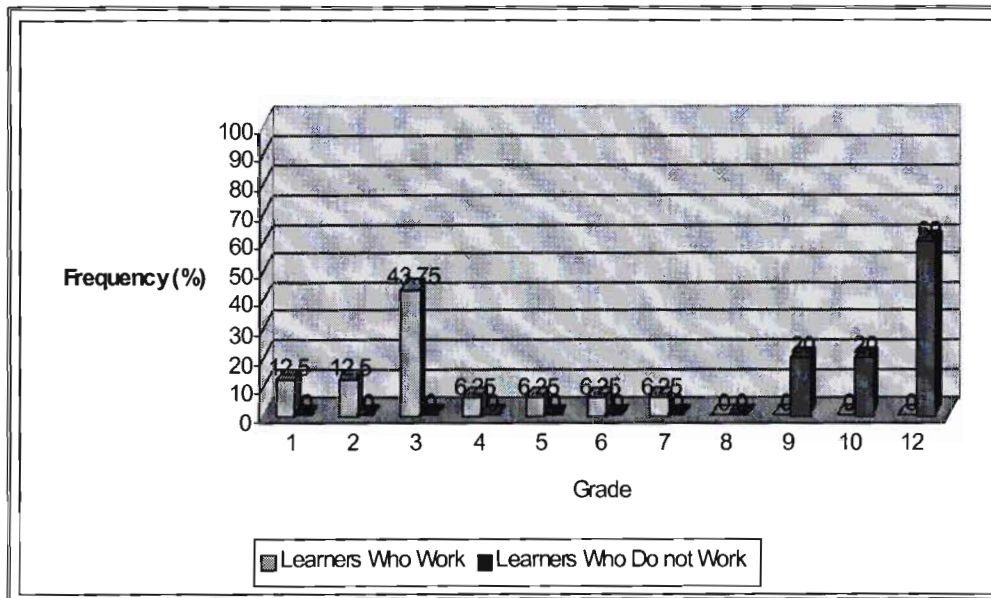
Figure 13. *Parental Level of Education*

5.2 TYPE OF ACTIVITIES LEARNERS ARE INVOLVED IN

5.2.1 *Selling*

Most working learners are involved in selling activities in the informal sector of the economy. Learners sell snacks (e.g. sweets, peanuts), cooked food (e.g. cakes, fried fish, pies), cigarettes, dagga, and stolen goods. There are some stories behind the selling of illegal goods like cigarettes and dagga. Smoking is not allowed in schools; therefore, some precautionary measures need to be taken by learners when selling these commodities. Dagga is sold during school periods. These are sold in the toilets whereas cigarettes can be sold even during breaks. The reason is that teachers sometimes raid toilets during the breaks when they suspect something is amiss. Learners usually sell various stolen goods depending

on what is available at the time. Their commodities range from food, stationery, clothes, and bus-tickets for adults, to cellular phones, as well as airtime vouchers. They use specific jargon when selling. In this school they say *"ngiyadlulisa"* instead of saying *"I am selling"*. This means that he/she is passing the items quickly away from him/her. The prices of their items are always very low. They sell to both learners and educators.

"Dagga merchants", for this is what they are called, are easy to identify. Whenever they go to the toilet they are followed by a number of boys. They are always moving up and down the verandah during teaching time or breaks. These are boys who are feared by other learners. They always carry cigarette lighters for their customers and they always carry their schoolbags. Teachers believed that one of the boys involved in this activity was at school only for business. He was always outside the classroom. It was indicated that generally if you sell these commodities you are a smoker. Learners who smoke know each other and their merchants. Learners who do not smoke hire those who smoke to sell cigarettes for them. This is problematic at times, as those hired can easily swindle you and you cannot report them since it is an illegal business. Selling cigarettes is very profitable. Girls who are in this business do it at home as they fear that the boys will take their stock without paying when they are at school.

Learners who sell cooked food explained that they either cook their food very early in the morning or the previous night. This is a very time consuming process. Another participant who bakes pies every morning indicated he had to wake up as early as 04.30 in the morning. Learners are involved in a number of activities at the same time. For example, learners combine selling with other activities. Selling is usually a family business where more than one child in the family is involved.

5.2.2 Domestic Work

Gender also plays a part as boys and girls do different activities. For example, only boys are involved in car washing. Information from the questionnaire

revealed that more girls than boys are involved in domestic work (refer to Figures 14 and 15). In fact, only 2 boys indicated that they were doing domestic work. During interviews only one boy indicated that he is involved in domestic work.

Figure 14. *Boys' Activities*

Type of work	Frequency	Frequency %age
Car wash	2	10,5
Domestic	2	10,5
Gardener	2	10,5
Selling Cigarettes	4	21
Selling drugs or stolen goods	3	15,9
Selling Sweets	4	21
Taxi Conductor	1	5,3
Security	1	5,3
Total	**19**	**100**

Figure 15. *Girls' Activities*

Type of work	Frequency	Frequency %age
Catering	3	7,1
Domestic	10	23,8
Scavengers	3	7,1
Hair business	5	11,9
Selling cigarettes	1	2,4
Selling drugs	1	2,4
Selling sweets	12	8,6
Sex worker	6	14,3
Missing	1	2,4
Total	**42**	**100**

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The type of domestic work boys are involved in is unique. One participant who sells sweets at school indicated that he also takes care of a physically challenged pensioner. He cleans him and takes him to the pension pay point. He is paid R100 a month for this. He has 3 other pensioners who are paid on different days. He stands in the queue for them on their payday. He does this before coming to school. He waits in the queue from as early as 5 o' clock until 7 o' clock in the morning when the pensioner joins the queue. From there he rushes to school. He is paid R20 for this.

Some girls indicated that they were caregivers of young children. They were fully responsible for these children. In instances when the children are sick, the girls miss school to take them to the doctor or clinic. They even take those who are of school-going age to school and pick them up after school. This finding is in line with that of a study done on learners from families living in a single room in Clermont Township (Mncwabe, 1999). Some girls also take care of sick relatives.

5.2.3 Mobile Street Traders

Only boys in this study were involved in mobile street trades like car washing, parking assistance, and guarding vehicles. During interviews they described being chased and sjamboked (beaten with a leather strap) by police who consider them to be thieves. A particular boy told a very sad story of how he left school in the middle of the previous year. He was lucky enough to get more money than the others do. This resulted in elder boys in the township forcing him to pay a fee for using their street when going to school. Ennew (1985) in her study found that such occupations had the lowest correlation with school success. She further indicated that juvenile factory workers and newspaper vendors found it hard to sustain their studies. In this particular study, there is only one factory worker and no newspaper vendors. Bullying is highlighted as causing children to drop out of school. In the street, girls only work as street vendors and peddlers (collecting card boards) and not a single girl is involved in car washing, taxi conducting or

guarding of cars. This is in line with the survey of juvenile street workers by De Sanchez (1984), who indicated that only 9% of street workers in this category were girls. Thus, it appears that girls are excluded or not involved from certain street services.

5.2.4 Skilled Learners

It is amazing how some learners acquire skills during school hours. During interviews 14% of learners mentioned that they missed school to go for skills training during school hours. They return and wait for jobs while in class. Some of these short courses take up to a month. This means that the child will be away from school for the entire period. They used money saved from their daily economic activities to pay for these courses. It is usually the boys who are involved in this. The following are examples of learners who acquired skills during school hours:

Participant A went for 2 weeks on a special event organisation and tourism skills training. He now works there whenever he is needed. He was now tempted to leave school and work permanently. Though he is doing tourism as one of his matriculation subjects, he was not sure whether he would get a job by the time he qualified. He firmly believed, though, that by doing short courses while working he would have more chances of getting a permanent job.

Participant B went for 3 weeks to be trained as a security guard. He was very boastful of his certificate enabling him to use a firearm. Though he was still at school, he was looking for a job. He is employed on casual basis whenever there are houses to be guarded in the township. He also absented himself from school whenever there was a job to be done during school hours.

Participant C went for a whole month on a dressmaking course, 2 weeks of which was during school hours. He enrolled for a fashion design course, which he

attends during some afternoons on school days and weekends. Female teachers within the school supported him. They hire him to design some of their clothes. They even recommend him to their friends and relatives.

Participant D went for 2 months to train as an electrician and at one stage left school and tried to work for himself. He came back for his Grade 11 but by the time examinations were written, he was busy with job applications. He wrote only 2 subjects during final examination and left for a job. He now works for a refrigeration company in Phoenix.

Participant E is a skilled tiler. When his father fell sick he gave him his own tools to continue working in his place. His father, who passed away at the beginning of 2002, was no longer interested in his son attempting to achieve Grade 12. He indicated to him that there were no jobs out there and that he must start working. His father used to find clients for him.

Participant F went for a month's training on hair dressing skills. She runs a salon at home. She has all the equipment for the job. She lost her mother at the beginning of 2002 and has not returned to school.

Lastly, certain activities were not easy to mention during interviews. Activities such as selling dagga and alcohol as well as prostitution were mentioned in the questionnaire and letters. Girls indicated that they are "situational prostitutes" who devote themselves to the trade while maintaining a seemingly normal life. They were subjected to sexually transmitted infections. They are always on the street waiting for clients and would return home afterwards. These young girls earn as little as R20 per client. This is in line with studies on street children in Latin America undertaken by Lusk (1989; 1992). The majority of street children including girls working as prostitutes are exposed to drugs, violence, harassment, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases. They are in regular contact with their parents and contribute to the family budget. The finding that girls in this study earn as little as R20, correlates with findings in studies done elsewhere in

which juvenile prostitutes in almost identical circumstances earn a pittance. They are also subjected to the worst working conditions (Myers, 1991).

Many studies on child work indicate that parents, in some instances, introduce their children to certain types of work and even provide the tools and skills for their children (Boyden, 1995). This study is also a testimony to this. One participant indicated in her letter that she was taught to make traditional spoons and introduced to a market for her work at Durban station by her grandmother. Another learner explained how her mother buys cakes for her children to sell from house to house. Each child is given a 12.5 kg bag of cakes to sell in the afternoon while the mother sells from their home. Children in this case become an extension of their mother's business. This is also happening in other parts of the world, as a study done in Lagos indicated that mothers who are also traders increase profits by using their own children as helpers (Myers, 1991). Also, the father of the boy who is a tiler in this study trained him and bought him some tools. While the boy was at school his father was networking with clients. In one instance, the boy had to be away from school for some days as he was working. Braiding hair is one of the activities where there is more than one family member involved. 2 sisters involved in braiding indicated that even their mother is involved in this activity. Their mother, who does braiding in the Berea public toilets, taught them. Parents transfer these skills to their children as means of empowering them to take care of their families financially.

The types of activities learners are involved in indicate that most of them are working in the informal sector of the economy. This is also true in countries like Peru where its ministry of labour found that very few (4%) working juveniles are employed in the formal sector (Boyden, 1983). Pradhan and Van Soest (1995) also found evidence that children from indigenous groups may have difficulty in getting formal sector employment and have no choice but to work in home production. Findings from the National Longitudinal Study of Youth (1997) indicated that youth in low-income households might live in areas with less

economic opportunity and have less access to transportation, decreasing the likelihood of their working in the formal sector. Though the formal sector of the economy hires learners on a casual basis, language is a barrier for second language speakers. The formal sector economy is easily monitored because it is illegal to hire children.

5.3 REASONS FOR WORKING

As reasons for working were not included in the questionnaire some learners decided to include them in letters. As indicated in Chapter Four, this provided a guide for individual interview questions. This part of the analysis is initiated with reasons from letters and 36 short interviews. They indicated that they work because of abuse, homelessness, school fees, and the need for extra packet money.

5.3.1 Abuse

Figure 16 represents different types of abuse learners' experienced as indicated in their letters.

Figure 16. *Types of Abuse Working Learners are Exposed To*

Type of Abuse	Neglect	Physical	Physiological	Sexual	Unidentified Abuse	Total
No. of Learners	7	3	2	1	1	14
%age	50	21.4	14.4	7.1	7.1	100

90% of learners (13 out of 14) indicated that they work because of abuse from home. Women were reported as the perpetrators. Though uncles, wives, aunts, and mothers-in-law were implicated, the highest percentage (63%) was that of biological mothers. Some examples of extreme abuse are: being burned with

boiling fatty meat, being dumped with the family of the mother's boyfriend, and being left to look after young siblings while the mother became the common-law wife of another man. In a letter, a girl explained how she was wrongly accused of stealing and how an electrical cord was used to punish her. She was later blamed for the death of the woman she worked for. It was alleged that she administered an overdose of medicine to her. This resulted in her feeling guilty even though the learner alleges that other family members told her that the woman died of HIV/AIDS.

In another letter the writer explains how her mother decided to become the common-law wife of a stranger and left her with her siblings. The girl had to work for herself and her siblings. In the process the uncle's wife, who was asked to keep an eye on them by their mother, physically abused her. In this letter a very disturbing picture is given in which children are not wanted by both maternal and paternal relatives. The girl explained how both families pushed them around. Similar findings were reported in a study of child abuse and neglect done in Washington (NIS-3, 1996) where females were reported as perpetrators. This is consistent with the fact that mothers and mother-substitutes tend to be primary persons held accountable for any omissions and/or failing in care-taking (Kim, 1968). Most learners are in the care of females. Only one learner indicated being sexually abused by a male. This is similar to the findings of NIS-3, (1996) where very few males physically abused children as compared to women abusers. This resulted in children running away from home to stay with friends, relatives, as well as boyfriends. It is in these settings that they exchange their services for shelter and food. The extent of abuse is echoed in a Canadian investigation of runaway adolescents, which found that such adolescents were victims of chronic extreme abuse at a young age, often perpetrated by their biological mothers. The phenomenon of changing accommodation more than 3 times from very early in life has been observed as a factor in several studies (Craig, 1996).

5.3.2 Homelessness

8 of the 14 letters written by learners indicated that they were also homeless. As indicated earlier, learners ran away from home because of various evils perpetrated. In this way they became homeless. They were now staying with people other than their parents. This is in line with a study done in Lima which indicated that girls who are for some reason made homeless are far more likely than boys to be taken in by neighbours who above all, seek unpaid assistance in the house (Rogers & Standing, 1981). This study presents shocking evidence of physical abuse by biological mothers of their children. In one of the letters, the writer who is now 20-years-old explained how she had been changing accommodation since she was 12. She also explained the harsh realities of being a working, homeless learner. She provided either unpaid or very little paid domestic work for many families. In some instances she had been forced to have sex with family members. When trying to protest she would be told that she was given shelter and food for nothing. There were times in her life when she was expected to contribute financially. This meant that she provided domestic services for the family she stayed with whilst simultaneously working for another family for a salary that she would give to the host family.

5.3.3 School Costs

This category includes items such as school fees, stationary, books, transport costs, and school uniforms. About 69% of learners are working for school costs. It is amazing how far girls go in order to remain in school. They were involved in activities ranging from getting money from their boyfriends to paying for themselves as well as their siblings for school needs, to prostitution, being enslaved by relatives of their late boyfriends as well as selling in the streets. The issue of transport to school was discussed at length during interviews. It emerged that the changing of homes by working learners due to reasons such as abuse, parental neglect, as well as the holding of their reports by schools because of

failure to pay school fees in time, resulted in them failing to get places in local schools. Learners were involved in taking young children to and from pre-school to get money for their own transport to school. One of the learners disclosed in a letter that she was involved in prostitution in order to get money for transport to school. Some learners whose parents were pensioners indicated that they work to supplement their parents' pension grants. Their parents were unable to cope with school costs. They were from big families relying on pension grants for the aged. This is in line with a study done in Cote 'D Ivoire (Grootaert, 1998), where a work-school combination is likely when the head of the family is older (up to age 56). Surveys mention the cost of schooling as a major problem for poor families (UNICEF, 1997). In this study, learners were working to pay for their school needs as well as the school needs of their siblings. Apart from school fees, learners had to buy uniforms and other extras needed for schooling. According to the studies done in Ghana, though the actual school fees can be minimal, costs related to it are high. In a report by The Girl Education Unit List, economic constraints were at the top of its synthesis of research findings on factors militating against the education of girls (Moletsane, 1999).

5.3.4 Extra Pocket Money

Though it is universally accepted that poverty is the main reason for children working, some learners are doing it for other reasons. According to this study, 8.3% of learners worked in order to get pocket money. They also indicated that they worked because they had a talent, which they wanted to develop. Some learners in hairdressing and dressmaking indicated that they worked because they like to work and there was no pressure from home to do so. They enjoyed their work and perceive it not only as means of getting pocket money, but also as a way of developing their talents. Statistics SA (2000) revealed similar findings in a survey on street traders.

5.4 WORKING: WHEN AND FOR WHOM?

Lastly, learners worked during, before and after school. They also worked during weekends and holidays. Most learners (data from questionnaire) were working for themselves (69%). Learners indicated that at times they absented themselves from school in order to go to work. One boy, a tiler, indicated that it is not easy to find a job. Whenever there is one available he would rather miss school. Money was desperately needed at home. His father, who is a pensioner, helps him find prospective clients while he is at school. Some working learners have been working since Grade 4 when, under normal school going age they were 10 years old. Most learners enter the work force in Grade 5, which marks the beginning of the senior primary phase and coincidentally, the beginning of their early adolescent life. Figure 17 indicates the grades at which learners began working.

Figure 17. *The Grade in which Learners Started Working*

Grade	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Grade Unknown	Total
No. of Learners	7	13	5	2	11	4	7	4	8	61
%age	11,5	21,3	8,2	3,3	18	6,6	11,5	6,6	13	100

5.5 CONCLUSION

This study shows that most working learners are from female-headed families, over-age for the grade they attend at school, and often heading families themselves. They also depend on extended families for support especially grandparents. Although some parents are employed, they occupy low-paying jobs. Gender plays a part in the type of activities learners are involved in. It is also revealed that although children are viewed as "consumer goods" (providing

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happiness, companionship and psychological benefits) in this study, such goods are turned into "investment goods" by parents. Children have been turned into breadwinners, providing for their families and in some instances heading such families. The next chapter attempts to understand more deeply the underlying reasons, as well as the effects on the children. Children themselves provide perceptions of the situation in the form of life histories. The next chapter presents the life histories of 5 working learners where all critical questions of the study will be addressed.

CHAPTER SIX

VOICES OF THE INVISIBLE

Man (sic) is always a teller of stories, he lives surrounded by his own stories and those of other people, he sees everything that happens to him in terms of those stories and he tries to live his life as if he were recounting it (Sartre, quoted in Bruner, 1987:21).

One of the most powerful forms of expressing sufferings and experiences related to suffering is the narrative (Hyden, 1997:49).

6.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I present 5 life histories of learners involved in the informal sector of the economy. A first level analysis follows each story. The 5 edited biographies were initially hand written in isiZulu and constructed from in-depth interviews, and diaries. The 5 learners know me not only as an educator in their school but also as their subject teacher and school counsellor. I cannot estimate the effect that these factors have had on either the form of narratives, or the form of analysis, but there has undoubtedly been some effect. Accordingly, neither the narratives, nor the analysis can claim to take the final and authoritative position (Wiener, 1991:40). The responses of learners to the critical questions created themes, which are then developed in the analysis. The themes are family background and cultural practices, educational needs, economic activities and academic performance. Each story also highlights different themes and different aspects in each theme. I conclude the chapter by pulling these themes together across the 5 cases.

6.1. STORIES OF WORKING LEARNERS' LIVES

Children, like women, have been a marginalised group since the dawn of history. Women have been the focus of studies and children have been referred to in

passing. In this context, working children have been seen as merely appendages of working women. Hence, studies on children have taken the form of a comparison between working children and working women. Indeed there are striking similarities that can be seen in the two groups.

Each group provides cheap labour, which is necessary for the survival (and sometimes the prosperity) of a large number of small-scale business enterprises. The work of both groups often carries no social recognition and it is not adequately rewarded (Rogers & Standing, 1981). Nevertheless, it should be recognised that children constitute a distinct group separate from that of women and any attempts to lump the two together in certain studies tends to muddle the fundamental distinction between the two groups. The key difference is that most researchers who achieved this have themselves been women, whereas few if any, social researchers are themselves children. Also, the women's status is permanent, whereas that of the child is temporary and this simple fact makes it difficult to meaningfully monitor the circumstances of children as they graduate to adulthood. This militates against meaningful research on children since children are often seen as objects and not the subject of the study. This marginal position has certain methodological implications, notably an ethnocentric temptation with strong moralistic overtones (Rogers & Standing, 1981).

It is, accordingly, no coincidence that there have been few or no biographies about or autobiographies written by children in general, let alone about children involved in the informal sector of the economy. The reasons for this are the lack of information on the involvement of children in the informal sector as well as reluctance on the part of researchers to use life history approach on children. As Blanc (1994) stated, integral to research on working children has been life histories which are rare and seen by most social scientists as not having unique or substantial diagnostic value.

This situation can be overcome only by using investigative methods in which children play an important role. This study is inclined towards what Woodhead and Faulkner (2000), and Hendrick (1997), termed the *"social child"* perspective. One of its implications for research is that one may capitalise on the areas where children are more competent, for instance, drawing and telling stories, and where they are often more proficient than adults who may be more comfortable with the traditional interview format.

It is necessary to ensure that stories are told not just about the legitimate and powerful, but also about the ordinary, the dominated, and those perceived as illegitimate. Biographies and autobiographies of ordinary rather than extra-ordinary people have a crucial role to play in telling different stories and rewriting history. Since they are about the powerless rather than the powerful, they often help people to see and understand power and how it operates in their lives. This point is clearly explained by Reddy (2000) in her life histories of black scientists in South Africa.

Stories were very important during the days of apartheid in South Africa. Stories provided a tool to illuminate the conditions of the oppressed people and workers. Stories generated from oral history projects have been used to tell the story of the *"underclass"*, providing an interpretation that is different from the existing interpretation and, thus, used to educate the masses.

Stories about workers, poor people, and women have been written in South Africa. These stories are about marginalised adults. Surely, these people were once children and their present situation stems from their childhood. Stories about children need to be written. This will not only make children more visible as members of the society, but it will also make society more accessible to children. Mayall (2000) argues passionately that childhood research should be committed to challenging the oppression of children. There is no need to wait till children are old to tell their story of childhood. This might result in stale stories where

intervention cannot be initiated on issues pertaining to them. In the following stories I shall attempt to answer the critical questions of the study gleaned from the silent majority in education (learners themselves). A detailed discussion of how they were constructed has already been given in chapter four.

6.2 *Mandlakhe: My Mother is Just Like a "Tool"*

I would like to be a social worker. I want to help other people so that they do not end up in a situation like mine. I do not think anyone deserves to experience what happened to me. I know that I am not going to pass again at the end of the year. I do not have time to study for exams. I am too busy with my work. I am always occupied with my own problems. At times I do not even understand what is being taught at school. There are very few boys of my age with problems like mine.

I started school in Mandeni at the age of 8. My father has three wives with my mother being the second wife. We are 14 at home. 7 are from the house of the first wife, 6 from my mother's house and one from the third wife's house. I am the second born child in my mother's house. 4 of us are attending school. My older brother is working in Johannesburg and my other younger brother disappeared in the year 2000. My father is a casual worker and stays in Reservoir Hills. He experiences problems in supporting his family financially. All his children have to work to fend for themselves from very tender ages, and of late, he is failing to help even those who are too young to work.

My mother is not working and stays at Mandeni. My mother is just like a "tool". She is not contributing financially in the family instead I support her. She only receives R100 from my father after a number of months. The first wife is in a slightly better position since she is old and she qualifies for a pension grant. On top of this there are 6 grandchildren who qualify for the child grant from her house. She gets more than a R1000 a month. They are managing well such that they do not care whether they receive the R100 from my father or not. As far as I

can remember my father has done nothing for me. I have been buying clothes for myself and it is thanks to second-hand clothing shops that I manage to buy with my meagre salary. I pay my school fees and also help my mother to raise my young brothers.

I started taking care of myself when I was in Grade 5. I used to work in the sugar-cane and madumbe fields for a very low wage ranging from R10 to R15 a week. I also fenced such fields with tree branches. There was so much pressure for money at home I had to find another job. I herded cattle and stayed with the family that gave me the job. Though I was treated nicely, there were indications that I was just a labourer and not a family member. I had to wake up early and tie the cattle in the field before going to school. In the afternoon I had to set them free and look after them while they were grazing and drinking. I was paid R20 a month and this was better as I was staying and eating there. I gave my mother all my salary. Once a week I took cattle to the dip. On such days I had to wake up as early as 4 in the morning. Waking up this early allowed me to do everything and still go to school in time. This job did not disturb me in my schoolwork as it was done before and after school. During weekends I used to do my other job that is ploughing sugar-cane and madumbe fields. Working in sugar-cane fields was not good for me as I always develop a rash, which was itchy. I did this together with herding cattle.

I used to go to school without shoes. It was only when it became compulsory for me to wear shoes in high school that I bought some. I was going through a difficult stage of my life when I was mocked and laughed at by my peers at school. I was called "Inyoni yamatoho" meaning I was a foolish casual worker. They teased me for working for other Africans instead of working for other races. I was a laughing stock for the whole school. I had to stomach it, as I had no choice. After a period of time I decided to go and look for a job in a white suburb. I worked there on Saturdays and Sundays as a garden boy. This was not enough for me, as I was not working during holidays. I needed more money. It was clear that

I had to either stop attending school and work full time, or try something else. I decided to come to Durban to look for a job. It did not take me long before I found myself a job with better remuneration. I work for a hardware shop in the neighbouring residential area during weekends and holidays. I assist customers by loading and delivering building material. I work from 8 in the morning to 17.30 in the afternoon. It is not easy working there as we are badly treated by the supervisors who call us stupid. If there is any misunderstanding between you and one of them you are suspended. I am fortunate that I worked for the whole year without any suspension. We are paid differently even if we do the same job. At first adults were paid R30 and children R25 a day. After a strike there was a raise of R10 for adults and R5 for children. There is a lot of work during the festive season. We work even on Christmas day. I do not go home but I work full time until the school opens in January. Whenever I finish exams I inform my employer so I can start working immediately. Though my salary is low, when I work like this I manage to send my mother more money. This work is very hard and the salary is a pittance. During busy days we load a number of trucks; as a result I am always very tired when I return home.

I supplement my salary with selling sweets at school. I buy it from where I work. Profits depend on the type of sweets. I sell stick sweets because of their good profits. Ordinary sweets give a profit of R3 a packet as compared to stick sweets with a profit of about R16 a packet. There are a number of problems with selling sweets. My profits are affected when learners buy on credit and fail to pay. At times, I have to beg some learners to pay. In such instances I get comments like "Why are you pressurising us for such a little amount of money?" Because of this I found myself ignoring some persons, as I am not a fighting type. Where possible I explain the position of profits to some learners. There is also a problem of stealing from the learners. In the morning when we go for assembly we leave all our things in class and this gives thieves a chance to steal. My friend and I have lost 2 packets of sweets respectively this year. At times I wonder whether these learners know how some of us are struggling. The money I get from selling sweets

is used for my school needs and food. When things are right I send my mother R200 a month. All the money I earn from the hardware shop is used for this. I eat very unbalanced meals to secure this amount of money for my family. I eat cabbage and phuthu for the whole week.

I am presently staying with my brother (from the first wife). We are staying in a 4-roomed mud house belonging to my father in Richmond Farm, an informal settlement in Kwa Mashu. My father occasionally visits us. In fact, this only happens when he meets his wives. When things are bad for any of the wives she would come for the R100. On such occasions my father would ask them to wait for the money, which might take a week or two. In the process I must provide food for them. My father would buy one head of cabbage and sometimes a small packet of sugar and go back to his work place for 5 days. The 3 wives would come all the way from Mandeni for R100 and spend part of it on transport. There is too much responsibility on my shoulders in terms of money. I cannot raise school fees because of the extra burden created by such visits. At times they come simultaneously, the 3 of them, which means more food. It is surprising that my father wants me to be at school, and yet he is exerting so much pressure on me. Even at home he simply points where new houses are to be built without contributing any thing. It is the duty of children like me to provide financial assistance for such projects. My elder brother is just like my father. He failed to support his own mother and he is now failing to provide for his wife. My mother also takes care of my brother's family.

As I am getting older I have my own needs. It is going to be difficult to take care of the whole family. I am presently making means for my mother to get a pension grant. There is a lot of fraud involved. I paid R200 to people who promised to help me to speed up the process. On the second occasion I paid R600 to another scam. All my efforts failed, as my mother's name did not appear on the computer as promised. I have decided to process it through social workers. I am now paying for doctor's fees and for transport only. When she gets her pension I will

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be relieved of the heavy load. It would be possible for me to buy myself clothes and bank money for furthering my education.

Last year I contracted tuberculosis and fell ill. I lost weight and became very weak. There were times when it was not possible for me to go to school. I had to go to the clinic every now and then for treatment and a check up. I had to stand in long queues and by the time I finished it was too late to go to school and I was tired. No one was taking care of me. I tried by all means to gain my strength so as to go to work during weekends. I did not report at work that I was sick. I did not want to lose my job. My father took me to a traditional healer whose treatment included drinking some herbs and then retching. Seeing that I was getting weaker and the process was becoming painful, I decided to go to the clinic on my own. I have completed the treatment. I am healthy and gaining weight again. I suspect that carrying heavy stuff and working in a very dusty area caused my illness. But even if my suspicions were correct I need this job and I will never stop working. This is a dangerous job as I always witness others being injured. At one stage I was told to hold blocks while the truck was moving. This landed me in hospital as the load of blocks fell over me as the truck was taking a corner.

My family at times stresses me. My parents are always fighting with each other. Though I always ignore such conflict, there is one incident I will never forget. This happened when my mother was accused of sleeping away from home. It was my mother's turn to be visited by my father, as is the traditional practice. She went to her family earlier on that day. She depended on her parent's pension grant for financial support too. It was necessary for her to attend. She had to come back with food and money for her family. But as she came back late in the afternoon, she missed her husband who had arrived a bit earlier. My father spent that weekend in his other wife's house. He was so angry that he never set foot in our home again. He would give the once a month R100 to others to pass onto our family. My mother was forced to go back to her family for "inhlawulo"(a fine). She came back accompanied by her brothers with a goat to apologise. To me this

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was cruel, unfair and embarrassing treatment my mother received from my father. For him to demand a goat from people who were also helping their daughter to raise his children for no apparent reason was unreasonable to say the least.

It was long after political violence in the area in Mandeni when my home was set alight in the year 1997. At that time I was staying with a family I was working for. Another boy informed me that my home was burning. When I went home I discovered that all our 7 houses were burnt to ashes. Fortunately, no one was hurt as they managed to escape. I was very frustrated because we had no place to stay and feared for our lives. Investigations revealed that the attackers were people from the same political party we belonged to, and not the enemy. These are the people I myself worked with in fighting the enemy. The family was branded as sell-outs because my older brother went to stay in Kwa Mashu at the same house I am staying in now while looking for a job. Because this area used to be a stronghold for comrades there was a feeling that he had joined them. A decision was taken to burn down his home. My mother who is very poor has not been able to rebuild all the houses. What is funny about my brother is that though he is now working in Johannesburg, he is not supporting the family. I had tried to help my mother in rebuilding our home. So far we have managed to rebuild 3 houses.

The disappearance of my younger brother in the year 2000 left me very disturbed and angry. My younger siblings used to come to stay with me during the school holidays to look for jobs. It was on June 26 in the year 2000 when a certain builder from Siyanda (another neighbouring informal settlement) *took my brother with him as his helper. He never returned. He was 15-years-old and was doing Grade 7. We have tried looking everywhere, but all is in vain. We do not know anything about the builder who took him. I pray to God that we find him, or his grave, so as to put the matter to rest.*

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6.2.1 Analysis of Mandlakhe's Story

Educational Needs and Cultural Practices

Mandlakhe perceived poverty and polygamy as the causes of his involvement in the informal sector of the economy. His father, though earning very little, has three wives and 14 children to feed. He is totally unable to provide for his family financially. This has created a situation where all his children work for themselves from very early stages in their lives. Their father only sent R100 home after a number of months. According to Mandlakhe, if his father had married one wife, things could have been better. His perception might be accurate as traditionally in Africa not every man could afford more than one wife except for those who are rich. In Mandlakhe's case, his father is very poor and his children have to work for other families in the community. Mandlakhe had to work in the fields and herd cattle for other families to feed his own family. He is fully responsible for his mother's hut. Historically, polygamy has been seen as a means of acquiring wealth. Wealth today is perceived as a necessary condition for polygamy. Since very early in life (when doing Grade 5) he had to work to pay his school fees. He also provides for his other siblings. Mandlakhe is so busy working for money that he does not have time to study.

Work Activities

Mandlakhe was doing Grade 5 when he had to work for his family. He had two jobs, herding cattle, and ploughing and fencing sugar-cane fields. During the week he had to work for 6 hours a day before and after school and 8 hours on Wednesdays. During weekends he worked his normal time plus 7 hours from his other job. All in all he worked for 57 hours a week. His monthly salary was R60 for working in sugar-cane fields and R20 for herding cattle. All this translated to 53c per hour or R3.18 a day. Mandlakhe was very grateful to the family where he herded cattle for they provided him with food and shelter. The entire R80 he earned was given to his mother leaving him with nothing. Mandlakhe's job in the sugar-cane fields had negative health implications for him as he developed a rash.

At times, he was looked down upon and called degrading names by his classmates because of his work.

His salary was too little for the needs of his family and he, therefore, had to move to the city for better wages. He is presently working in a hardware store during the weekends and holidays. He earns R30, working 7 hours a day and this translates to R4 an hour. This amount is R10 less than that earned by the older men. Though this job pays better than the one in the rural area, he still thinks he must get more than this. This job is difficult for they lift heavy building material for the whole day. It is also very dusty as they also load cement and sand. He suspected that his contraction of the tuberculosis virus was related to this job. He had to be away from school for a number of weeks but was always present at the very same job. He also mentioned that the job is dangerous. He was once badly injured in this job. The dangers faced by working children are unbearable. The most awful point highlighted here is the disappearance of a child without any trace as the case of Mandlakhe's brother demonstrates.

Academic Performance

Mandlakhe's academic record is not a pleasing one. He repeated Grades 1, 4, 9, and 11. In the first 3 instances he blamed himself for not paying attention to his schoolwork. In Grade 11 he knew before examinations were written that he was going to fail. He gave a number of reasons for this. Because of his sickness he spent more than a month away from school at the beginning of the year. He does not have time to devote to his schoolwork as he is always preoccupied with his own family problems. At times he does not even understand what is being taught at school. He failed to do homework. He failed Grade 11 in 2001 and repeated it for the second time in 2002. Even this second time around he knew he was going to fail again. He perceives the welfare grant for his mother as the only way to ease his problems. He believes that he would be able to concentrate to his studies with lesser financial responsibility from home. Mandlakhe's story also paints a bleak

picture of the exploitation of children during the political struggle in South Africa. It shows how political rivalry exposed children to life-threatening situations.

6.3 Sipho: Hidden But Not Forgotten

Though I was born in Durban, I was taken back to the farm in Pietermaritzburg when I was only five-years-old. I was given to my mother's younger sister. When I was 6-years-old she took me to school. She bought me a school uniform and paid for my school fees. I became part of this family. I was treated as their little boy. I was never discriminated against even when traditional rituals were performed. My aunt's in-laws accepted me fully. Her husband was working in Johannesburg. He used to come back during the December holidays. My aunt and her husband had three older children who were all married by the time I joined the family. Their elder son was working too. At home I stayed with my aunt only during the course of the year.

As I got older, I realised that in fact I was working for this family. I herded cattle for them. I started this job at the age of 6. They took care of me. I had to take the cattle to the hill for grazing every morning before going to school. In the afternoon I had to look after them and take them back home. On Wednesdays I had to take the cattle to the dip. On such days I used to wake up as early as 4.30 in the morning. I would come back and take them back to the hill before going to school. This process was time consuming and tiring. Matters got worse when I started secondary school. The reason for this was that the school was far away from home. The Wednesday activities resulted in my coming late to school. This time I felt that I was abused somehow. My academic performance started to drop. In the primary school I used to get good grades but here in secondary school things were different. Relations between my uncle, my aunt's husband, and myself soured because of this. Teachers were complaining about both my late-coming as well as my poor performance. I had no choice as I was working and this family was doing everything for me. My life depended on them and no one else.

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The resultant frustration drove me to drugs. I started sniffing glue. This I used to cheer myself up and forget about my problems for the moment. As time went on I was introduced to dagga. This time teachers stopped saying anything to me as they used to. I started bunking classes, and on some days I did not go to school at all. We used to stay and smoke dagga. We bought it from some Basotho women who used to come to the farm to sell dagga. I had no problem in financing my habit. I was a small businessman already. I was a shoemaker as well as a haircut stylist after hours. The eldest son of my aunt bought me both the needles for sewing shoes as well as a haircut set. I would work till very late at night repairing shoes. I needed money for dagga. During the day I used to look after the cattle as well as taking care of my hair cut business. My business was doing fine because back at farm schools all learners both girls and boys were wearing short hair. For secondary school learners no one was prepared to have his\her hair cut by a pair of scissors, as was the case with young children. If there were many shoes to repair I used to bunk classes and do the job. This happened when I was doing Grades 8 and 9. I failed Grade 8 and had to it repeat the next year.

One day as I was returning from the hill my aunt related some bad news to me. She told me that I was accused of raping a mentally retarded girl. I was shocked by this news, as I was innocent. Everything became black and I felt as if my mind was deserting me. The story was that a boy from a big white house raped the girl. There were other houses in the area fitting this description but all fingers pointed at my house. Things were hard for me. I was treated badly by many people in the area. I ran short of words on this issue as they insisted that it was me. No one was willing to listen to my side of the story. Even my family believed that I did it. They had to pay a fine of some sort. They explained to me that they had to pay to protect me from being killed. They sent some goats to the girl's family who insisted that they also wanted some cattle. Though some members of the community did not believe these allegations I was really hurt. For the first time in my life my mother came into the picture. She had to go with my aunt to apologise

for what had happened to the girl's family. I later learnt that the rapist was in fact the girl's uncle who was of my age. They were all staying together. What frustrated me further was the fact that they did not bother to apologise to me, instead they kept quiet. This boy was not attending school. We are enemies with him even now.

After all this I fell sick, having contracted what is known as "isichitho". This happens when a person is bewitched. He would have lice everywhere on his body where there is hair, more particularly in the private parts. When afflicted by this illness no one likes you. One experiences bad luck. The sight of your face would anger some people. My mother took me to a traditional healer who gave me something which helped temporarily. One day my uncle, who by then had retired and was then staying with us, discovered that some cattle were missing. This was not the first time that such a thing had happened. This time he was very angry. He was a person who knew how to use corporal punishment effectively. He used his stick to hit me and I had to run for my life. He chased me away forever this time. I was ordered not to return to his house ever. I stayed with my mother who by then was back from Durban in the house belonging to the man she was married to. I stayed there looking after my brother who was mentally challenged.

By this time I was 18-years-old. It was during this time that I gathered information about myself. My mother was married to a certain man. They have 4 children, 2 of whom were twin brothers. Her husband passed away and my mother got involved with my father. My father has the same surname as that of the couple who raised me. They were not related. I believe I was taken to the farm to be hidden from my mother's in-laws from her late husband. My mother also wanted me to be raised by people with the same surname as my father. I had to maintain her late husband's surname, as is a tradition when you are born after the death of a husband. My biological father did not do anything for me and I was not even given a chance to know him. Up to this day I am still puzzled by the fact that I was separated from my mother at such a tender age. I had to work for

myself as if I had no one. I was only reunited with the rest of my family at the age of 18.

In 1999 my mother took me to Kwa Mashu and for the first time in my life I joined my other siblings. My sister took me to my present school where I was admitted to a Grade 10 class. There I was, a boy from the farm coming to a township. I started doing my own things. I met boys of my type who smoke dagga. I play soccer here at school; I also play for a community team. This is a very demanding sport. I have to go for practice for both clubs. At school at times soccer involvement disturbs my studies, as there are instances where we have to practice during school hours. We are taken away from class whilst others are continuing with their schoolwork. Teachers not involved in sport teach while we are not there. They do not sympathise with us even though we are playing for the school. They even tell us when we come back that we are to pass playing soccer. One of the lady teachers is always making a joke about soccer players. She says that while other learners would be looking for their results in the front page of the newspaper, soccer players would be busy with the soccer log at the back of the newspaper. Our names will not appear in the front page for results. In fact, I used to play soccer back at the farm. There is something very remarkable about my two coaches. Back at the farm we used to smoke dagga with our coach when preparing for matches. Here I was caught two times smoking dagga by the coach who warned me to stop. This particular coach was different. He encouraged me to exercise intensively that I do not even remember when I stopped smoking. I was always at the gym. I did not get time for my dagga friends. I do not think I will ever forget my coach. When I visited my friends back at the farm, the moment they learnt that I was no longer smoking, our friendship ended.

I became so much interested in girls that I forgot about my schoolwork. I failed Grade 10 and had to repeat yet another class. As a bonus, I also became a father. The mother of my child had completed her matriculation when she fell pregnant. My sister had to pay damages for me. This is a tradition whereby a man pays a

certain amount of money for making a girl pregnant. I am presently selling sweets at school. There are girls working for me. I pay them on commission i.e. per number of packets sold. I buy my stuff from the Kwa Mashu-Phoenix junction. I like my business, but like any other business there are problems. At times the school breaks up early without any prior knowledge from our side as learners. We are sellers within the school who are counting on a full-day sale for our commodities. When this happens I really become frustrated because I need money. There are days when there are no breaks because a particular teacher is either punishing the class or trying to cover the syllabus. During exams the business ceases as there is no time to sell. When exams are written different grades platoon. Only 2 grades write per session. This decreases the number of customers. Learners also come only on a specific time usually few minutes before they write and leave immediately. There is tension created by uncertainty as to what time the school will break.

There are other problems too. I think my participation in soccer within the school is creating problems for me. There are times when we will be playing against other schools until late in the afternoon. This creates problems for me, as it would be too late for me to buy my stuff. The wholesale closes at about 5 o'clock. I am planning to be a singer one day. On days of soccer I would be late for my music practice, which I do after school before going to the gym. Music is one of the things I am raising money for. There are some financial implications involved before one becomes famous. We as a group are raising money for a demo at the present moment. At home I am running my own table where I sell sweets, cakes as well as ice-blocks. When I am at school my other brother sells for me. He is so good because I get all my money when I come back from school.

I do have regrets in my life. Though the family who raised me paid my school fees and everything it was not enough. I worked for them from the age of 6 until I was 18 only to be chased away when my services were no longer needed. I came out with nothing from such an involvement. It is the usual practice on the farm that if

one herds the cattle, one is paid with calves. By the time you get old you have your own cattle. At the present moment my sister is supplementing what I get. This makes it possible for me to raise my child and buy myself clothes.

6.3.1 Analysis of Sipho's Story

Educational Needs and Cultural Practices

Though child work is associated with poverty and unemployment, Sipho's case is different. He was born after the death of his mother's husband and was given to another family to be raised. It is never mentioned that his mother had any financial problems. She was working at the time and his other brothers were well taken care of. He believes that his mother was trying to hide him from her late husband's family. Being illegitimate separated him from his family for 13 years. He had to start working very early in life at the age of 6. This puzzled him for he believes that there was no need for him to be hidden. According to him, the child born of the widow after the death of the husband belongs to the late husband. This is even more so because he also uses the surname of his mother's late husband. He had to work for relatives so that all his educational needs would be taken care for.

Work Activities

He tended cattle at a very early stage. This was a very time consuming and tiring job. He had to work for 4 hours a day for 4 days a week. On a Wednesday, which was a day for the dip, he worked for 6 hours. During weekends, he worked for 9 hours a day. He worked 40 hours a week in all. This is the job which created problems between him and teachers when he was at a secondary school. The school was far and he was always late. Teachers complained about him in front of other learners. His academic performance dropped. He felt trapped in the situation and responded by bunking classes and later by absenting himself from school altogether. His frustration with work and school did not end in truancy, but he started using drugs (smoking dagga). Drug abuse offered a form of release from

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stress. Dagga is very expensive but he soon found a way of making money. He supplemented tending of cattle for which he was paid nothing, by repairing shoes and started a hair-cutting business. Here, he spent about 2 hours a day on cutting hair. Repairing shoes was done at night. There were days when he could work for the whole night. Business was good in his 2 ventures. He was making enough money to finance his habit. At one stage he was framed for raping a mentally challenged girl. His family failed to protect him because they were not sure. His dagga smoking created a situation where even his own family did not trust him. For them the possibility was there because of his intake of dagga. Sipho's family accepted guilt by paying a fine for him. This saddened him deeply. Eventually, at the age of 18, he was reunited with his brothers and a sister at Kwa Mashu. Here things were different. There was no need for him to work as everything was taken care of, for him. On the contrary he started his business at home. He owns a table in front of his home where he sells chips, sweets, fruit, and ice-blocks. Though he stopped smoking dagga, he has other personal expenses. He is now the father of a baby girl. Even though his sister has paid for all the baby's needs, the desire to be independent still remains with him. At school he sells sweets and there are some girls working for him on a commission basis. He pays them R2 per packet sold. Every morning he delivers his packets of sweets to different classes. He collects his money in the afternoon and his brother helps him when he is participating in sport.

Academic Performance

When he was in the lower grades, he did not experience any problems. It was when he was in secondary school that for the first time he recognised that he was nothing but an ordinary worker. The man of the house (his uncle) was not prepared to listen to his problems relating to school. As indicated earlier, herding cattle was time consuming. He was always late, tired and failed to do his schoolwork properly. His academic performance dropped. He was always in conflict with teachers who eventually decided to ignore him. He repeated Grade 8 as well as Grade 9. There was too much work required for school and no time to

do it. He once tried to reason with his uncle who by then was no longer working but all was in vain. His frustration was further aggravated by the fact that for the first time he realised that he was a slave working for nothing. This family did not care for his academic performance as long as the job was properly done. He was supposed to earn his education, but under such conditions it was clear that his master was not committed to remunerating him fairly. One day one beast went astray. He was punished and chased away. He was once exposed to a sickness called "isichitho". He believed that he was bewitched for working for the same family for such a long time. Part of him would like to believe that this was the reason he was later chased away.

He does not experience any problems with his business at home. There are problems with selling sweets at school. Such problems are related to the functioning of the school. His participation in sport both within and outside school is also impacting negatively on school performance. He is so frustrated with this that he feels the school does not cater for him. The demands of the school through sport put so much pressure on him that he failed to buy stock for his business. Sport activities are not well planned, as at times they are to go for practice during school hours. Teachers who are not involved in sport continue teaching and there is no sympathy for learners participating in sport. Learners participating in sport are punished for not doing work even if they were not there when such work was taught. In Grade 11 all 6 teachers who taught him were not involved in sport. Sipho is good at sport but he sees it as standing in his way. He had doubts whether he would manage in Grade 12 if he passed Grade 11. He knows that he is not brilliant and that he must work harder in order to pass. Sipho feels the family he worked for when he was young exploited him. According to him all cattle herders are given a female calf after a year. Since he worked for 13 years he was supposed to come out with a herd of cattle. He was exploited under the guise of his education. He feels that he lost on both counts of wealth and academic performance.

Future Plans

Sipho would like to be a singer and he wonders whether there is a need for him to have Grade 12 for this. He presently sings with a very promising gospel group. As is the case with many new groups, they are trying to raise funds to make their first cassette. If things go well he will not waste his time in school, but rather pursue his music career. After dropping out of school there are some changes in his plans. The grandmother of his daughter from the mother's side is putting so much pressure on him that he is looking for a job. He would like to do carpentry on a part time basis. He had been offered a number of jobs, but unfortunately he does not have an identity book. He is presently trying to get one.

6.4 *Hle:* Who are my Relatives?

It all started when my father passed away in 1986 and I was given to my paternal aunt (my father's sister) in Kranskop. In 1990 my mother gave birth to another child. She then took me to her own family. Like any other young girl I had to look after her newborn baby. I stayed there with my grandmother who treated me badly. Whenever she was drunk she would hit me. At times she would lock me out of the house. I started school in 1991 when I was 6-years-old. There were times when I had to go to school on an empty stomach. I was not allowed to use soap even if I wanted to bath. Soap was expensive and my mother did not send any money home. My grandmother would ask whose washbasin I was using whenever I tried to wash. If she found me with clothes already washed, my grandmother would throw them in the sand and walk over them. I would be showered with questions such as where do you think this soap came from? Don't you know that your mother does not buy any soap? All this time my mother was working in Durban.

This treatment from my grandmother resulted in my mother taking me to my father's family. I stayed with my paternal grandmother (my father's mother) and my cousins from 1995. At first everything went well until my aunt lost her job in

June of the same year. She came back and stayed with us. Whenever she bought bread she gave it to her children only. I was ordered to eat "phuthu"[19] without any curry for supper. Before going to school it would be porridge without sugar. Again I had a problem of soap. I had to go and collect small pieces of soap leftovers from neighbours who were also tired of my begging. At times I had to go to school very dirty and would be punished by teachers for that. There were instances where teachers would chase me away from school demanding that I go and wash. These were some of the sad days of my life for this would make me so angry and frustrated. There was no soap for me. In December there was a big storm and my granny's house was blown away. We had to stay with my uncle, my father's younger brother.

It was on New Year's Day when I visited my mother who was visiting her family for holidays. I came back at about seven in the afternoon and I went to sleep with my cousins as usual. As I was sleeping I felt something pressing me. I pushed it away and fell asleep again. It felt as if there were voices telling me to wake up. As I tried to wake up there was this thing pressing me down until I was helpless. This time it was difficult to push it away. I was raped. I could see the shadow of a man inside the room with the help of the light from the only small window in the room. At first I was afraid of waking my cousin but eventually I did. I shouted for my grandmother and aunt and this person jumped out of the window. My aunt shouted for my uncle whose house was at a lower level but close by. In that house there was supposed to be my uncle and my other aunt. There was no response. It took quite a time before my uncle responded. He came to where we were sleeping and was informed of what had happened. He looked shocked. When light was put on there were shoes and a man's underwear next to where I was sleeping. My aunt who belonged to the Nazareth church vowed to take those things to her church so that a curse would be cast upon the owner. My uncle who at this time was angry ordered that those items to be left outside for the owner to collect. In

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[18] A Zulu traditional stiff porridge

the morning all the members of the family as well as some neighbours were called to the meeting. There were many people as we are also a big family. My aunt, who was sharing a house with my uncle, confirmed that those shoes belonged to my uncle. His friend indicated that the underwear were also my uncle's. He was sure of this as they bought similar items and he was wearing his. He also explained that my uncle had indicated the previous evening that he did not want to drink too much beer. He indicated to his friend that he had a mission. Finally, my uncle admitted that it was he who raped me. From that day I was very scared of him. It was frightening to be close to him even to meet him in the street.

When I went to my mother and reported the incident, we both cried. After a few days she received a letter from my grandmother asking her to find other accommodation for me. The reason was that her house was blown away by the storm. I had to remain behind as my mother went back to Durban where she worked. I had to get a transfer letter from my school and join my mother. When schools re-opened the principal was not there. My mother organised my accommodation with family. This was the same place where I was raped. I had to go back and stay with the same people. It was very difficult and painful to stay with a person I knew did such a horrible thing to me. I thought he was going to victimise me. On the contrary things went well. Though we were on speaking terms again, he was very rude to me when he was drunk. At times he would attempt to hurt me. The aunt I was staying with at that time got a job and left us alone. There were 3 of us, myself my brother and my cousin whose father was the owner of the house.

In 1996 my uncle's wife came to stay with us. At first life was good but later she turned me into her domestic servant. I had to wash and iron clothes for her child. Every morning before going to school I had to bath and feed the child. At times when I came back from school she would lock herself in her room. She developed a tendency of not talking to me. The school was far away. I had to leave home at 6.30 am and return at 4.00 p.m. Because of this it was not possible at times to do

my job. On such occasions she would be very cross with me. In 1998 she went to stay with her husband in Pinetown. I was left to look after her child. They used to send us money for food and everything.

In June 1998 the child became sick and his mother took him to Pinetown. We were left alone and there was no money sent for us in July. The uncle, who raped me, also got a job and left. We had to move from house to house begging for food. At times we slept without eating anything. My brother went to stay with my mother's family and I was all by myself. It was at this very crucial period that I was ordered out of the house. I received a letter from my uncle's wife telling me to pack all her things properly and lock the house. It was indicated in the letter that I was to find my own place. I had nowhere to go and I remained in the house. I stayed there until my half-sister from my elder uncle took me to her family. I stayed there until she also turned against me. There were times when she did not speak to me. We used to fight with her other sisters, as is the case with all other children. It was in September when my aunt who had been there when I was raped, visited us. She ordered me and another girl to sleep alone in another house. We were still sitting with the door open when my half-brother emerged and stood in the middle of the doorway. He then went to his room and came back with some sweets. He gave me more sweets than his sister. He asked me to write him a letter because I had good handwriting. He asked me to come to his bedroom, as this was a personal letter to his girlfriend. He objected when I called his sister to join us. He asked me to sit on his bed. As I was writing I sensed that the letter was about me. He started touching me as I was writing. He locked the door and gave me R10. He asked me to sleep with him. I had to fight. I reached for a pillow and threw it hard to his face and jumped out of the bed He reached for me and he raped me. At last I managed to unlock the door and ran away to report this.

When this was investigated my half-brother refused to come to my aunt's house. I went through the same experience as that with my uncle. I was very frightened and this time I felt that they were going to kill me. I started questioning myself

why is it that my male relatives raped me? Why have my female relatives become my enemies including my own mother? It was because of such thoughts that I concluded that no one cared for me. When I thought of my mother, I felt that I was nothing in this world I started to question my mother's love for me. I blamed her for the second rape by my half-brother. I saw the days of my life coming to an end. I concluded that the easiest way out to end my life was to drink petrol. This was the only way I could free myself. I was ready with the plastic container of petrol when I listened to the radio. It was 7.30 when a priest on Radio Ukhozi said something like, "God has an aim for each and everyone of us. All that we need to do is to give our entire problems to him. He will put us to rest". I bent my knees there and then, and prayed. I put the petrol container away. I was frightened by the fact that I heard this as I was planning to end my life. When I woke up in the morning my grandmother informed me that she dreamt that I was committing suicide. She asked me not to even think about it.

I finished writing exams (Std 6 / Grade 8) on Thursday. The following Tuesday I woke up early, cleaned the house, packed my things and left. I took the money left by my sister and told the children that I will be visiting my friend. I took a taxi to Kranskop and from there another one to Stanger, and lastly another to Umlazi in Durban. I did not know where I was going. I took a taxi to C-section where I ended up walking with a woman who happened to be the last person in the taxi. I asked her for overnight accommodation. She showed me another house where I could ask for help. After I told them that I was going to my mother in Kwa Mashu, they said that I must go to the police station. I left their house and took a taxi to town then to Pietermaritzburg. I knew that one of my aunts was staying there. She was a street vendor in town. It was 5.30 p.m when I arrived there and I was lucky enough to find her in seconds.

We went together to her home in the township. My aunt has a daughter of my age. Everything went well at first. It was towards Christmas when my aunt from Kranskop visited. She told her sister all that happened back home and how I left. I

stayed there until the beginning of the year. My aunt had earlier on promised to take me back to school. Things changed when she told me that it was no longer possible. There was no money. Towards the end of January an old woman that used to send me on errands offered to take me back to school. She took me to a high school nearby, bought me a uniform and paid the school fees. All that I had to do was to help her here and there at her home. As I was staying with my aunt, things changed again. At times there were misunderstandings between my aunt's daughter and I. We used to sleep in the dining room.

One evening as we were sleeping I felt some one sleeping next to me. When I raised my head he ran and hid behind the sofa. I pretended to be sleeping so as to see who it was. My aunt has two boys who are twins and it was one of them. I did not tell my aunt that morning for I feared he was going to hurt me. We were alone while his mother was at work. I told the old woman's daughter who advised me to tell my aunt. When I told her in the afternoon she became very angry. She said her son was just watching T V. She chased me away from her house. She went to the old woman next door and told her to take me if she needed me. I was no longer welcome to her house. I had to stay with this old woman whom I called granny. She did everything for me in return for my domestic services. The only problem was her daughter who used to insult me whenever she was drunk. At times she assaulted me, but soon I got used to that.

In 1999 I visited my sister in Kranskop. I returned shortly before school re-opened in the year 2000. I was entering Grade 10. Granny stopped paying my school fees, as well as buying me exercise books. I negotiated with teachers to be re-admitted even if my fees were not paid. I used my own ways to find money for exercise books. In October granny sent me to town. I was asked to pay her furniture installments. In fact she used to send me, as she could not send her daughter. She realised that she would buy alcohol with the money. We were preparing for exams in our school. We divided ourselves into groups as we used to study in the afternoon. I was given R200 by granny. Some fraudsters touched

me on my shoulder and told me some stories and then hoodwinked me. The next thing I discovered as I crossed the robots was that the money was missing. I cried and was so frustrated that I tried to get in front of a speeding car to end my life there and then. Fortunately the driver noticed me. I knew that was the end of me. I went back to my study group at school. I tried to study, but failed and told my classmates what happened. They knew my condition and they all empathised with me. They prayed for me as I went home to face granny. I did not go straight to the house. I had to wait for granny at the taxi stop. It was 6.00 p. m. when she arrived. I wished I had died at that moment. I told her what happened. She was so angry that she behaved like a mad person. When we were inside the house she made it clear that she wanted her money. Her daughter called me all sorts of names and no one believed my story. I did not eat or sleep that evening. I was insulted for the whole night and I cried all night long.

Back to school the following day my friends need not have asked what had happened. The swollen red eyes told the whole story. I remained behind crying as they all went for assembly. They informed my class teacher what had happened and she promised to phone my granny. When I arrived back that afternoon I was told not to touch anything not even food. The following day my class teacher asked me to take her to where granny was working. I explained to her that she was going to create a scene. Eventually, she phoned and asked granny not to make me pay the money. My teachers then went home to talk to the daughter who greeted them with insults. They were so patient with her that at the end she listened to them. We started our exam on the 9th of October. I was so disturbed that I forgot all that I had learnt for exams. I tried my best up to the end of the exams. I was not given the school fees owed to the school. I begged my principal to give me my report, as I was not supposed to get it without paying the school fees. He gave it to me and fortunately, I passed. When I showed my report at home they became angry. Granny said I embarrassed her by telling teachers that she failed to pay school fees for me. They were very bitter and they stopped talking to me. Life became difficult for me. Every now and then the issue of money

*was raised. It was clear that I was no longer needed but I had no money to go. I
did braiding until I had enough money. They were not happy when I told them
that I was going to my mother in Durban.*

*I joined my mother in 2001. For the first time in my life I had to stay with her. My
step-father proved to be a problem from the outset. When I tried to study, he
would call me and discuss his problems with my mother. He made noise and slept
as late as 11p.m. daily. This noise irritated me so much that during June I asked
permission to visit my uncle in Pinetown. I went with my brother. It was Saturday
and I was supposed to return on Tuesday the following week. I was asked to stay
longer as my uncle's wife needed someone to look after the children. She was
attending a traditional function back at the farm. I did not see any problem, as it
was the holidays. Unfortunately on Saturday it rained and I returned home on
Sunday. My step-father was there when I arrived. At first he ignored me and
bought himself some beer. They were drinking with some other patrons. After
everyone had left he asked my mother whether she had asked me where I was
from. My mother indicated that she was not going to ask me anything. All that she
wanted was for me to take my things and go. My step-father stressed that I should
do as my mother said. I took my bag and left· I was a few kilometres away when
they sent my brother to call me back. My step-father started asking me where I
was. I told him that I was in Pinetown. He demanded that I give him some proof
so I gave him my uncle's cell number, which he tore into pieces. He invited me to
sit next to him. My mother gave him an electric cord. He finished his beer first.
He pulled me by the neck and pushed me against the headboard. He pushed my
head in between his legs repeatedly hitting me with the electrical cord. He then
pulled me with my hair and kept on banging my head against the wall. He pushed
me to the floor and jumped over my ear. This took some time and my mother
complained that it was not enough. He then put his feet on my back and started to
strangle me. There was a moment when I could not breathe and my brother cried,
pulling him away from me. My step-father ordered them to light a candle. He
pulled up the T-shirt I was wearing. He started burning me with the candle on my*

back. He only stopped when he realised that I was totally powerless and struggling to breathe because of the pain. Whenever I tried to cry my mother would say I was making a noise.

At times I even doubted that she was my real mother. I am fully responsible for myself. I sell sweets at school and at home and I also do braiding. My mother runs a shebeen from her two-roomed house. One room is used as her bedroom and the kitchen. In the other room there are few things, that is, a fridge and my bed. This is where customers drink their beer. I do my homework in my mother's bedroom if it is not busy. At first my mother used to stay with her customers and I slept in her bedroom until they were gone. But things changed. Later, my mother slept early leaving me to sell alcohol till very late in the evening. Customers used my bed as a sofa. Usually males are patrons here. They would drink till very late. Though we are supposed to close at 9.00 p. m. some days they leave very late. I sell from afternoon till very late at night and early in the morning. Customers woke me up as early as 4.45 in the morning at times. They come to drink before going to work. They are there until 7.00 a. m. I experience problems as I am expected to clean the house before going to school. At times it is not easy for me to bath before going to school, as there is no privacy and space. My own mother treats me like a domestic worker. She does nothing. I do ironing and washing for the whole family. I was very fortunate to get a job in the nearby industrial area at a garage though I only work there during holidays.

I have been changing schools. This is my fourth school. I would like to be a chemical engineer and I am prepared to work hard for this. My only problem is that I am not good in English. I know that I am a hard worker. I have been through hard times in my life. I do not want to look back ever in my life. My wish is to finish the very last Grade I am left with in high school, which is Grade 12 and this is the key to my future.

6.4.1 Analysis of Hle's Story

Family Background and Culture

Parental neglect is cited as the cause of working. Hle blamed her mother for all that happened as her father passed away when she was young. She was given to a number of relatives to be raised. In the process Hle had to pay by working for them. She suffered a lot at the hands of such relatives. There were instances when she was chased away from school to go and wash herself. Her mother was working but did not bother about her welfare. It was under such conditions that there were rapes and an attempted rape on her by male relatives. The first perpetrator who was always drunk decided to be sober on that day. He planned everything.

Neglect is also witnessed when her mother sent her back to the same family after all that happened. Hle was very frustrated, but could do nothing. Her frustration was worsened when her half-brother raped her again. This time she wanted to commit suicide. She felt helpless. Lastly, she ran away from home to Pietermaritzburg. According to her perception, other male relatives like to try their luck on you once they learn about other rapes. She believed that in her case whenever her aunt, who was there when she was first raped, visited, the same thing would happen. She thinks that maybe her aunt's telling of the story in all incidents motivated the perpetrators. She kept on wondering why is it that her relatives are the ones who raped her.

Her mother was indifferent to her suffering. When Hle eventually turned to her for help, she incited her boyfriend to physically abuse her. Her own mother treated her like a slave. Hle's mother was worse than many other people she had worked for. At least her school needs were taken care of by others while in her mother's case, she had to work for nothing. Hle had to take care of herself financially.

Work Activities

She started working as a child-minder of her younger brother. She was a surrogate mother as the mother was working far away. She remained with a child. Her mother failed to support them financially. She was left with a very abusive grandmother. She was punished for her mother's failure to send money home. Her second job was with her uncle's family. She was a domestic worker and looked after the child. She experienced some problems with this job too. The school was far. She had to leave home as early as 6.30 in the morning and return home at 4.00 p.m. This created a very bad relationship between her and the uncle's wife who made it clear that her work must be properly done irrespective of the needs of her schoolwork. She was not paid anything except food, shelter, and school fees. At one stage she was left with the baby on her own. The parents of the baby used to send them money for food every month. Unfortunately, the baby fell sick and her aunt had to take the baby with her to Pinetown. She then begged for food from neighbours. Hle was then thrown out of the house.

After running away from home to Pietermaritzburg she worked for an old woman that paid for her school fees and provided shelter and food for her. Though working conditions were not bad, the old woman's daughter was very abusive when she was drunk. Hle had to put up with that, as she had nowhere to go. Lastly, she worked for her mother who did nothing to help as far as school needs were concerned. She did all the household work before and after school. She also sells alcohol for her mother from as early as 5 o'clock in the morning until midnight as long as patrons are still there. She is also responsible for making orders for alcohol, which is done in Kwa Mashu crossroads section, which is about 5km from her home. Hle has other jobs done. She is selling sweets within the school and outside school. She also does braiding at school and outside school.

Academic Performance

Though she had been exposed to difficult situations for most of her school life Hle had never repeated any grade. She is a very hard working and determined learner who even after running away from home found herself another school and family to pay for her. In Grade 11 she was one of the top 5 in her class. Unfortunately she dropped out of school after the first term in Grade 12.

6.5 Thando: Days are Always Dark for Me

When my mother took me to school, I was very excited. I was under the impression that school fees would be paid at the end of the month. To my surprise, my father did not send any money. My mother left us with my grandparents and went to Durban where my father was employed. He worked at Mount Edgecombe. My mother too never returned. The school demanded its fees. Other children promised to pay at the end of the month. For me with parents who decided not to come back things were difficult. There was a tendency for teachers to punish those who failed to pay. I was always a victim of such practice. When I was sent to the principal's office one morning, I knew what was going to happen to me. I decided to run back home and that was my last day at school. My sister continued going to school and neighbours gave her an old school uniform. She had to turn it inside out as its colour was fading. She used the strings from cabbage bags to sew it. It did not take long before my sister also dropped out of school as well. We had no one to pay school fees for us. We stayed home for the whole year. My sister was doing Grade 5 by then. She went to work in the sugar-cane fields. When my mother returned, she found us not attending school. The following year my father returned too and he was no longer working, as he was very sick. We all depended on my grandparents. The family expanded as my mother gave birth to three more children. There were 6 of us then. My sister got married at a very early age.

It was 1991 that my aunt found a job for me in Durban. I worked as a child-minder. I was paid R40 a month. Half of this money was sent back home and what

remained was used to buy my clothes. The following year my aunt decided to send me back to school. I was doing Grade 3 when I returned home and my aunt was paying my school fees. At that time my mother was working in the sugar-cane fields and she was earning R3 a day. I started working for myself I would ask for odd jobs from teachers at school. I worked as a domestic servant and also provided gardening services. There was no agreed upon salary with teachers. They gave me whatever they felt was reasonable. Teachers took care of me. Some treated me as their own child. During the holidays I worked at the sugar-cane fields and was paid R100 for the whole period of about 3 to 4 weeks. The money I received from all these activities was used for my school fees and cosmetics.

In 1996 one of my teachers recommended that I be allowed to skip a grade. The reason was that my performance was excellent. I moved from Grade 4 to Grade 6. I stayed with the same teacher who motivated for my promotion. She was very caring but her husband was very bad. He used to complain, whenever I made tea for my teacher. One day something went wrong with the kettle. He shouted at me saying some horrible things. Things became worse as my teacher fell sick. The husband fell in love with their domestic worker. One day my teacher was very sick at school and was taken to hospital. Some teachers came home to report this and they talked to me. There was a belief that the domestic worker bewitched her. I gave my teacher's husband the message on his arrival from work. At first things looked normal until at night. I was ordered to sit next to him and the domestic worker was asked to bring a knobkerrie. He hit me on my knees repeatedly asking me to tell the truth about his wife. The domestic worker was so excited and she was insisting that I knew something. She indicated that she saw me discussing something with the teacher before she went to school that morning. He pushed me to his bed and inserted edges of a piece of paper into my eyes. This was unbearably painful. I cried but no one came to rescue me. This was a real entertainment for the domestic worker. The children, who were also crying at the top of their voices, begged their father to stop, this saved me. The following day I had to leave very early, as I was hurt and it was not easy to walk. I had no choice

as we were writing examinations. I had to go. My teacher never returned to her husband. She phoned her friend to take care of me. I had to move to another house again. At last my teacher came and took me to Swaziland with her to her relatives. She instructed her relatives to take me to school when school re-opened. Unfortunately for me, she never returned.

I became a slave of this family, as I had to fetch wood from a very dark forest. I depended on the neighbours for survival. I was no longer at school. One day a certain couple from Durban visited my neighbours. They asked them to give me a lift back home. I was home within days. I was shocked when I went to school to find the teacher who left me in Swaziland and she was working as usual. She was very embarrassed to see me. I later learnt that other teachers confronted her about this. She indicated that she was angered by the fact that I had a boyfriend in Swaziland. This was a lie.

In 1998 I went to a high school and my grandfather paid for my school fees and uniform. Unfortunately he passed away on the 28th of January the same year. I had to sell sweets at school to make ends meet. It was not difficult since my grandfather had paid my school fees for the whole year. My mother went back to work leaving me with children to look after. There was so much involved in this. When I was in Grade 9, 3 men raped me. It was during holidays and the children had visited my grandmother. I was alone at home. I felt someone touching me. At first I thought it was my brother who by then had dropped out of school and was working. He used to come home late and had to wake me up for his food. It turned out not to be him, but 3 men who suddenly appeared from nowhere. They raped me taking turns. It was extremely painful. I started blaming myself. From that day onwards I am never free when I am alone at home. I reported this to my class teacher after the holidays. The matter was taken to the principal and I was given permission to remain at home until I was feeling better. It was only after 3 weeks that my aunt took me to the doctor. That was the worse day of my life. The doctor discovered that I was pregnant. I had to undergo an abortion. Even now I still see

myself as a murderer who killed her own child. I so wish that all males could be made aware of the consequences of such actions. Rape makes you lose your dignity. When it is time for you to fall in love it comes back and haunts you. You feel dirty again. There is something weird about me. Good things are short-lived and bad ones are dominating my life.

After all this my aunt decided to take me with her to Kwa Mashu. I had problems in dealing with what happened. I feared that those men would come again for me. It was not possible at first to move away as my mother had a stroke after the rape. It was only last year (2000) that I moved in with my aunt. There was an improvement in my mother's condition. I started Grade 11 at my present school at the beginning of 2001. I experienced problems right from the beginning, as my aunt is self-employed. She is selling cooked food at the Field street taxi rank in town. I started selling sweets again at school. This has helped me with my cosmetics and school needs. I struggle to pay school fees, as profits are low. Learners also buy on credit. I provide domestic services for my aunt and I am treated like any other worker. I exchange my services for food and shelter. I work before and after school until very late in the evening. No one ever bothers whether I get time for my schoolwork or not, as long as all the work is done. I cannot join other learners at school in the afternoon and study. My aunt always reminds me that I am working and that learning is my business with which she has nothing to do. I am expected to work for her and look after her children, as she is always not at home. On Saturdays I work at her stall in town while she relaxes at home. I do my daily duties very early in the morning before going to town. I cook and sell food in the street. For all this I am not paid anything. At one stage my aunt took me to a sangoma because I did not make enough money selling food at her table on four successive Saturdays. The sangoma[21] confirmed that I had bad luck because I did something horrible. My aunt told her about the

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[21] a traditional healer

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abortion. I had to work for money for a cleansing ceremony, which took place at my aunt's place.

At the beginning of 2002 my mother passed away. This devastated me, as we are very poor at home. Teachers contributed money for me to go to the funeral. Things were so bad that no one had money to bury her. My ex-teacher paid for all funeral expenses. I left my brother and my younger sisters alone at home. My married sister took 2 of them to live with her family. The other children remained at home begging from relatives for food. Unfortunately my sister's husband chased the 2 girls away. One of them dropped out of school and the other is working for the same teacher I used to work for and is still at school. It is surprising that though my sister's husband failed to keep my 2 younger sisters, he applied for a welfare grant as a foster parent for all my siblings. The chances are that they are getting some money every month. This angered other relatives who provide food for the children and they are threatening to stop. I am going to see them for the first time this December (2002) after the death of my mother. The teachers gave me some money to visit home during the June holidays but my aunt refused to let me go. She borrowed the money and did not pay it back. This year in Grade 12 I encountered a number of problems. Teachers indicated that they were not going to entertain learners who sell during school hours. They said such learners spend much of their time selling and not learning. This was a blow in my face. I had to work for some teachers during weekends if my aunt allows it. I am paid R30 a day for domestic services. My aunt's attitude changed totally as I am doing Grade 12. She became very angry whenever she finds me with books. I suspect that jealousy has something to do with this as her son failed Grade 11 and dropped out of school. My classmates and teachers are aware of the situation as my academic performance is dropping. My very close friend accompanies me home some afternoons. She helps me with my duties so that I can get time to do my schoolwork before my aunt arrives. My Biology teacher had decided to let me stay with her during exams. She told my aunt that she needed my domestic services as she was also writing UNISA exams. This arrangement has given me a

chance to study for my last year at school. My teacher is prepared to pay my aunt for this.

6.5.1 Analysis of Thando's Story

Educational Needs and Lack of Parental Care

Poverty and parental neglect are highlighted as the reasons for Thando's working. At the very beginning of her school days she was exposed to the harsh realities of poverty and deprivation. Thando's mother left home to look for their father and never returned. She stayed with her husband in Durban leaving the children with very poor grandparents. She failed to pay school fees and was always punished for that. Eventually, she ran away from school. Thando's parents deserted them for more than 3 years. Though the father was working, he did not bother to provide for his children. Thando's sister got married very young and this was the possible solution for them at the time.

Work Activities

Thando dropped out of school in Grade 1 and started looking for a job. She started working as a child-minder at the age of 12. She found this job through her aunt's intervention. She was earning R40 a month half of which was sent home and the remaining half was utilised for her personal needs. The following year her aunt helped her to go back to school. Her aunt's motives were not that noble, though, as she wanted her to be able to write her name only. Grade 3 was enough for that purpose. Thando liked school so she entered another form of work to remain at school. She worked as a domestic worker for teachers who would take turns engaging her services. She did domestic work and gardening. Teachers liked her because her schoolwork was good. They paid her whatever they could afford and she was satisfied with this arrangement. Though she perceived her job positively, she once suffered at the hands of the husband of one of her teachers. This happened when she moved in with the teacher's family as an extra domestic worker. The husband physically and emotionally abused her. She was not paid

any money except that her teacher took care of her school expenses. Thando went to Swaziland where she ended up working as a slave for a particular family. Her education came to a halt. She was not given food and she had to rely on her neighbours for it. Her duties included fetching wood from a very dark forest. When she returned home her grandfather helped her with her school fees. She supplemented this by selling sweets at school. She was now a grown up girl who needed certain personal things. She was able to get these from the profits of selling sweets. During the holiday she would work in the sugar-cane fields where she was paid R100 at the end of holidays. She was involved in cutting and loading sugar-cane in trucks.

Back at home she was responsible for her siblings as her mother was working and staying at the sugar-cane compound. Thando had to work and come back for the children. It was during such occasions that unknown men raped her at her home. She was traumatised and blamed herself for this. Things were made worse by the fact that she fell pregnant. Her pregnancy was terminated but this left a feeling of guilt in her, which haunts her whenever she sees children who were born in the same year. She still feels that she did something wrong by being persuaded to undergo an abortion. After the rape it was difficult for her to be alone at home. She feared that it would happen again. She indicates that men in general need to be told how painful it is for a woman to be raped.

Her aunt took her to Kwa Mashu where she worked for her as a domestic servant. She was paid with food and shelter only. As for school the message was loud and clear that her aunt wanted her to be able to write her name only. Her aunt is not employed and does not care about her education. Whenever Thando wants to do her schoolwork, her aunt always reminds her that she is working there. She works before and after school until very late at night. The only time Thando gets to study is when her friend comes home to help her. On such days she is able to do at least one hour of schoolwork before her aunt arrives. When caught with books her aunt would shout on the top of her voice. Thando continues to work for teachers who

also appreciate her services. The problem is her aunt discourages this by refusing whenever it pleases her to allow her to work. She stopped selling sweets as she is now in Grade 12. Depending on the mood of her aunt she still works for teachers who take her on Fridays. She earns R30 a day. She works on 2 days of the week, on Saturday and Sunday. Her aunt demands half of her earnings.

Academic Performance

Thando is performing well at school, as she has never repeated any grade. She was once given a chance to skip a grade and managed. She is old for her grade as she started school late. Though she has been working all her life, her progress at school is satisfactory. Now she is worried about her Grade 12 performance. She feels that she is not going to achieve good results. This is related to the treatment she gets from her aunt. Thando would like to be a soldier or policewoman. She is very determined to have a career.

6.6 *Thobile*: Is this woman my real mother?

My parents separated when we were very young. My mother ran away with the six of us from Umkhomazi to the Lindelani informal settlement. We later on moved to Kwa Mashu where we stayed in the backrooms of my mother's friend, a certain old woman. This woman treated my mother as her own daughter. We referred to her as granny. When she passed away her children threw us out of the house. My mother got a piece of land from Siyanda informal settlement and built a 2-roomed house for her family. My mother had a baby boy by then. I was only 6-years-old when I had to work as a baby-minder. When all other children of my age had to go to school, I remained at home tasked with the duty of minding the baby. My mother who was a domestic worker at that time, stayed at her employer's home. We were left alone. What was surprising is the fact that all her other children except me were going to school.

One day my mother took me back to my father who registered me at school for the first time at the age of 9. It was very painful for me to see children of my age doing higher grades than I was doing. My father was a small businessman operating from Kwa Makhutha small business centre. He was very concerned about my education. He had high hopes for me. He always reminded me how much he wanted me to be educated. Fortunately, my performance was good. I always attained the first position in class. This used to make him very proud. In return he bought me nice clothes and took me to places. I will never forget life with my father. We were staying alone the 2 of us. He never married again. Though there were girlfriends in his life, I always came first. We stayed in a 2-roomed house. Everything was going well until he fell sick. This was a weird sickness, which lasted for a few minutes, and then he was gone. I was 12-years-old when this happened. It was in the middle of the year, therefore I stayed with the neighbour who was my father's friend for the rest of the year.

At the end of the year my mother took me with her to join others at Kwa Mashu. She had a boyfriend that happened to be the father of my half-brother. My other 2 sisters had children of their own too. This was the beginning of the nightmare. I was treated like a slave. I had to look after 3 children. I was attending a local primary school, which was a distance from home. I had to wake up very early in the morning in order to bath and feed the children and take them to their different pre-schools. I would have to fetch them after school. This was a very tiring and time-consuming process, as their schools were kilometres away from each other. When I returned from school, I had to clean the house and cook. I did the washing and ironing for the entire family. I was always tired. My academic performance dropped from being always in the first position to positions 13 and 14. During the weekdays I only got time for my schoolwork after 10 in the evening. No one was prepared to help· me even by washing dishes after the evening meal.

I was 13-years-old and in Grade 5 when I was raped by an older boy who was then at a high school. Though it was 7 o'clock in the evening, it was dark already

since it was winter. There was this boy who had previously proposed love to me. I had written a letter to him indicating that I was too young for such things. As I was going past some trees he appeared from nowhere. He did not say anything, then pulled me forcefully towards him and pressed my mouth. I was kicked and punched and eventually fell down. He repeatedly raped me. I have never experienced such pain in my entire life. When I got home my sister noticed that my clothes were dirty and full of blood. Though the rapist had advised me not to tell anyone, saying no one would believe me, I told her what had happened. I was instructed not to wash myself and it was very difficult to sleep in such a dirty state. When my mother arrived in the morning she was told of what had happened. She made a joke about my clothes that she thought that someone was stabbed. I was taken to a community councillor. I was paraded in front of many people in dirty clothes and I smelled like a rotten piece of meat. People were saying horrible things about me. I was blamed for the whole incident. It was said that I was an embarrassment as I wrote letters to boys. I was branded a troublemaker who had just arrived in the area to label their boys rapists.

When my mother was given a chance to speak, she only claimed a goat from the boy's family. This surprised me, as it was as though I had been in love with the boy. The only thing wrong was that he slept with me. She told me in front of other people that I was then nothing because I had decided to lose my virginity at such a tender age. My mother was very calm and cool throughout the whole meeting. She did not look like a woman whose daughter had been raped. The boy's grandmother was angered by my mother's reaction. She questioned the type of a mother she was. She told her that the boy's mother was not working and it was not possible for her to buy the goat. I did not go to any doctor or police station and the case was not reported. No one showed any sympathy for me at home. I was told not to phone any relative about this especially my brother from Umlazi. My mother's only worry was the possibility that I might be pregnant. When it become apparent that I was not pregnant, life went on as usual at home. The boy who raped me is now involved in crime.

In 1996 political violence erupted in Kwa-Mashu and many people were killed. My mother feared for our lives. My sister and I were sent to KwaNdebele where we had to look after my aunt's house. All her children were grown up and she was employed in Johannesburg. She returned home only during Christmas periods. We were on our own the two of us for the rest of the year. The agreement was that both my aunt and mother were to support us by taking turns in sending us money. Unfortunately my mother failed to send us anything. It was only my aunt who sent us money but she eventually got fed up. We had a very hard time as we had nothing to eat. My sister, who had no problem in having many boyfriends at the same time, provided for both of us. She would ask for money to buy food from all those men. I was always by myself during the night as my sister was always out. I was lonely and I ended up falling in love with a certain boy. I was 15 by then.

I had a very difficult time with my sister boasting to my boyfriend that I was still a virgin and that he was the first. This is a very difficult situation when you were once raped as a child. You have many questions that you cannot ask anyone. Fortunately my boyfriend did not find out the truth about me. My mother sent us money to come back home.

I attended an Indian school in Newlands. I had a problem as no one was prepared to buy me the school uniform. At home I am always the last person to be given whatever is needed in school. At last my brother from Umlazi bought me one. I do not remember who paid my school fees but they were paid. We walked to school though it was a distance from home. I met and fell in love with a certain boy on my way to school. The affair did not last long as I became pregnant and he dumped me. I fell in love with another boy who was not aware that I was pregnant. He introduced me to his parents. He was really in love with me. When it was obvious that I was pregnant I took my mother to his parents to report my pregnancy. He admitted the paternity of the child to be his. After my baby boy was born, I took him to my latest boyfriend's place. Everything was going smooth

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*before people started saying things about the whole issue. Sooner than I expected
the biological father came to claim his child. He was not working and his family
was not prepared to support the child. I became the sole provider for my child. I
had to raise him alone. I had to work for him to survive. He was one of those
babies who was sick every now and then. I often took him to the doctor.*

*I worked full time in the "Mr Phones" container. I used to take my son with me to
work. We used to leave very early in the morning because my work started from
5.45 a.m. All the money I earned there was used for the child. In 1999 I stopped
working as I wanted to go back to school but it did not work. My mother asked me
who was going to support the baby. She stressed that I work for my child and that
no one else was going to help. I had to look for another job from the neighbours. I
was prepared to do anything to support my child. I got a job as a domestic
servant for a certain teacher who was a bachelor. People started making up
stories, as he was living alone. He eventually asked me to work for his sister too.
His sister stayed in another section of the township. To me this was a sign that I
was no longer needed. Besides I had reservations working for females. They are
usually not satisfied and it was not going to be possible to work in two houses,
which were kilometres apart. I got another job in a container closer to home. At
first there was noise about this job as the owner did not want people from the
neighbourhood to work for him. My eldest sister intervened by saying she did not
want me to work for neighbours and she promised to take me to school. She was
getting money for her children and I was sent back to school. I was admitted in
Grade 10 at my present school in the year 2000. My sister also took care of my
child by buying him clothes. The school fees were paid in half and the school
uniform bought. I took my child to be looked after by his father's grandmother
who runs a pre-school in the area. I do not pay except to bring the child with food
to school. When my mother heard all this, she confronted us vowing that she was
not going to be involved. She was not to be bothered with any of this.*

Unfortunately the source of money for one of my sisters' children dried out. My sister depended on selling some small items in the informal sector. She told me that there was no money to help me with my studies. I tried to get my job back from the teacher but failed. I started selling sweets at school. The problem is that profits are very low and there is always a temptation of using all the money at once. This money does help. As my child is now older there is no need to buy milk for him. He eats whatever is available at home. I am presently working for my other sister by looking after her child. I do everything for her and she pays me. At times she buys me some other needed items like school shoes. I take the child to the pre-school every morning and pick him up after school. I also look after my mother's child. I always have problems of famine with these children. Both my mother and sister do not leave anything for the children when they go to work. At home there is only one meal available a day and that is the evening meal. In the morning I cook porridge for the children. The problem is when I come back from school I must provide what is to be eaten by the 3 children. I buy bread with whatever I get from selling sweets at school. When the business is not good I fail to buy bread. I usually lock myself at home and let children play outside. This is how I ignore them when they are hungry. At times we all cry if I did not get anything.

At school when the afternoon bell rings everyone is happy to go home except me. I look at my classmates and wish to be them. They are going home to eat while I have to provide food for the children and myself. The money I get is also used to pay for my school needs. I still have a problem, as my school fees for this year are not yet paid. I remember that last year I ended up paying half of the school fees. I explained everything to my class teacher with the hope that he was to tell my new class teacher about my position. Unfortunately this did not happen.

I was hurt this year when one of the teachers came to our classroom with the list of all those who had not paid school fees. Other learners were very surprised to learn that I was also on the list. One of the reasons for their behaviour is the

tendency of many people to assume that those who perform better are from well-to-do families. The family background of one is not written in one's face. Other learners on the list promised to pay. I remember one girl who easily told him that her boyfriend was going to give her the money at the end of the month. I was the only one who did not say anything. I asked to talk to him privately. He had no time for me, but asked me to come early the following day to his office. I did that and explained everything to him. I also told him that I was not in the position to leave school as I had big plans for my life. He asked me about my mother. I was angered by the question on whether I had a child. I knew where this was leading. He concluded that that was the reason why my mother could not pay my school fees. He asked me to tell him how I was to raise money to pay. I explained to him that I was a member of a club where learners pay each other R20 a month. He was going to inform the principal about my case. I was surprised when my class teacher called me out again. I went back to the teacher who promised to inform my class teacher. As we were writing exams I had to go to him again to plead for my report to be released as I was having problems in raising the money. He indicated clearly that I was selling sweets within the school and also a member of a club therefore there was no reason for not paying. I tried to explain that I failed to pay for two members and I was left out, the reason is that there is so much that must be done with my income. It is not that school fees are not important, but no one can ignore starvation.

When I told my Grade 10 class teacher about my situation, I suspect that he discussed it with others. The reason for this is the fact that our sports teacher became very interested in me after this. He promised to do everything for me if I had an affair with him. I did not accede to this request. Fortunately, this teacher is not teaching me any subject. I know from experience how a girl can be victimised by such teachers. At times I wonder why some male teachers think I can be a carpet with which they can clean their feet. I am saying this because even back in kwaNdebele I had a similar problem with my IsiZulu teacher. I was the only one doing IsiZulu and for him this was an opportunity for an affair. I

ended up hating him for I was at a disadvantage. When teachers do this they lose their pupils' respect.

There were instances when my mother would encourage my being left out when my sisters invite each other on outings. She always discriminates against me. She once chased me away from home. The reason for this was that my sisters complained that I was using their clothes. When I challenged them as to who must buy clothes for me they threatened to move out. My mother told me to take my child and leave and never to return to her house ever again. I stayed with a friend, Nomusa (not her real name), and her family. In fact being chased away happened a few days after I was asked by Nomusa's sister to find some one to work for her. I offered my services in return for food and accommodation for both of us and some cosmetics for me. Nomusa was an old friend of mine. We met while I was at primary school and she was at secondary school. We grew very close to each other, as she was always there for me in difficult times. She was the person who listened to me and supported me. She was more than a sister to me. Unfortunately she passed away having contracted HIV/AIDS. I was very frustrated by this. I was left with a number of questions. I knew my friend well. She was a one-man girl and for her to die such a shameful death disturbed me. My friend was an orphan whose mother passed away when she was young. Her sister raised her and she met her father a few days before she died. I stayed there until people started to talk, and my mother was embarrassed enough to invite me back home.

I sell lollies at school. I sell them during the course of the day. I buy them from Kwa Mashu cross roads. I spend R4 for a taxi to and from there. For good business it is important to buy them whenever they are finished at school. This means that at times I rush there at break and come back to sell. There are problems at times. I value education a lot but I need to eat. When teachers drag their periods up to the middle of lunch break our business as sweets sellers suffers. This also occurs when we are not informed in time when school closes

early. This results in low sales as learners rush home to eat. When you sell at
school, you want nothing to disturb you. You become very frustrated when
teachers ask you to do something for them when it is break time. It is even worse
if you are a member of the Learners Representative Council. Most of the meetings
take place during break. The business is also adversely affected by examination
times. Learners only come to school at specific times for a particular examination
paper. Because of the shortage of desks, only two grades write in a particular
interval. There is also the tendency of some learners to buy on credit and they fail
to pay. Some learners don't know that I sell because I need to. It is very easy for
them to say they do not have the money as if I must just forget.

6.6.1 Analysis of Thobile's Story

Family Background and Culture

She perceives the separation of her parents as a cause of her working from early in life. Though her father was also working, he was not prepared to support them when they were staying with their mother. As her mother was working, she had to remain at home and take care of the baby. Thobile, who eventually got a chance to stay with her father, was devastated by his death. He was not poor and supported her. He freed her from working for three years. When he passed away, she had to go back to work. Later on she became a single mother herself and it became imperative for her to work. She has to provide for her own son whose father is irresponsible.

She blames her mother for discriminating against her, thus turning her into a family slave. Even when bad things happened to her like rape, her mother was only interested in the money for damages. She did not give her any support during such a painful period of her life. Her mother chased her away from home and this resulted in Thobile working for her friend's sister. When they returned from KwaNdabele, she had a problem with her school fees while her mother paid for her sister. She reached a point where she questioned whether this woman she

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called mother was her real mother. Though her mother is poor, her ill-treatment of Thobile is unforgivable. She believes that this discrimination stemmed from some family secret, which led to the separation of her parents. It is not clear whether it is this discrimination, which resulted in her being sexually active very early in life. Falling pregnant in this day and age and continuing to sleep with another man signals people's ignorance on issues of HIV/AIDS. The perception by some communities leaves much to be desired. The following statement highlights this:

> *Unfortunately she passed away having contracted Aids. I was very frustrated by this. I was left with a number of questions. I knew my friend well. She was a one-man girl and for her to die such a shameful death disturbed me.*

Work Activities

She started working as a child-minder as a means of relieving her mother who was working as a sleep-in domestic worker. She was 6-years-old when she was left with the child. She did everything for this child. In fact she was like a mother to her baby brother. Thobile remained at home while others went to school. She did all household work with the child on her back. She had a break of 3 years when she stayed with her father. After his death, she resumed her work and this time she was like a slave.

She had to take care of 3 young children and do household work. She walked long distances to their different schools. She worked before and after school. Her mother and 2 sisters were working and therefore did not participate in domestic work. On top of this she was sent on errands even at night and this resulted in her being raped one evening. Even in Grade 11 she is still doing all her chores but has supplemented her work by minding her third sister's child. She is paid R100 a month. This money is used to buy sweets, which she sells at school. She runs around between schools and wholesales sweets during school hours. She aims at selling at least two packets a day. The profits so far are R3 a packet that makes it possible for her to buy bread.

Academic Performance

Thobile started school 2 years later at the age of 9. Although she was embarrassed by the fact that she was older than her classmates, her academic performance made her father proud. After returning to her mother she knew that her academic performance was never going to be the same. She was not given any time to study. As she put it: *"During school days I only get time for my work after ten in the evening"*.

She was always late and tired at school. She failed to do any schoolwork at home. Her academic performance dropped. She became an average child getting class positions from 13 and up. No one at home seemed to care about her school performance. This period was followed by many disturbances in her education. She dropped out of school because of her pregnancy. She returned after 2 years with financial help from her sister. Her academic performance was better than the last time she was at school. She came first in Grade 10 and 11. Thobile is convinced that this is still not her maximum performance. There is no space for her to study at home as they are living in a 2-roomed house. She needs to work very hard during school hours to get good results.

Hunger is also cited as one of the causes for not performing up to her potential. This is more so because during the last period she does not concentrate as she thinks of what to give the children at home. In Grade 12 she experienced problems. It was not possible for her to attend all holidays and Saturday classes. When all Grade 12 parents were invited to school, her mother did not come. Her Grade 12 results were a bit disappointing. She got a school-leaving certificate with below average symbols.

6.7 SUMMATIVE ANALYSIS

6.7.1 Family and Cultural Background

These learners have been separated from their biological parents at an early stage of their lives. They had to work for themselves for survival. They have been changing homes. Both relatives and strangers have chased these learners away a number of times. Their biological parents have been irresponsible and their own mothers have neglected these learners. 4 of the 5 learners blame their mothers for what happened to them. They have negative feelings towards their mothers. Grandparents played a very important part in their lives. They helped financially with their pension grants and provided other forms of support. Unfortunately both of Hle's grandmothers did not treat her well. Both Hle and Thobile had strangers who acted as their grandmothers and they had to call them so. Even though these learners struggle to survive, their families kept on increasing as more and more babies were born. They are all from big families of more than 3 siblings each. Their families are headed by women i.e. their mothers. Learners in their stories had branded these women cruel, negligent, irresponsible, and discriminating, as well as being lazy.

Though these learners' conditions can be linked to poverty, family instability, unemployment and irresponsible parents, culture and cultural beliefs also played a part in their lives. Mandlakhe blamed his father for having more than one wife, which resulted in him failing to take care of his children. Conflicts and rivalry experienced in his family is not conducive to proper raising of children. Mandlakhe is very bitter about the fact that his mother had to pay a penalty for visiting her own mother. Children tend to know too much about the relationship of their parents. How Mandlakhe explained her mother's turn to be visited by the father proves this. Sipho on the other hand was given to relatives to be raised because he was born out of wedlock by a widow. He was hidden from the family of the late husband. He had to work for himself while his brothers and a sister

were well taken care of. Hle's parents were not married to each other when her father passed away. The fact that he paid for damages for making her mother pregnant gave the mother an excuse for dumping her with her paternal relatives. The struggle to make ends meet by Thando's grandparents resulted in her sister being married while very young. Cows paid by the groom helped with milk and they were also used in fields. Lastly, when Thobile was raped, her mother was only interested in damages for loss of her virginity. Her action resulted in Thobile lying about the father of her baby some years later.

As is the case with many Africans, traditional healers and sangomas play a part in these learners' lives. When Mandlakhe contracted TB, his father took him to a sangoma. According to the sangoma's findings, he had idliso (TB). This was the deed of jealous relatives. Though he was given muti[23] to cure this, he ended up going to the clinic as his condition deteriorated. Sipho had isichitho[24], which was the cause of him being chased away by the Khumalos. He had to undergo treatment by a sangoma, which, according to him, was successful. Information provided by Hle's mother was that she was taken by an inyanga who is believed to be able to cure HIV/AIDS. Her own mother believed that her daughter would be cured. As Thando's story indicates, she claims to have had bad luck in her life. Her aunt took her to a sangoma long after the abortion. The sangoma claimed that the family was supposed to cleanse her after the death of her baby. The baby she got rid of was causing problems for her. She raised money for the traditional ritual, which took place at her aunt's house.

6.7.2 Educational Needs

All 5 learners had to work for their education. They work to pay school fees, purchase uniforms, food, and shelter. Some learners are not paid any money but

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[23] Traditional medicine
[24] Traditional name for poison

their employers take care of all their school needs. Those who work for salaries earn very meagre wages, which in most cases results in failing to pay their school fees in full. At times their employers fail to pay their school fees. This results in learners being chased away from school by unsympathetic educators. These learners have been overloaded with work to such an extent that they do not have time to devote to their schoolwork. Working learners need to study and do homework, but this is impossible. 4 of the 5 learners reside in informal settlements like Siyanda and Richmond farm. Houses in these settlements are one or two rooms. There is no space to do school work. All their extra time is consumed by economic activities.

The attitude of some family members towards school and overcrowding hinders learners from attending to their schoolwork. Thando's aunt always reminds her that it was enough for Thando to be able to only write. Her continuation with schooling is not her business. She is an example of an indifferent relative. Also, for Hle's mother to force her to sell alcohol in the same room where she is supposed to sleep until very late at night highlights the lack of space to do school work. On top of all these problems some learners take care of school needs for their siblings. These learners feel that no one in their lives has ever genuinely taken an interest in their education.

Finally one of the educational needs relates to sport and recreation. This is hampered by the school's failure to plan properly. Sipho and Thando are actively involved in sport, which usually takes place during school hours. This means no selling and other teachers continue to teach which put these learners at a disadvantage. At times sports practice drags on until late in the afternoon forcing learners to abandon their after-school economic activities.

6.7.3 Economic Activities

All these learners are working during and after school hours. They all sell sweets within the school. They are all faced with problems of low profits, functioning

and dysfunctioning of the school, theft, teacher interference, as well as selling on credit. Sipho and Hoe sell sweets even at home i.e. outside school. They have a problem of buying their stock. Sipho employs other learners to sell for him at school. On the question of work undertaken by these learners, gender also plays a part. Some activities are specifically for boys and others for girls. There are also those activities in which both sexes participate.

Boys

Both boys started working in rural areas at a very early age herding cattle. They took cattle to the field before going to school and looked after them after school. There were days when they woke up as early as 3 a.m. to take the cattle to the dip. This is a very tiring and time-consuming job. They stayed with their employers when doing this job. This arrangement helps them in that they are able to pay their school fees. They also get food and shelter free of charge as Mandlakhe put it. He worked for strangers who paid him R20 a month. Sipho on the other hand was not paid anything except that all his school needs were taken care of. Sipho failed to cope with his schoolwork and this resulted in conflicts between him and his teachers, which ended in him taking drugs. He went further expanding his activities by becoming a shoemaker and a hairstylist. Mandlakhe did not stop working in the fields though this was done during weekends. He is presently working for a hardware store in Newlands, Durban. Sipho sells from his table at his home.

Girls

All 3 of them started working as child-minders. It started with their own siblings when their mothers were not even there. They were surrogate mothers who had to tend to every need of the child. They all had irresponsible mothers who did not care whether they went to school or not. They all provided domestic services for both relatives and strangers. They have suffered a lot at the hands of these people. There were instances in which they were not paid any salary. Instead, they exchange their services for school needs, food, and shelter. They were all, at some

stage, raped while doing their duties. They differ on what they are presently doing during weekends and holidays. Hle works in the garage during holidays and Thando cooks at the taxi rank during weekends. Thobile works in the kitchen at a local school for the deaf during holidays. This institution is used as a marking centre for some Grade 12 examination papers.

Girls and Boys

There is a difference between girls and boys in their academic performance. Both boys had repeated more than two grades in their school lives. Sipho's failures are associated with herding cattle when he was still on the farm. Recently he perceives his involvement with girls as well as the pressures exerted on him by the school (participation in sport) as the cause. When he was given a chance of proceeding to Grade 12, he dropped out of school. In his letter to the school he stated that he could no longer cope with the amount of work in Grade 12. Mandlakhe differed on the issue of herding cattle; his failures were associated with his carelessness. It is only now that he indicates that personal problems as well as his work, which is tiresome, and dangerous (he contracted TB) are the causes of his repetition of grades.

All 3 of the girls have never repeated any grade. Instead, they have been excellent learners achieving high marks. Thando for instance was given a chance to skip a grade and she managed. The over age status is not due to repetition of classes but rather due to late registration for Grade One. In the case of Thobile early pregnancy also contributed to her over-age status as she had to drop out of school for two years. All girls indicated that they were not performing at their maximum potential. Hle dropped out of school after the first term of Grade 12. Her performance was already deteriorating even before that. Thando had problems with her aunt during her last year at school so much so that she had to stay with her teacher during examination. There was no time for her to study at home. Thobile, on the other hand, could not attend Saturday and holiday extra classes in

which most of the Grade 12 curriculum is covered in this school. She got a school-leaving certificate with below average symbols.

6.8 CONCLUSION

These learners had careers in mind when the study was initiated. Some have since changed their choices. Mandlakhe would like to be a social worker and Thando a policewoman or a soldier. Both these learners have reasons related to their personal life stories influencing these decisions. Thando is presently working for the same teacher who helped her when she was young. The teacher is paying for her driver's license tuition. A driver's licence is a requirement for acceptance into the police force training programme. Hle was very focused on what she wanted in life. She wanted to be a chemical engineer and she was aware of the requirements for such a field. She was very hard working in Mathematics and Physical Science. She is presently a domestic worker in Gauteng. Sipho would like to be a singer and a carpenter. He easily dropped out of school because he believes that there is no need to have Grade 12 for this career. He is presently continuing with his business selling in front of his home. Lastly, Thobile wanted to be a caterer and now that she is working in a similar job, her interests have changed. She is presently doing a short course on sign language. She is also registered with UNISA in childcare work. 3 of the 4 learners are still involved in the informal sector of the economy providing the same services as they did at the inception of this study (in 2001). No one indicated any interest in business studies, not even the 3 learners who were in commercial classes.

These stories contributed greatly to the study by filling in the gaps in the data provided by the survey and interview methods. They link and add rich detail to the information revealed in the letters. An in-depth explanation of activities as well as reasons for the involvement of learners is given. Experiences, emotions as well as the perceptions of learners involved in the informal sector are built into these stories. The next chapter, which is a cross-case analysis, combines

information from the stories together with findings from the survey, letters, and individual interviews to derive a thematic analysis.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LEARNING FROM WORKING LEARNERS

7.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I have further analysed the data gleaned from this study through the multi-method approach described in chapter four. Themes that have been drawn from data in the previous chapters will be linked in this chapter to the existing literature/research in the field. This is an attempt to interrogate current theoretical reasons for the involvement of learners in the informal sector of the economy, the type of work they do and their remunerations, and the effect this involvement has on their academic performance and schooling.

Family background plays a very important role in determining whether a learner would be involved in economic activities or not. The first theme combines and explores poverty and the family background of learners. All families have their own cultural practices. This study alleges that such practices, at times, force children to work. Cultural practices are discussed as a second theme. This study is about learners striving for an education. There are certain educational needs involved that drive learners to work, and this is explored as theme three. That learners are involved in the informal sector is not the end of the enquiry. It is important to enquire about the type of activities as well as their remuneration, which is discussed as the fourth theme. All this does not happen in a trouble-free atmosphere; there are certain challenges learners are faced with as a consequence of mixing school and work. Hence, their exploitation, abuse and the issues around welfare grants are explored as the fifth and sixth themes respectively. It is an undeniable fact that education is important and the question arises whether working learners are benefiting from school. Therefore, in the seventh theme, the relationship between work and academic performance is discussed. I have concluded the chapter with working learners' perceptions and experiences of their

teachers, and a discussion of issues connecting learners, teachers and schooling as the final theme.

7.1 POVERTY AND FAMILY BACKGROUND

The majority of Black South Africans have not enjoyed a happy family life. Factors such as unemployment, separation of fathers from families, and death have contributed to this state of affairs. The prolonged absence of husbands and fathers leads to high rate of conjugal breakdowns and desertions (Morei, 2000). It induces a repetitive circle of illegitimacy and instability in arrangements for rearing children. Learners involved in this study are no exception as they are from a similar background. They are from single female-headed families. Even though some of these women are employed, they earn very little and could not afford to find some one to look after their babies. They turn their own daughters into child-minders of younger siblings. This results in these girls registering late for their first grade in school. Deaths of fathers are seen as a contributory factor for children to start working for themselves as the following passages indicate:

> *It all started when my father passed away in 1986 and I was given to my paternal aunt (my father's sister) in Kranskop. In 1990 my mother gave birth to another child She then took me to her own family. Like any other young girl, I had to look after her newborn baby.* (Hle's story).

> *This was a weird sickness, which lasted for few minutes, and then he was gone. At the end of the year my mother took me with her to join the others at Kwa Mashu. This was the beginning of the nightmare. I was treated and worked like a slave.* (Thobile's story).

Children from unstable poor families usually end up providing unpaid menial services for relatives and strangers in exchange for basic needs. They have at some stages of their lives stayed with either their relatives, strangers or, in some cases, on their own. Their family lives were disturbed when they were separated

from one or both of their parents for different reasons. Extensive research has shown that income-generating activities of street children originate from poverty and accompanying social disorganisation of their families (Newson, 1996). For all learners involved in this study, family life was demonstrated as disorganised. This is evident in some of the stories. When Thobile's parents for instance separated, her mother had to take care of all of them on her own. Though her father was also working, he was not prepared to support them where they were staying. Hle, on the other hand, did not know her father as he passed away when she was a baby. From a young age of 6 she had to provide her services to relatives in exchange for basic needs. Though her mother was working, she did not bother to send her any money.

Most learners involved in this study expressed anger with their parents especially their mothers. They believed that they were let down by these women very early in their lives. This is well articulated by learners themselves in the following passages:

> *My mother is just like a "tool". She is not contributing financially in the family instead I support her* (Mandlakhe's story).

> *Up to this day I am still puzzled by the fact that I was separated from my mother at such a tender age. I had to work for myself as if I had no one. My mother showed interest in me only after I was chased away from her sister's family* (Sipho's story).

> *When I thought of my mother, I felt that I was nothing in this world. I started to question my mother's love for me. I blamed her for the second rape* (Hle's story).

> *My mother left us with grandparents and went to Durban where my father was employed. My mother too never returned* (Thando's story).

There are instances when my mother would encourage me being left out when my sisters invited each other. She always discriminates against me. I say this because she once chased me away from home. The reason for this was that my sisters complained that I was using their clothes. When I challenged them as to who must buy clothes for me, they threatened to move out. My mother told me to take my child and leave and never to return to her house ever again (Thobile's story).

All these findings from the life histories about neglect by parents coincide with those from letters indicating that children are more neglected by females usually their biological mothers. These findings are in line with the fact that mothers and mother-substitutes tend to be the primary person held accountable for any omissions and / or failures in care-giving (Kim, 1968) since mothers are most often the persons who have to raise the children. According to the study on low-income U.S. mothers, for some parenting becomes so stressful that they abuse their children (Medora, Wilson & Larson, 2001).

Parents in some instances seem to be very insensitive to the situations of their children. His own mother who joins the wives in visiting their father let Mandlakhe down. These women are all aware that Mandlakhe has to take care of them. His mother always expects money every month-end from him. His father treats him like an older man who is in charge of his family. This study highlights the expectations of family members of working learners' little income. In Thobile's case, the fact that both the mother and sister leave children in her care without food is a different story. This is a way of showing her that she is also an older person who must contribute something. It was very disturbing listening to her explaining her thoughts during the last period of the day at school. The idea of not knowing what to give to children belongs to an old woman not to a schoolgirl who made a mistake and fell pregnant. The same thing happened with Hle. At one stage she had to beg for food for both herself and her brother. They were left to fend for themselves by a relative.

This study also exposed unexpected cruelty of parents and communities. How Thobile was treated after the rape is shameful. All the women who were there, including her mother, insulted the integrity of females. To let a raped little girl parade in her dirty clothes at a hearing was a degrading act for the girl. Remarks were passed and her mother added insult to injury by reminding her that she was nothing because she had lost her virginity. Though it is a tradition that boys who make a girl lose her virginity pay something, rape is a different story. The loss of virginity is related to a failure of lovers to control their feelings. Rape is forced sexual intercourse. In Thobile's case the mother ended up being more concerned with receiving a goat as payment from the criminal who raped her child. This scenario also indicates how delicate issues were dealt with wrongly in the so-called community forums in the townships. Rape is an actionable wrong for which you can claim damages in law; it is not an event to make traditional damage claims. It is a violation of personal rights, *inter alia*, physical integrity and impairment of dignity, moreover, it is a criminal offence. Community forums have no jurisdiction to hear rape matters. Thobile did not undergo any treatment and the matter was not reported to the police. Her mother did not want her to tell anyone about what had happened.

One may have many questions as to why Hle's mother kept on sending her back to the same family where she was abused. She proves to be the type of a mother who shifts her responsibility to others. This is demonstrated by the fact that when she had the chance to be with Hle she incited the step-father to physically abuse her. Hle did not write her final examinations. She resorted to getting a husband who paid all the lobola[25] to her mother. The man was one of the shebeen patrons. In the questionnaire, Hle indicated that a neighbour gave her a refrigerator for beer. According to Hle's friend, this is the man who ended up being her husband. Hle spent only 15 months with her real mother since she was left with relatives at the age of 5. She left school after the first term of Grade 12 to look after her then sick fiancé. The 17-year-old girl had to take care of him in his home for 2 full

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[25] Zulu custom: a bride price is paid to the family of the bride before any marriage can take place.

months away from school. At the end the man passed away. Her mother was asked by the school to bring her back as she was a bright learner. To the teachers' shock they were informed that she had to undergo traditional rituals at the man's home like all other widows. What happened to Hle is similar to a study by Moletsane (1999) on poor families. According to Moletsane, some families encourage young girls to find a "*good man*" to take care of them. Poverty and the consequent focus on material security lead girls to seek relationships for food, clothing, cosmetics, toiletries, accommodation, and comfort, without taking into account the dangers of HIV/AIDS pandemic. Though it was clear that Hle was not going to sit for the examinations, the Department of Education needed a letter from a parent. Her mother was visited for this purpose. To my surprise at that particular moment she did not know where her daughter was. It is said that she was taken by an inyanga[26] who is believed to be able to cure HIV/AIDS. The latest news about Hle was that she was working as a domestic worker in Johannesburg.

In both Thando and Hle's cases it would appear that the mothers were more interested in material possessions than the welfare of their children. They hid behind culture to gain something from their daughters. The intensity of irresponsibility showed by the mothers in this study shadows their socio-economic status. It is a fact that many poor families rely on their children for survival. One may expect that their own families treat such children as valuable assets. Mothers are usually the first people to practice this. Exposing children to dangerous situations is not usual for a mother. For Hle's mother to push her back to a family where she was once raped does not appear to be a sound decision. On the other hand, when Thando was raped, her mother was ensconced where they both worked. It was Thando's duty to come back every afternoon to look after the family. Here one sees a reversal of responsibilities where the bulk of it is dangerously thrust upon the child.

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[26] Zulu traditional healer

7.2 CULTURAL PRACTICES

In Mandlakhe's life history, poverty and polygamy are perceived as the cause of his involvement in the informal sector of the economy. His father, though earning very little, has three wives and 14 children to feed. Needless to say, he is unable to provide for his family financially. This has created a situation in which all his children work for themselves from a very young age. Mandlakhe's father only sends R100 home after a number of months. According to Mandlakhe, if his father had just one wife, things would have been better.

Polygamy was the preserve of the rich. In the case of Zulus, the husband has to provide each wife with her own hut, her own fields which she cultivates to supply the needs of her own household and with cattle allocated to her hut for its own special use (Krige, 1965; Rogers & Hart, 1989). Polygamy, when connected to poverty, points to changing cultural practices as it is practiced by the poor as well. Mandlakhe's father is very poor and his children have to work for other families in the community to survive. Mandlakhe had to work in the fields and herd cattle for other families to feed his own family. He assumed full responsibility for his mother's hut. Historically, polygamy was seen as a means of acquiring wealth. Wealth today is perceived as a necessary condition for polygamy. According to the study by Moller and Welch (1985) on polygamy among Zulu migrants, two major economic problems of polygamy were observed. These were large families where there is more than one wife and a high cost of educating children. These days in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal, polygamy is only common among chiefs (Hunter, 2005), but it is urban areas where the practice has been appropriated by poorer folk.

On the contrary, polygamy is not as bad as is shown in Mandlakhe's case. Even if the family is poor, children are not burdened with responsibility at such an early stage. On the issue of visitations, it is the father who visits his wives at home. Even if this is reversed, i.e. wives visiting the husband, it is his duty to support

them. To a boy who is struggling for food, to entertain his father's wives is unthinkable. His father always praises Mandlakhe as a man who is able to look after his mothers. During interviews some learners indicated that they were also from polygamous families. They are all selling sweets. One pair, a girl and a boy from a polygamous family, indicated that their father, a retired factory worker, buys them packets of sweets at the beginning of the year. He pays the school fees and buys the uniform for them. They are supposed to sell sweets for all other school needs as well as cosmetics. Together with their sister who is a street vendor, they buy food for themselves. The boy explains how these packets of sweets are referred to as the wealth of their mother's hut. Another pair of similar learners is also selling sweets. They indicated that they are doing everything for themselves.

Then there is also the issue of lobola. The fact that lobola was paid for did not mean that she had to act as a wife in the event of his death. Her mother's acceptance of such an arrangement is a bit confusing to an outsider.

Relatives raised Sipho while his other siblings were staying with his mother. Illegitimacy resulted in him working for himself for more than 16 years. Being born out of wedlock by a widow can create a situation where the child has no family of his/her own. This puzzled him as he understands that a child born to a widow, after the death of her husband, belongs to the late husband. This is even more so because he also uses the surname of the late husband. This is in line with studies on Africans, including Zulus, which state that the widow may bear children by a relative of the late husband or a stranger. Such children are regarded as the children of the late husband (Schapera, 1966; Obbo, 1981). In fact, marriage endures beyond the death of the husband and father for he is still married to his widow and he is still the father of the widow's future children. These children take his clan name and have rights to live and inherit in his agnatic lineage (Radcliffe-Brown & Ford, 1950).

7.3 EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

In all 5 life histories and in the majority of letters written by 9 out of 13 girls, as well as in 33 out of 36 interviews, school needs were cited as the core reason for working. Some learners are not paid any money, but all their school needs are taken care of. Those who work for salaries earn minimal wages, which in most cases results in their failure to pay school fees in full. Schools exert pressure on poor children to work for themselves. Failure to pay school fees is a punishable act in some schools. Thando, in her story, tells of the harsh realities of poverty and school needs. Her parents left the three of them with their grandparents who were very poor. She was always punished for failure to pay school fees. She explains how humiliating it was when other learners promised to pay while there was nothing to promise in her case. She eventually decided to run away from school. She remained at home until her aunt found her a job and was able to raise the school fees for her to do Grade 1. In this study, a lack of finance to meet the costs of schooling is highlighted as a handicap resulting in children being treated badly at school. This leads them to not attending and eventually leaving school. This is in line with the work of Scharf *et al* in 1986, which concludes that children are likely to leave school when they experience beatings (Scharf, Powell & Thomas, 1986).

Learners in this study indicated that being teased for failure to pay school fees is a very painful experience. They feel humiliated whenever their names are called out in the presence of their classmates. This treatment of learners is also practiced by teachers in other parts of this country and is echoed in the following testimony:

> *Teachers shout at you. Teachers like to swear at us. They don't have a good way of approaching children. They keep on teasing us about school fees. It is not nice because we also like to pay, we just don't have money*[27].

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[27] Girl 11, at an ACESS workshop in Northern Province (Orkn, 2000). Results from the Survey of Activities of Young People (SAYP).

Apart from school fees, learners are expected to buy school uniforms and some other needs like stationery. Learners involved in all stages of this study have school uniforms. Their uniforms are in a good condition (except for Mandlakhe's uniform), which makes it difficult to discern their plight through their external appearances. During interviews some learners indicated that at times they get help for school fees. But uniforms and stationery also put a strain on learners since they are as important as the school fees. This is in line with the findings of a study done on working children in Colombia which concludes that though the government subsidises school fees, the major cost of schooling are uniforms and school supplies (Cartwright & Patrinos, 1999).

During interviews some learners indicated that though their parents managed to pay their school fees, they have to work for their cosmetics. In the life histories it is indicated that for girls cosmetics are catered for before any other school needs. According to studies done in Ghana, though the actual school fees can be minimal, other costs related to it are high. In the girls' education list, cosmetics were at the top of research findings as factors militating against the education of girls (Moletsane, 1999). Lastly, most learners indicated that they were also responsible for their siblings' schooling. In the letters one of the girls indicated that she was tempted not to press charges against a man who raped her in order to get school fees for her brother and sister. Mandlakhe's story is another example. This is in accordance with studies of survival strategies which indicate that children work primarily to raise money for their schooling and that of younger siblings (Cain & Mozumder, 1980).

7.4 WORK AND WAGES ARE GENDERED

Learners differ in the type of activities they embark on according to gender (Beneria, 1979). All girls started their work as child-minders and they later

became domestic workers. Boys, on the other hand, start by herding cattle. This study shows that particular jobs are for girls while others are for boys. This is in accordance with studies done among pastorals in the Sahel (World Bank, 1994c) where there is an expression of a sexual division of labour. In such a study girls' milk, cook, spin, and look after younger children while boys look after animals. There are also those jobs done by both girls and boys like selling. Other studies concerning life histories of working children show us some of the processes, which lead boys and girls into their first working experience (often helping a close relative) and then into their first earning occupation (Blanc, 1994). They reveal how children, especially boys, are actively on the look-out for better work possibilities, shift occupations according to what is available and making good use of networking (UNICEF, 1999). This is also the case in this study as girls are still in domestic work even in their adolescent stage whilst boys have been changing jobs. Mandlakhe's story shows this in the following excerpt:

> *After a period of time I decided to go and look for a job in a white suburb. I worked as a garden boy. This was not enough for me, as I was not working during holidays. I needed money. It was clear that I had either to stop attending school or work full time or try something else. I decided to come to Durban to look for a job. I found myself a job with better remuneration in a hardware store.*

7.4.1 Girls' Work Activities

Child-Minding

In all levels of the study some girls indicated that they started working as domestic workers minding their mother's babies (21.3% in the survey, 50% in individual interviews, and 100% in life histories). Later on, they provided similar services to relatives and strangers. These girls had to act as mothers of the children they were minding. In most cases they were left with them while the mothers were working somewhere else (they were surrogate mothers of these children). Child-minding is highlighted as providing work for many of the girls

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mixing school and work. According to studies done in Delhi, surrogate mothers are generally between the ages of 6 and 14 (Blanc, 1994). In this study, it emerged that some girls are still involved in the job even after they are long past this age (refer to story 4).

Details of how child-minders go about doing their duties in both life histories and interviews of this study show a very high level of commitment to the children they cared for. They even absented themselves from school to take these children to clinics or doctors whenever there is a need. They worked before and after school. This is in harmony with findings from the study of children from families staying in one room in Clermont Township. Here working schoolgirls are not simple child-minders but they act as mothers of the children they mind (Mncwabe, 1999). Some girls indicated that their job description included taking children to and from school. This type of work can be done on its own without being mixed with other child-minding activities. My sister did similar work (see my autobiography). In an interview with one of the pre-primary school teachers in the area, she indicated that such girls bring most of the children to her school. If the child does not pitch for school without any notice, it is known then that the parent did not pay the girl's salary. This is in accordance with a study done by Moerehead (1987) where girls indicated during interviews that their job was to take primary school children to school in the morning and to bring them back in the afternoon.

Domestic Work

Girls provide domestic services for both relatives and strangers. They exchange their services for food and shelter and at times for very minimal wages (as low as R40 a month). The three girls have quite different experiences.

It is possible for girls to be involved in more than one activity at the same time. They sell at school, they are domestic workers at home and some of them also do braiding (a form of smart hairstyle). The latter activity is highlighted as having the

potential of providing more money faster than other activities. Hle used this activity to get money to go to her mother. During interviews, most girls indicated how they supplement their income with braiding. This is the activity in which clients are predominantly teachers during school hours. There are those who are willing to pay and those who demand the services free of charge. There are instances in which a girl hides from the latter type of teacher. It is not only that they do not want to pay, but they also do not want to sacrifice their breaks for this. They use learners during teaching time. On a number of occasions you find teachers hiding somewhere with a learner busy doing her hair.

At one stage a sister of one of the girls came to school to demand payment from a certain teacher. This was a family where all the members are dependent on braiding. The sister was furious because not only were services rendered free of charge but also the material used was not paid for. Other teachers had to intervene because the sister was shouting and calling the teacher all sorts of names. I once had a very nasty experience when I tried to punish a girl with a fancy hairstyle as the school policy prohibits this. The learner proudly told me that she was asked by a female teacher to show her the best hairstyle she could do. At times learners are exploited as a means of punishment. She will be forced to provide similar services free of charge to a teacher if she is found braiding another learner's hair during school hours. There are some teachers who are known to be against this and therefore braiding is never done during such teacher's periods. There are pathetic situations where a girl is carrying her sweets to be sold and yet spending all her break braiding a teacher's hair for free. Her business is disturbed for the whole day. In as much as this is a very lucrative activity, it also promotes exploitation of learners by some teachers.

It is not easy to calculate the remuneration for girls, as most of them were domestic workers who exchanged their services for food and shelter. In instances where they are paid it is very little. Thando for example once earned R40 when

she was a child-minder. When she worked for teachers they paid her whatever they saw as fit. The remuneration for child-minding is about R100 a month.

7.4.2 Boys' Activities

Herding

Both boys started working as cattle herders in rural areas of KZN. They were five and nine years old respectively. They were younger than the acceptable age of starting herding in most places. According to studies done in Lesotho, males in the communal area who are engaged as herders are older than ten years. Households employ only 4% of these as paid herders (Ministry of Employment and Labour, Lesotho, 2005). In this study Mandlakhe was a paid herder who earned R20 a month while Sipho was not paid. Both boys were victims of profit-making pursued by owners who keep herd costs low by using schoolboys. Herding cattle is a very time consuming job, as both boys had to work for long hours before and after school. They woke up as early as 4 in the morning during "*dip days*".

They supplemented their income derived from herding cattle with other jobs. While Mandlakhe worked in the sugar-cane fields, Sipho provided haircuts and shoe repair services. He attained the skills for doing the two jobs from the elder son of the family he worked for. He was trained and given tools for the job. This is not unusual as more learners acquire skills while still at school. In some instances they absent themselves from school for a number of days for skills training. This was also highlighted during interviews. Though everything was done for Sipho in return for his services, the stress of his job resulted in him taking drugs. He needed extra money to finance his habits. Mandlakhe, on the other hand, needed more money to take care of his family. He had no extra money to spare as whatever he earned was given to his mother. Mandlakhe's case is similar to Greenberg's findings that where children are working due to family poverty it is unlikely that they would have a disposable income (Greenberg &

Steinberg, 1986). Mandlakhe came to Durban to look for a better job like all other migrant labourers. He shares a house with his brother. Sipho, on the other hand came to Durban to be united with his family after 18 years of separation.

Boys, in contrast to girls, were exposed to salaries and in some instance work for themselves. Mandlakhe's monthly earnings were R60 for working in the sugar-cane fields and R20 for herding cattle. All this translated to 53c per hour or R3.18 a day. There is a similarity between this study and the one done by Walman (1995) where a boy worked for R1 an hour on a Western Cape farm. Mandlakhe was very grateful to the family where he herded cattle for they provided him with food and shelter. The R80 he earned was given to his mother leaving him with nothing. This is in contrast to Walman's study since all children in her study were given something out of their salaries by their parents. His salary proved to be too little for his family. Hle had to move to an urban area for better wages. This is in line with studies by Sing (1990), who states that if children fail to find jobs for their survival in rural areas, they are motivated to migrate to areas where jobs are available. Sipho works for 8 hours a day during weekends in the hardware store and earns R30 a day. This adds up to R240 a month. Though they do the same work as adults, they are paid R10 less.

Work Done by Both Girls and Boys

Selling Sweets

Both boys and girls sell sweets within the school premises during school hours. This job is supplemented with other jobs for some of the learners. The girls are domestic workers while Mandlakhe works in a hardware store and Sipho runs his own business at home. They buy their goods from Kwa Mashu and Phoenix junction, which is about 10 kilometres away from school. When business is good they rush to buy more packets during breaks and continue with their work. Learners indicated that they experience problems when selling sweets at school.

Profits are very low i.e. about R3 a packet for ordinary sweets and R6 a packet for lollies. In some instances learners who sell more than one packet a day are able to get a day's meal. There are instances when they are forced to use both the profits and capital. They start again when they have money from other jobs. Stealing is a common practice amongst the learners. It is common for a whole packet of sweets to be stolen during assembly time. Learners sometimes buy on credit. In some instances sellers are forced to sell on credit if business is not good. In most cases what follows is writing off debts as learners fail to pay back. At times this results in misunderstanding between learners.

At times school finishes early without prior knowledge and such practices affect business, for they are counting on a full day for their profits. There are days when there is no break because a particular teacher is either covering his or her work or punishing the class. Some teachers involve learners in other things during breaks when they are supposed to be selling. Examination time also has a negative effect on business as only two grades write per session. This reduces the number of potential buyers as learners come a few minutes before the beginning of each paper. They thus don't have the time to buy. The participation in certain school activities also creates problems for learners who sell. Sipho highlights sport as affecting his business as well as his academic performance. It interferes with his time for buying the goods he sells. At times he leaves school during breaks for soccer practice. Thobile perceives being a member of the Learner Representative Council as crippling her business as most of the meetings are during the breaks. When learners are caught selling sweets, they are at times badly treated by being asked to pick up papers. This is a system used by some teachers whenever there is litter in the class. All those who sell sweets are forced to pick up the papers. It is assumed that they are responsible for the litter in classrooms. This is normal in the school as it also applies to those outsiders who sell to learners during breaks. After the break they pick up the papers next to where they are selling. At times learners will buy sweets from these people and eat them in class throwing the papers on the floor. Those who sell sweets will pick up those papers. This really

humiliates those learners who are expected to be the servants of others instead of asking all learners to pick up the papers near to them. At times while they are busy doing this, others will start throwing more papers at them. Thus both learners and teachers discriminate against them and other learners always look down upon them as being inferior.

7.5 EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

7.5.1 Exploitation and Abuse of Girls

Both letters and life histories revealed that most of the girls have encountered some unfortunate experiences. Three girls who participated in this study indicated in their stories that they were once raped.

Thobile's sister sent her to the shop at night as she recounts in her story. This resulted in her being raped by a boy who once proposed love to her. But she had turned him down. There was even a community hearing. She was blamed for replying to the boy's letter and, therefore, the rape was her fault. According to a feminist analysis of rape within a patriarchal society, it is women and not their assailants who are held responsible for the rape. Unless a woman can prove initial refusal and ongoing resistance, she may well be seen as culpable (Koss & Harvey, 1991).

Hle was an unpaid domestic servant for relatives. Her half-brother and uncle raped her and a cousin attempted to rape her. The first perpetrator, who was always drunk, decided to be sober on that day. This phenomenon is in line with a study, which states that, instead of being spontaneous events, most rapes exhibit forethought and planning (Menachen, 1971). She was very frustrated when she was forced to go back to the same relatives where she had been raped. Her frustration was worsened when her half-brother raped her again. This time she wanted to commit suicide. She felt helpless and decided to run away from home

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and ended up with her aunt in Pietermariztburg. Both her rapists were unemployed at the time of the rape. Unemployment may be a feature of child sexual abusers as men with time on their hands are available to abuse (Richter & Davis, 2004). Lastly, her cousin attempted to rape her. According to her perception, other male relatives *"would like to try their luck on you"* once they learn that you have been a victim of rape. Rape attempts on her would follow whenever her aunt visited the family she is staying with at that particular moment. This aunt was there when she was first raped. She believes that maybe her aunt's telling of the story in all incidents motivated other perpetrators. Her perceptions are in harmony with the findings of incest researcher Herman (1981). According to her once a girl has been branded incest victim; many men will find her sexually interesting and treat her like a public property (Herman, 1981). She kept on wondering why is it that her relatives were the ones who wanted to rape her. But according to rape research this is usually the case. Acquaintances and relatives commit many rapes (McCahill, Meyer & Fischman, 1979).

Thando was gang-raped by 3 men one night, when she was alone at home. The men were unknown to her. She was very hurt and blames herself for it. Things worsened when she fell pregnant thereafter. She had to terminate her pregnancy. She still feels that she did something wrong by being convinced to undergo that procedure. She felt that she killed an innocent child. Part of her is moved when she sees children who were born in the same year. After that rape it was very difficult for her to be alone at home. She feared that something would happen again. She indicates that men in general need to be told how painful it is for a woman to be raped. This view is in line with studies of victims who have been raped in their own homes. Indications are that they will experience a subsequent increase in fear of being alone at home than those who were raped somewhere else. Also, if the victim has no knowledge of the perpetrator(s) she is likely to generalise about men (McCahill, Meyer & Fischman, 1979). Males also physically abused both Thando and Hle. The husband of the teacher she worked

for physically and emotionally abused Thando. According to her, this is what happened:

> *1 was ordered to sit next to him. He hit me on my knees with the knobkerrie repeatedly. He pushed me onto his bed and inserted edges of a piece of paper into my eyes. This was unbearably painful. 1 cried but no one came to my rescue.*

Hle's ordeal happened with her mother's blessings. The painful experience at the hands of her step-father is well articulated in the following extract from her life history:

> *He pulled me by the neck and pushed me against the headboard. He pushed my head in between his legs repeatedly hitting me with the electrical cord. He then pulled me with my hair and kept on banging my head against the wall. He pushed me to the floor and jumped over my ear. This took some time and my mother complained that it was not enough. He then put his feet on my back and started to strangle me. There was a moment when I could not breathe and my brother cried, pulling him away from me. My step-father ordered them to light a candle. He pulled up the T-shirt I was wearing. He started burning me with the candle on my back. He only stopped when he realised that I was totally powerless and struggling to breathe because of the pain. Whenever I tried to cry my mother would say I was making a noise.*

This is in line with various studies indicating that in domestic work, scolding and beating are not uncommon, and men of the house expose girls to sexual harassment and molestation (Blanc, 1994).

7.5.2 Exploitation and Abuse of Boys

Sipho's frustration of work and school did not end in truancy, but in the use of drugs (smoking dagga). According to the National Education Longitudinal Study

(NELS, 1998) adolescents living with other family types reported significantly more drug use than adolescents living with their biological mothers and fathers. Drug use might offer a form of release from the stress of living in a community with little organisation and little hope. Dagga is very expensive but he soon found a way of making money. He supplemented his tending of cattle (for which he was paid nothing) by repairing shoes and embarking on a haircutting business. He spent about two hours a day on the latter. The repairing of shoes was done at night. There were days when he could work for the whole night. Business was good in his two ventures. He was making enough money to finance his habit. This is consonant with Greenberg and Steinberg's (1985) research on adolescent part-time workers. Their study indicated that the adolescent's experiences could be shown to be associated with an increase in the use of cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana. Steinberg, Fedley and Dornbush (1993) reinforced this finding by relating specific variables of long working hours to alcohol and drug consumption. They suggested a number of explanations for this. Increased disposable income allows the adolescent to engage in those types of behaviour. The use of alcohol and drugs is a response to the stress of work; long working hours increases the stress.

Sipho was once framed for raping a mentally-challenged girl. His family failed to protect him because they were not sure about his innocence. His smoking of dagga created a situation where even his own family did not trust him. For them the possibility was there due to his intake of dagga. Their reaction is similar to the responses given by Mabaso (1991) when he was interviewed on rape in Soweto. According to this study, dagga is associated with the commission of rape. Sipho's family accepted guilt by paying a fine for him. This saddened him deeply.

Mandlakhe's early job on the sugar-cane fields had negative health implications for him. He always suffered from an itchy rash. He associated this with the use of some fertilizers that they mixed with their bare hands. His present job at the hardware pays better than his previous jobs. He still thinks that he must earn more

than what he is getting presently. This job is difficult as they lift heavy stuff for the whole day. It is also very dusty since they also load cement and sand. He suspected that his contraction of the TB virus was related to this job. He had to be away from school for a number of weeks but was always present at work. This is in accordance with the study done by Sing (1990) with parents of working children in India. According to this study, work affects the eyesight, afterwards leading to dilation, headaches, joint sight and chronic diseases like TB. Some parents in the study indicated that their children suffered from scabies and other skin diseases.

Mandlakhe also mentioned that the job is dangerous. He had seen others being injured apart from himself. He was told to hold blocks as the truck was taking a bend. Unfortunately the load fell over him. He was injured and taken to hospital. Such accidents are common with working children. This is in line with an ILO (1996) survey in the Philippines, which found that more than 60% of working children are exposed to hazardous conditions in their work, while 40% experience actual injury or illness (ILO, 1996).

Tending cattle is a very time consuming job. Both boys worked for six hours a day before and after school. On Wednesday, which is a day for cattle dips, they worked for 8 hours. They worked for 32 hours a week on weekdays. The number of hours differs for weekends. Mandlakhe worked his usual 6 hours a day on cattle tending and 7 hours a day on his other jobs. He worked for 58 hours while Sipho worked for 50 hours a week. When Sipho was in secondary school, he increased his working hours dramatically because of his two new jobs.

One day Sipho failed to bring the entire herd of cattle home. In fact one went astray. He was punished and chased away. This treatment is associated with that given to Bushmen cattle herders. They were not paid except being given milk and they were brutally punished whenever an animal went astray (Smith, Malherbe, Guenther & Berens, 2000).

7.6 WELFARE GRANTS

The story related by working learners about different welfare grants is amazing. During interviews it emerged that some learners used money from grants as capital for their business. Packets of sweets are bought from part of the monthly grant. This helps in using both the profit and capital for the day in putting food on the table for the whole family. Thobile explained how not having an identity book disadvantaged her from getting a child's grant. She believes that this money would have made a difference in their lives. Though identity books were needed for their Grade 12 registrations, she was more concerned about getting a grant.

After Thando's mother died, her siblings were left on their own. Thando's elder sister took 2 young girls to stay with her. The teacher who paid for the funeral took another one. She was going to work for her in exchange for her education and shelter as had happened with Thando. The greed shown by relatives on the issue of grants is highlighted. It seemed as if Thando's sister was interested in getting a grant for foster-parenting the girls. The children were so badly treated by her husband that they ran away. It is believed that the grant she receives on behalf of her sisters only benefit her own family. I am reminded of a boy who explained during interviews what happened after the death of their mother. He said they were divided between their 2 sisters like old clothes. His sisters were more interested in the younger siblings for the purposes of getting grants. No one was interested in him because of his age, 14 at that time.

In Mandlakhe's story, it is explained what makes the other family better than his family. The first wife is getting her old-age pension as well as grants for grand children from her daughters. It is possible for her to get a R1000 a month. There are no daughters from Mandlakhe's house. It is shown how corrupt officials exploit poor people by extorting money from them to get disability grants. Mandlakhe paid dearly in trying to get his mother on the scheme. He believed that this was the only way to ease the burden put on him by his family. This is a very

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pathetic situation where a learner pays some of his pittance to crooks in the system. While social grants are one of the best ways of alleviating poverty, in some instances unscrupulous relatives exploit the situation.

7.7 WORK AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

This part was mainly covered by life histories though some learners mentioned their academic performance during interviews. Their comments are included where it is relevant in the following paragraphs. This topic is discusses boys and girls academic performance separately.

7.7.1 Work and Academic Performance of Boys

Both boys had repeated more than two grades. Sipho repeated Grades 8, 9 and 10 while Mandlakhe repeated Grades 1, 4, 9 and 11. They gave different reasons for their academic performance. Sipho explains that when he was doing lower grades he did not experience any problems. In secondary school he recognised that he was nothing but being an ordinary worker. His uncle was not prepared to listen to his problems relating to school. As indicated earlier on, herding cattle was time consuming. He was always late, tired and failed to do his schoolwork properly. His academic performance dropped. He was always in conflict with teachers who eventually decided to ignore him. He repeated Grade 8 as well as Grade 9. There was too much work for school and no time to do it. He once tried to reason with his uncle who was by then retired from work, but all was in vain. His frustration was further aggravated by the fact that for the first time he realised that he was a slave working for nothing. This family did not care for his academic performance as long as the job was properly done. He was supposed to earn his education but under such conditions it was clear his uncle was not committed to remunerating him fairly.

At the present moment it is not work that is a problem to his academic performance. The demands of the school through sport put so much pressure on him that he fails to buy stock for his business. Sport activities are not well planned, as at times they are to go for practices during school hours. Teachers who are not involved in sport continue teaching and there is no sympathy for learners participating in sport. One is punished for not doing work even if he/she was involved in sport. Sipho, though good in sport, sees it as standing in his way. He had reservations whether he was going to manage in Grade 12 if he passed. He knows that he is not brilliant and that he must work hard in order to pass. His fears were confirmed when he dropped out of school after the first tests of Grade 12. Too much work was cited as the reason.

7.7.2 Work and Academic Performance of Girls

All 3 girls are performing well since they started school. They are hard working learners who even under trying conditions managed to be on top in their classes. Two of them are older for the grade they are doing. Thando was chased away from school because of her failure to pay school fees. She had to find a job to get money. She spent some time at home. She started school again at the age of 12. She is staying with her aunt who is overloading her with work. Thando finds Grade 12 very trying. Her aunt does not want to see her with school books. She is always reminded that she was supposed to learn to write her name only. She managed to pass with the help of a very caring friend. Her child-minding job robbed Thobile of the opportunity of starting school at the appropriate time. According to findings of a study on baby-minders, one of the psycho-social risks to the child at work is the total exclusion of any form of education (Kayongo-Male, 1985). Thobile started school two years late at the age of 9. Although she was embarrassed by the fact that she was older than her classmates, her academic performance made her father proud of her. After returning to her mother she knew that her academic performance was never going to be the same. She was not given any time to study and as she put it:

During school days I only get time for my school work after ten in the evening.

She was always late and tired at school. She failed to do any schoolwork at home. Her academic performance dropped. She became an average child getting positions of 13 and 14 in class. No one at home seemed to care about her school performance. This period was followed by many disturbances in her education. She dropped out of school because of her pregnancy. She returned after two years with financial help from her sister. Her academic performance improved compared to the last time she was at school. She came first in Grade 10 and 11. Thobile is convinced that this is still not her maximum performance. There is no space for her to study at home as they live in a two-roomed house. She needs to work very hard during school hours to get good results. Hunger is also cited as one of the causes for not performing up to her potential. This is so because she does not concentrate during the last period as she thinks of what to give the children at home. Hle on the other hand has managed to start school at the correct age. She worked hard all the way until she reached grade 12. She dropped out of school after the first term and, according to her mother, her whereabouts are not known.

When comparing girls and boys who were interviewed, 70% (14 of 20) of girls, passed Grade 11, and 31% (5 out of 16) boys passed as indicated by the 2001 Grade 11 final examination schedules. More girls than boys passed Grade 11. More boys than girls dropped out in Grade 11 (about 23% as compared to 15% of girls). These findings are in line with studies, which indicate that girls remain in formal education for a longer period than boys in both urban and rural areas (Turbay & Acuma, 1998, in Cartwright & Patrinos, 1999). This view is further reinforced by one of the reasons provided by Ennew's (1985) study on working children. This study found that many of the occupations showing a correlation with schooling are those in which girls are concentrated. On the issue of being over-age, working learners had either repeated some grades or they started school late (Ennew, 1985). These results are also similar to those found in Cote d' Ivoire

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where repeating of grades and late starting of school are common, making the actual graduation age 2 to 3 years later (Cartwright & Patrinos, 1999).

7.8 WORKING LEARNERS, TEACHERS AND SCHOOLING

Learners in the study as a whole perceive and experience teachers both negatively and positively. Learners do not take it well when they are chased away from school because of a failure to pay their school fees. They express anger and feel very degraded when they were summoned in the presence of others. To them, this is the time when they are reminded of their situation, which is different to others. These learners have a history of not paying their school fees. They had their reports withheld by different schools even before they came to this school. They have been helped by some sympathetic teachers to move from grade to grade if they have passed. In the case of Thobile, she expected that her situation to be relayed from class teacher to class teacher without being humiliated in the presence of other learners.

The issue of school fees in this school has resulted in a situation in which all mechanisms for the enforcement of payment have collapsed. As a teacher in the school, it is possible to see that the issue of fees and performance is linked to work and poverty. Although the success of learning at school is dependent on many factors such as teacher-pupil ratio and quality of the curriculum, there is evidence that a child's learning potential is also affected by hunger, low energy diets, parasitic infestations, and micro-nutrient deficiencies (Health System Trust, 1995; 1998). The school results are so poor that working learners do not feel the need to starve themselves in order to pay school fees. Indeed, there is no incentive to pay in a school where about sixty learners out of two hundred in Grade 11 passed (information from past Grade 11 schedules). This has been the trend for the past four years. One of the reasons for this is the fact that this is the grade where many new-comers seek admission with fraudulent reports. The school is interested in maintaining the highest number of learners to protect its teachers

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from being declared in excess. At the end of Grade 11, very few learners pass into Grade 12. The teachers are very strict on this as the performance of the school is judged by Grade 12 results. This can be proved by the fact that, after they have seen themselves in the newspapers for Grade 12 results, defaulting learners come and pay for the release of their results. These learners have a way of assessing themselves before examinations are written. Mandlakhe, for instance, knew both in 2001 and 2002 that he was still going to fail Grade 11. Sipho also knew he was going to fail. In his case he was given a chance to proceed to grade 12 because of his age and contribution to sport. He then paid his Grade 11 fees at the beginning of Grade 12. All the girls made arrangements for school fees at the end of their Grade 11, as they were sure they were going to pass. For me it is as if the learners in Grade 11 need assurance that they will pass before they pay their school fees especially if money is not available or difficult to come by.

Learners in Grade 12 are faced with a catch-22 situation where they need their Grade 11 reports. Some institutions demand that they include their Grade 11 reports when applying. In cases where forms are to be signed by the principal's office, the school clerk checks first whether fees were paid in Grade 11. It is only then that working learners pay or make alternative arrangements. I was asked by two of the participants in the study to pay for them. There is a culture of not collecting reports in this school and class teachers remain with a number of reports every year in the lower grades. At the end of Grade 12 it is only those who have seen their names in the newspaper that come and pay to get their results. In this school the statements of results of those who have failed remain in the school forever. Food is rated as a first priority. From the little money they get they must eat, buy school uniforms and cosmetics. School fees are of secondary importance.

Working learners have come to the realisation that they do not attain their maximum potential in their academic performance. Since I worked with Grade 11 and 12 learners, there are a number of reasons for this. This is the grade in which most extra classes begin in the school. Whenever such classes are in progress,

working learners are not there. In most instances learners are expected to remain in school in the afternoon and during the winter holiday (half-yearly) holidays for Grade 11. In Grade 12 they are in school as early as 6.30am and they leave the school as late as 5 p.m. A lot of work is covered during these sessions. It is important to note that some teachers rely on these sessions as they do not teach during official working time during the school term. Most often these teachers stay away from school or do not go to class. When the learners involved in this study were in Grade 10, they raised this issue with the office. They complained about a teacher who attended his union activities during school hours. These learners were perceived as being very rude, but for working learners every hour counts. When they are at school, they expect to be taught, as they do not have the advantage of the extra time that other learners have. During interviews learners expressed their anger at teachers who worked during breaks and those who punish them during this time as these teacher practices interfere with their business. There are times when tests are based on the work covered only in these sessions. Learners who were not there suffer the consequences. All five learners in the life histories did not attend extra classes for Grade 11. In Grade 12 all holidays are spent in school as teachers take turns to provide extra tuition. In fact, it is important to note that teachers are not repeating lessons during such periods, they are teaching these lessons for the first time. They want to complete the syllabus so that by the end of the third term all work is complete. I have noticed some peculiar patterns from my experience of more than 20 years of teaching both Grades 11 and 12. Learners tend to master well what is taught to them during holidays. They are more relaxed and comfortable. This is more so as teachers are taking turns and they are taught three subjects a day for the whole week.

When learners are in Grade 12, they fail to sell sweets since they are even given work during breaks. Some teachers even go as far as telling learners to stop selling if they want to pass Grade 12. More frustration is experienced as learners supplement this with other forms of work. At times they are forced to stop or ask others to sell for them. The latter reduces profits as they are paying those who

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work for them. All six teachers give Grade 12 learners more work and they always complain that there is too much work. Working learners are unable to cope with this situation. Other learners improve their performance in their last year at school. Working learners are deprived of this luxury. Teachers witness them being overtaken in the academic domain, even by those who struggled to pass Grade 11. This is borne out by the case of Thobile, who achieved first position in Grade 10, second position in Grade 11, but in Grade 12 got a school-leaving certificate with very unpleasing symbols. Sipho on the other hand left school very early. He cited failure to cope with Grade 12 work as a reason. Hle had her problems even before leaving school. Her English teacher complained about her deteriorating performance to such an extent that she forced her to register for standard grade in English. Thando's work was a concern to teachers who knew her condition. At first teachers thought that she was disturbed by the death of her mother at the beginning of the year. As the year progressed, it was obvious that she was not coping. A special arrangement was made (by a Biology teacher) for Thando to pass. It was a commitment by the teacher to pay Thando's aunt for services not rendered that enabled Thando to study for her final examination.

The strong relationship between working learners and some teachers is demonstrated in some of the life histories. Thando's teachers supported her as early as primary school. They provided her with opportunities to work for them. She was satisfied with what they paid her. As indicated, she started school very late, but teachers motivated for her to skip a grade. Though there were painful experiences in her relationship with one particular female teacher, the bond between them remained. When Thando's mother passed away none of her relative's was willing to pay for her burial. I was very surprised by the attitude of her aunt who is benefiting from her services. It was a teacher who made it possible for Thando's mother to be buried. She indicated that there was no need for her to go since there was a possibility that the funeral would not take place at all. This was seen as a waste of money and time by Thando's aunt. She told her that she did not have such money. Teachers were very sympathetic and they

collected R300 of which R100 was for transport and the rest for other needs. Teachers from her present school are also providing her with paid work.

7.9 CONCLUSION

In all 5 stories learners indicated that they started working very early in life. They worked long hours and were unable to make the most of school due to fatigue or a lack of time. Their work is unhealthy and dangerous and they were either paid very little or nothing at all. According to Fyfe (1989), all these are the features of exploitative work. In the next chapter the themes are developed further and later my autobiography is presented to demonstrate the enduring nature of work for learners and its relation to schooling, family and community.

CHAPTER EIGHT

INSIDE THE LIVES OF WORKING LEARNERS

"In days gone by, and possibly even today in many instances, the view has prevailed that children should be seen not heard. The time has come for our children to be seen and to be clearly heard. The cries of our abused and exploited children must no longer fall on deaf ears or closed minds" (Mandela, 1999:27).

8.0 INTRODUCTION

Writers have over the centuries sought to demonstrate how poverty, family instability, cultural malpractice, exploitation, abuse and a hostile learning environment, individually and cumulatively impact on the academic performance of learners. This chapter takes a critical look at the theories that evolve around these factors and seeks to confirm some and refute others. This study adds a dimension to the aforementioned complexities of learners' lives, that is, their involvement in economic activities. It is accomplished by developing the themes discussed in the previous chapters.

8.1 WORKING, LEARNERS AND POVERTY

Working learners are from big families headed by single parents. Under normal circumstances having many children is desirable for some cultures as long as the head of the family manages to raise them. In Africa, for instance, people desire many children instead of wealth (Achebe, 1958). Changes are brought about by death, divorce and desertion on the part of breadwinners. These factors together with the high rate of unemployment in this country create a burden on the remaining parent, usually the mother. Children are expected to provide for the survival of their families. The bigger the family the greater is the propensity to use children in labour markets to supplement family income. Additionally,

working children find themselves being household heads responsible not only for their siblings, but also for their parents who are either sick, old or are poorly paid in casual jobs. The involvement of children in economic activities is a desperate measure to deal with a crisis situation.

These working learners are from a poverty-stricken background. They experience the impact of poverty from early stages in life. Survival strategies reinforce resilience in working learners. They manage to support their families through the very little they get. No matter how badly they are treated by employers, teachers, parents, as well as relatives and strangers, they remain in school up until they have exhausted all their efforts. It is in such conditions that children go to school hungry and spend the whole day wondering where to get the next meal for their families. Even those who qualify for government social grants are excluded from such benefits because of their lack of appropriate documents such as birth certificates. For others their relatives abuse their grants. Though poverty may be the reason for children to work, it cannot be singled out and discussed in isolation from cultural and social factors such as cultural malpractice.

8.2 CULTURAL PRACTICES AND PREJUDICES

Some cultural practices result in children struggling to survive on their own because parents are neglecting them. An example is the issue of polygamy. Polygamy has traditionally been reserved for men, and where the father is poor, unemployed or retired and has more than wife, is a new cultural practice. Polygamy and poverty point to how cultural practices are changing. Children are given tasks such as supporting families, building houses for their mothers, paying school fees for themselves and their brothers and sisters. Competition and rivalry between wives result in too much pressure being exerted on children who are expected to work harder for their mothers to be on the same financial level as other wives.

Though the model of rural to urban migration explains factors such as change to commercial agriculture as the cause for moving to the cities, there are also other factors. Children migrate from rural areas to the city to find better paying jobs because of costly demands by their families. The abuse of the tradition of placing children with relatives is another factor. Parents leave their children in rural areas with relatives when they go to work in cities. They do not send any money to the families looking after their children. The status of these children changes from being a member of the family to being a slave, working for food and shelter. Frustrations caused by the failure of parents to pay, results in maltreatment of these children by these households, which are also poor. Children migrate to cities to look for their parents who in many cases also exploit them. This study also highlights a new trend where relatives recruit children from rural areas to come to cities to look after sick relatives.

Prejudice towards illegitimacy is another malpractice, which results in the children being separated from their mothers very early in life. When a woman marries a man other than the father of her (illegitimate) children, her children are left at the parental home of the woman or with relatives. In the process they are discriminated against while their half-brothers and half-sisters are enjoying all that the mother can offer, including financial support. They end up providing domestic services in exchange for food, shelter and education. They are deprived of both of their biological parents, and find themselves on their own struggling for survival.

It is usually girls who suffer because of the abuse of some cultural practices. They are turned into commodities where a certain price is paid for their sexual abuse. Practices that involve payments are for, example, the lobola, the bride's price, where the man initially raped the girl and subsequently wants to marry her, "*umqhoyiso*"[28] for sleeping with a girl which may be consensual, as well as

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[28] The paying of punitive damages for sleeping with a girl

"ukugeza"[29] for victims of abuse to cleanse themselves. There is also pressure on children to abide by these practices. Some practices are expensive to perform and the children are forced to raise money on their own as there is no one who can pay for them.

8.3 RESOURCEFULNESS AND SKILLS OF WORKING LEARNERS

The resourcefulness displayed by working learners is amazing as they are involved in a number of economic activities at the same time, but also in the range of activities that they devised to survive. Selling is the main activity for most working learners and it is always supplemented with other activities like prostitution, child-minding, domestic work, gardening, and herding cattle. Sexual division of labour results in girls being involved in domestic work. Girls are introduced to such activities at home when they are still young. Most of these activities discriminate against girls as they are in non-paying jobs. They exchange their services for food and shelter. In instances where they are in paying jobs they are paid less than boys, and their families demand that remunerations are given to their parents.

Skills gleaned from these activities are not recognised in the labour market, or by schools themselves. While boys change jobs as they wish, girls remain in the some job for a long time. This sexual division of labour is further reinforced in some township schools where girls are expected to clean classrooms while their male counter parts are either continuing with their jobs after school or remain at school studying. Most of the working learners are involved in hazardous jobs that expose them to diseases, rape, abuse, robbery, injury, and long hours of work, which even result in their disappearance.

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[29] Cleansing after the death of a family member.

8.4 WORKING LEARNERS AND VIOLENCE

Working learners have been subject to exploitation and abuse by families, communities, schools and teachers.

8.4.1 Parents of Working Learners

Working learners strive under very trying conditions. They experience all forms of violence at home, in the community as well as at school. This study reveals cruel treatment of children by their biological mothers. These children feel that their own mothers give them away to strangers and relatives. These families do not easily accept children. They are physically punished and chased away even for minor misdemeanors. In some instances where children happen to be staying with their mothers, they physically and emotionally abuse them. Some mothers encourage their boyfriends to physically abuse their daughters in their presence. These mothers put their own interests before that of their children. They move in with new boyfriends leaving their daughters on their own where they end up prostituting themselves for survival. That they have to fend for themselves is one thing, but the working conditions themselves expose girls to violence and sexual abuse. Even when daughters are raped, some mothers offer no sympathy; instead they exploit the situation by demanding money for damages from the perpetrators. Girls are expected to pay in kind in spite of providing domestic services to male relatives. Some mothers ignore their daughter's plight even if such relatives rape them. One does not hear of any proper police investigation. Instead community forums, which traumatise rape victims further, are resorted to. Mothers are also implicated in giving away their underage daughters to men in exchange for lobola. The abuse of many working girls, by mothers and other women, results in them running away from home. They become homeless, keep on changing residence and in the process are forced to exchange their domestic services for food and shelter. Protection of girls is not a priority as girls move from house to house selling in the afternoon. Those who sell liquor are left with male patrons

until very late in the evening. All this happens while self-employed mothers have a privilege of selling from home during the day.

It is encouraging to note that there were people in the lives of working learners, other than their parents who cared for them. Grandparents, and included in this category are also those who are not biological grandmothers, are perceived as the only people caring for working learners. They support them out of their pension grants. Children are devastated by the death of their grandparents after which they are totally left on their own. Some girls start prostituting themselves after the death of their grandmothers.

8.4.2. Working Learners and their Communities

Members of the community in urban areas turn to poor children in rural areas for help with their sick relatives. Children are brought to the township to take care of the sick relative in exchange for their education. They are exposed to dangers of contracting diseases. When the sick person passes away, they are blamed and chased away. They then move in with families of their boyfriends in exchange for basic needs and education.

Community members, who have access to government tender jobs, employ learners for meagre wages and, at times, the children work during school hours and thus they miss out on education. Some working children disappear or leave home permanently while doing their jobs in the community. Boys suffer health hazards and are targeted by criminal elements in the community, for they are known to be earning some money. Working learners are badly treated by the community. When girls are raped, the community blames them for what happened. No one in the community shows interest in supporting the raped victim.

8.4.3 Working Learners and the Curriculum

Children from poor families share with their peers from affluent families the same yearning to pass Grade 12, which is perceived to open gates for a better life. They are hampered by poor living conditions, which propel them, to engage in a number of economic activities within and outside school in order to enable them to meet their school requirements such as school fees, books, and lunch, as well as transport fares. The culture of the school in the form of the timetable has put the working learner at a disadvantage. The school starts very early in the morning and learners who work before coming to school are usually late for school. In the afternoon learners work until very late at night and they fail to do their schoolwork. These are punishable offences where the child is either locked out of the gate until break or corporal punishment is administered. The uncertainty of the duration of each day because of poor functioning of the school puts their selling business within the school at a risk. Afternoon classes and sport practices also disrupts their after school economic activities.

Ironically, the school curriculum is such that the educational system does not impart skills necessary for survival in the informal sector of the economy. The school curriculum caters for a learner who intends entering the formal sector of the economy. Hence many learners from poor families absent themselves from school not only to engage in economic activities but also to undergo training or to undergo short courses that impart practical skills e.g. security, tiling, electrical wiring, hairdressing, tailoring and dressmaking. In this context learning is perceived to be of secondary importance, more particularly because the formal sector absorbs a negligible fraction of school leavers. The majority of school leavers are absorbed by the informal sector. Armed with their experiences of the informal sector, coupled with skills from short courses, the type of learner we find in schools are also those who use the school as a waiting room while looking for a job. Parents negotiate with their customers, friends and relatives to give their

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children jobs. Whenever there is a job available even if it during the year-end examination time, these learners do not hesitate to take the job.

Schools are not sympathetic to poor learners. Township schools, where most of working learners are to be found, have, in line with the prevailing stable political conditions in the country, re-introduced school codes of conduct that prescribe the compulsory wearing of a school uniform. This places working learners at a disadvantage as school uniforms are expensive and they cannot afford them. They end up being forced to borrow uniforms from other learners whenever they want to participate in certain school activities. The wearing of a school uniform is a pre-requisite for participation in school activities and learners are expected to be in full school uniform at musical competitions, debates and career fairs.

8.4.4 Teachers and Working Learners

While some teachers were kind and went out of their way to help working learners, there are also those teachers within the school premises are implicated in abusing poor children. Learners are punished, humiliated in front of others and chased away from school if they fail to pay school fees. Learners are not given a chance to explain their situations. Some of the learners in this study dropped out of school because of such treatment. It is not that they do not want to pay but their income from their economic activities only pays for food. Migration of learners across township schools imposes transport expenses to learners. This is a result of school practices such as withholding reports upon failure to pay school fees. By the time money is available, local schools are full. The high failure rate forces learners, who are ashamed of repeating grades to change schools. Lastly, the fact that working learners are changing homes, results in them staying far away from school.

Teachers join other adults in the lives of working children by exploiting them. Working learners provide their domestic services to teachers at very low rates and

at times they are not paid anything. Children who come to school with particular hairdressing skills are forced to exchange their skills for punishment or are paid very little. Girls who do braiding are faced with problems of unscrupulous female teachers who have their hair done even during school hours for nothing. Some teachers demand time-consuming hairstyles where the learner would spend most of her school day and receive nothing in return. This raises a question whether schools and teachers are aware of how they participate in deepening the sufferings of children.

8.5 Working, Learning and Schooling

Going to school for poor children is not as easy as it is for children from affluent families. It involves enslaving themselves, giving in to exploitation, putting their lives in danger as well as degrading themselves in doing humiliating jobs. The question is whether this painful journey is worth pursuing. The educational path of working learners is full of many obstacles. They enter school late, more especially girls who are expected to look after their younger brothers and sisters while mothers go to work. The education of girls is not given any priority. Working learners are absent from school for a number of reasons. This results in them lagging behind in their schoolwork. They repeat classes due to failure to cope with the amount of schoolwork they are expected to do and also because their background is not conducive to learning. They are exposed to adult life early and add to their misery by having their own children who also take away their time for studying. They spend their time between school and jail because of their involvement in illegal activities. These children are from families who do not support their schooling. Their parents prefer them to work full time than to be at school. There is no time and no space for them to study. They are from informal settlements where houses are very close to each other and it is impossible to avoid noise from neighbours.

If schools acknowledge and recognise the plight of poor working learners then school attendance may be encouraged through subsidies and stipends. High quality schools should become widely available so that the alternative to child work is appealing and valuable to poor children and families who have to make economic sacrifices to enable their children to attend school. Initiatives such as the "*Learn to Earn Program*", where children and mothers are trained in income generating skills have to be introduced, especially in poor schools. Interventions must include the community from which the child comes from. This would enhance the empowerment of children and their families. Good quality primary and secondary education, which teaches children practical skills, needs to be strongly encouraged. It has been shown that hunger is one of the problems poor children have to contend with; therefore the government should provide factory meals to working children in secondary schools just as it sometimes provides school meals to primary school children. Primary care workers should be mandated to visit and provide free care to child workers and employers to restrict and monitor children's workday so that they can attend school. Such measures would benefit children who are confronted by an economic crisis, which is not likely to change in the short term. Such programs, of course, would require rather profound shifts in many governments' current attitudes of denial, "*all-or-nothing*" bias, and one size fits all approach.

Since child work touches on a number of ministries it may be useful to establish an inter-agency co-coordinating body on child work. This body could exert pressure within government and ensure the effective delivery of services for the reduction of child work and the protection of working children. Positive actions can be encouraged through educational and information campaigns on the evils and consequences of child work and this can also be done by worker's organisations. An earnest attempt should be made to identify social conditions that forced the child into that situation followed by the introduction of multi-sectoral rehabilitation programs for working children. Although the law stipulates

that no child should be employed, the department also must recognise that poverty exists (Byat, 2000).

It is obvious that no matter how hard working learners try to be educated, their chances to succeed are hampered by their unfortunate living conditions outside the control of schools. Some learners drop out of school before Grade 12 and those who continue get unsatisfactory results. Their involvement in economic activities impairs their academic performance. This lends credence to advocates of the zero-sum model who contend that school and work do not mix. The skills they acquire in the informal sector of the economy do not enhance or complement their academic performance. In this context, the developmental model does not appear to have any relevance to learners in this study. To conclude, working children are doubly disadvantaged by being poor, and by not being able to benefit fully from school.

CHAPTER 9

FORGOTTEN ROOTS

9.1 INTRODUCTION

When I embarked upon this study, I had no illusion about the intricacies of the challenges I might encounter. I was mindful of the fact that I was dealing with children from poor families whose perception of the researcher might be skewed by their background. My position as a school counsellor, nevertheless, helped to reduce the gap between the researcher and the researched. My interaction with the learners as the study progressed evoked strong memories in me of my own distant childhood. I paused to reflect on my family background and realised that the similarities were stunning. I could also respond to the critical questions of the study. It then dawned upon me that the study I have been involved in was not just about working learners at a certain school in Kwa Mashu. It is a phenomenon that transcends topographical boundaries and time. It is on these bases that, in order to facilitate a comparison between my life history and that of the learners I studied, my family background is necessary in this thesis.

9.1 MY ROOTS

My father left the common matrimonial home in Clermont Township, Durban when I was in Grade 2, leaving our mother and us to our own devices. Initially, we were a family of 11, but two brothers and a sister passed away at a tender age. My father was an ordinary labourer whilst my mother was a housewife involved in what is now called the "informal sector of the economy". My mother, a very strong and dedicated woman, sold anything from chickens to beans. She supplied her relatives from the rural areas with clothes that she used to sew at home in exchange for bags of beans. She had people helping her to sell clothes in the nearby "Frametax Cotton" industries. Every Wednesday we, as young as we

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were, had to iron and pack suitcases of clothes, which would be delivered to the homes of my mother's friends. They would sell these at work. I had the duty of looking after my mother's chickens before and after school. I had to work from about 3 to 6 every afternoon and I would wake up very early to be able to feed them and refill the paraffin lamps before going to school. She also had a herd of goats that she would sell at the beginning of each year to pay for our school requirements.

As we were all growing up it became difficult for my mother to raise us. This was the time when all her friends were out of work. Laws relating to selling within factory premises were tightened. You needed to have a permit, and that was hard to get. This coincided with the outbreak of a chicken disease which killed all her chickens. She turned to selling soft drinks, which was not that profitable. 2 of my brothers were at technical college and the eldest at university. My mother had no choice but to ask them to give up their studies to help her provide for all of us. They decided amongst themselves that the eldest should finish while the two looked for work. Thereafter, each of the younger children was assigned to each of the three brothers in the order of age. The brothers assumed responsibilities in respect of each of us. The arrangement was that my mother was to pay for our schooling up to Grade 10 and each brother to take over his partner until tertiary level. My brothers decided that no matter how good your Grade 12 results would be, no girl was to go to university. This decision was based on stories told by my elder brother about the behaviour of girls at university during his time.

My mother arranged for me to sell with a certain woman in a place called Umolokohlo, which is an informal settlement on the Umgeni riverbank opposite Newlands West and Reservoir Hills. I had to sell clothes during the weekends. A woman would fetch me every Saturday and Sunday morning and we would walk together passing through a very dark and dangerous forest. She sold medication as she was an agent for a certain company. I used to come home in the afternoons- very tired but satisfied, as business was good. During the holidays I

joined a group of children who were selling from house to house. This was during the early seventies when most of the informal settlements mushroomed in Clermont Township. This was nearby an industrial area called New Germany, which attracted thousands of migrant workers. Cottage owners had to provide accommodation for them. This created a market for hawkers to sell their commodities. I walked about seven *kilometres to join the queue for meat at the "Umvuzane Butchery". The tripe was selling at 50c a piece and we would sell it for R1 a piece. This was a good profit. From the butchery we would proceed to sell in groups from house to house until everything was sold. There were dangers with this work as some rude customers used to chase us away by setting their dogs on us. One of the older girls ended up getting married while she was very young to one of her favorite customers who used to buy a lot of meat from her only. At home they would wait for me to check any surplus meat before they could cook their curry for supper. There were no holidays for me. All the day's collections were given to my mother. This money was used for our school needs and food. Clothes were never a problem as my mother was selling them and we never bothered about ready-made clothes. After finishing Grade 10, my elder brother had to take over paying for my education.*

At the college of education where I studied towards my teaching certificate, I continued selling clothes to non-teaching staff. My mother had to provide for my two sisters and a brother who by then was also helping at home. My elder sister was a child-minder for working women, with her duties being to escort young children to a nursery school before going to school every morning. She took care of them in the afternoon before their parents arrived from work, which was often very late in the evening. She also provided domestic services to one of the tenants who accused her of stealing his candles. At school, she sold boiled eggs for my mother. My younger sister gleaned her selling skills from an old woman selling vegetables at the bus rank. She used to sell izimbeleko[31], which became one of my

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[31] A traditional food

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mother's latest ventures. She also worked as a domestic worker in Westville, which was mainly a white suburb then, during certain holidays. While at the college of education she saw an opportunity for selling my mother's work to teachers who used to come for adult choir competitions at the college. My youngest brother worked as a gardener in Westville. All his earnings were invested in the neighbourhood stokvel[32]. At the end of each year my mother would collect his lump sum. He would be given part of it to buy himself clothes. The four of us also used to collect boxes and bottles for recycling. This we exchanged for fruit and vegetables from one of the neighbours who was my mother's friend. She sold vegetables from her home.

In 1976 my eldest brother took the younger 2 siblings to stay with his family in Newcastle. To my surprise my mother informally adopted another child, a young girl who had a very abusive mother. Her mother was using this 10-year-old girl and her sister as her substitutes in doing domestic work for locals who would pay the mother. The girls were malnourished with tattered clothes, while their mother was always drunk. This addition to the family created a situation where my mother had to work even harder. After completing my J.S.T.C. (Junior Secondary Teachers Certificate) I had to take over from my brother and maintain my three younger sisters and a brother. This was done with the help of my eldest married sister whose family accommodated my two younger sisters. I had to pay school fees and buy clothes for them as well as look after my mother. Apart from that, my mother demanded that we assist the children of her brother-in-law that stayed on the farm. I was responsible for my uncle's daughter from Grade 8 to a tertiary institution, which was difficult financially as her primary education had gaps. I supplemented my salary by buying clothes from some shops in Grey Street in Durban and selling them to teachers.

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[32] An informal lottery arranged between a small group of individuals as a way of saving and accumulating a large sum of money.

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I started teaching in 1981 at a local high school in Clermont. In my first year I taught Mathematics to Grade 10 and 12 pupils, Physical Science to Grades 11 and 12 pupils as well as Biology to Grade 10 pupils. At the beginning of 1982 I discovered that my post was a temporary one and I did not get my salary at the end of January. At the beginning of February of the same year learners complained about two teachers who they claimed were not doing their duties. Instead of addressing the issue the principal called a meeting of learners and educators. In this meeting the qualifications of educators were discussed indicating to learners that the educators they were complaining about were the only ones appropriately qualified to teach in a senior secondary school. The rest of the teachers were supposed to be at either primary or junior secondary schools. I also discovered that teachers who came after me were given permanent posts. This is the school where I had worked with a number of people in the community to help needy learners. This was too much for me emotionally and I had to leave the school.

I never regretted that decision but I was uncomfortable about the fact that inevitably needy learners were let down. One particular case pops into my mind; namely that of a boy in Grade 11. He was away from school for two weeks. I asked his friends to accompany me to his home. I discovered that he was asleep, very sick and alone in his rented room in the informal settlement (a few kilometres from school). He had no food and only one old blanket. I alerted a certain retired nurse and businesswoman working for the Catholic Church in Clermont distributing food parcels and blankets to the poor. We worked together with this woman as well as my brother-in-law who provided accommodation for the sick learner until he got on his feet again. The boy had no parents and was working in Westville as a garden boy during the weekends and holidays. He left school immediately after my departure and became a labourer in a bakery. I used to blame myself for that since he was good in both Mathematics and Physical Science. He later on explained to me that it was useless for him to be at school as

he had a duty to look after his 2 younger siblings who had been taken by relatives after the death of their parents.

In the new school, I together with my three friends (for the period 1982-1985) obtained good results. It was at a time when the Grade 10 pupils had to write external exams. We organised morning classes and holiday programmes. We were always at work. We created an excellent working relationship with our learners. I was also a church youth leader. We organised a number of weekend activities with the daughter of the priest who happened to be my friend and a colleague at work. We had many learners attending the church programmes. This was the period during which I was drawn to politics with the same teachers I worked with. We were members of the Clermont Youth League Executive Committee. Though we were criticised, I was too involved to entertain such criticism. Reality surfaced after I had been away for a year upgrading my qualification from a certificate to a diploma at Eshowe College of Education. When I came back in 1985, I witnessed the volcanic anger of learners who at the time were against dedicated teachers. In fact, such teachers were seen as standing in the way of freedom. This was a blow to me. I remember one afternoon when I was going to teach my Grade 10 Mathematics class and I was told by learners to leave the school as it was not safe for me to be there. I learned that war had been declared against schools that were teaching when learners were supposed to be attending meetings that were convened during school hours. No one in the staffroom bothered to tell me this, not even my comrades in politics who were also responsible for some of such meetings. I felt betrayed and I saw myself as an instrument that was used to attract many learners who believed in me from both school and church. I witnessed a number of brilliant learners dropping in their school work for they spent sleepless nights guarding the houses of some political figures, fighting and being killed by both police and rival political parties, some being sent to jail in numbers and some leaving the country.

There were instances when soldiers would come in numbers to school claiming that learners were throwing stones at them. It was at the beginning of 1986 when soldiers sprayed teargas all over the school. There were about 200 of us hiding in the Science laboratory, which is the size of 2 classrooms put together. Both learners and teachers were on the floor as teargas canisters were thrown into the building through the windows. I realised at that moment that our learners were used to the situation and that they knew what to do. They took the teargas canisters quickly before it landed and threw them back while others opened the taps so that we could wash our faces in the running water. We were suffocating and our eyes were painful and red. It all ended when the principal arrived after taking a learner who had been run down by a truck to a clinic. We were ordered by the soldiers to evacuate the school premises immediately. Little did we know that a Grade 8 boy had already been shot dead. We were told that he had been throwing stones at the soldiers.

It was in 1987 when learners turned against teachers. Teachers were seen as instruments of the state. Even those involved in the struggle like myself were let down by learners. It was a day like any other day; we were informed to go to the school hall as the Learner Representative Council had convened a meeting. Learners were singing political songs whose meanings signalled that they were very angry over something. We were so frightened that for the first time we hoped soldiers could come and rescue us. After a few minutes, teachers from a neighbouring school arrived accompanied by their learners who were also in the same mood: singing and dancing. What transpired from the meeting was that learners from both schools were not happy about a number of issues. Amongst these were complaints about Physical Science, which they thought was crippling their future, as it was not easy to pass. A Science teacher from our school was further accused of asking learners to come to school with some flowers for her General Science class in Grade 8. She was rudely reminded that not all homes had flowers like hers. I was accused of enforcing the wearing of school uniforms

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for girls. I learned for the first time from that meeting that learners from all schools had to wear black and white.

Learners had to come out with suggestions on the type of punishment to be imposed on their teachers. Some suggestions made were very degrading for any human being. It took one girl to rescue the teachers. She indicated that they were losing direction, as they were supposed to voice their grievances and the issue of punishing teachers was not part of the agenda. At the end of the meeting, some school equipment such as over-head projectors was destroyed. 3 science teachers (including me) decided to leave the school. Parents demanded from the circuit office that we go back to the same school. The circuit inspector made it clear to such parents that they did not own the teachers. It was his duty to protect teachers therefore he was not in a position to force teachers back. It was painful at first and there was a feeling of being betrayed. The same teachers who thought they were part of the struggle were thrown to the learners by forces I still do not know. This incident left scars in my heart that cannot be healed.

It is because of the above reasons that I transferred to my present school. I had to move some kilometres from the township where I was born. The other two teachers decided to go to rural areas. My experiences of the previous school changed me. I used to boast of being able to teach all three Science subjects because of my Junior Secondary Teachers Certificate (J.S.T.C.). In my new school I had a problem when I was allocated General Science. I was still angry and was not in the position to invite the same treatment from these learners too. The period from April 1987 to June 1989 had a healing effect on me. 1 developed a love for learners again, something that was taken away from me in the last meeting with learners at my previous school. Here things were different. Learners were disciplined, liked to learn, and the atmosphere was conducive to teaching and learning. All learners were working hard to be included into the Science stream. The principal was a very good Science teacher who put the interests of learners first. Teachers received whatever they needed for their subjects. He was

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very strict and there was order in his school. The school was nicknamed the "Prison" by learners from other schools.

Things started to happen when the principal was accused of being a "sell-out" who was always seen in the company of some whites. I did not take these allegations about his political status seriously. But on a particular Thursday morning we noticed that learners were busy making petrol bombs. Others were seen entering the school gate with ingredients for such bombs. During the tea break they were on either side of the gate singing and chanting calling for the informer to come out and face them. God did miracles on that day, for all that I remembered was the principal driving past them and he escaped. We were left with very angry learners who were blaming each other for the escape of the principal who by then was labelled the informer. Police arrived and there was teargas all over the place. We had to run for our safety. What followed was the destruction of the school, which was only used for meetings. Eventually, the school was not functioning at all as teachers were reporting to the circuit office. This happened for a number of days until the "circuit inspector"[34] issued an instruction for all teachers to go back to school stating "that was what they were paid for".

This was followed by a real mockery of education. The S.R.C would convene meetings every now and again reminding teachers how to behave, how they wanted to be treated, and that no one was going to fail at the end of the year. In December 1989 the principal was killed by a mob in another section in the area. We were told that he was stoned to death. At his funeral some of the staff members did not want to be identified with him. They did not sit with other staff members and refused to use flowers provided for staff members. We were all branded as responsible for instigating learners against the principal. We felt so

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[34] A Department of Education official.

guilty that for a number of years it was not easy to mention the name of our school in meetings with other teachers.

A hatred for the learners started to build up within me. I wanted nothing to do with learners. They had failed me on a number of times. I kept on reminding myself that after all I was not related to them. Other teachers had a similar experience. I witnessed so much evil in the hands of learners and I had learnt how cruel they could be. After the death of the principal the school was turned into a death row for some learners. They were picked up for reasons ranging from not being active in the struggle to being related or having friends in the notorious group called " Amasinyora" which was associated with much of the killings in the area. A number of learners were killed during the period 1990 to 1991. I will never forget a day when a Grade 9 girl was taken out of the school premises by other girls and killed. It was said that when the "Amasinyora" set alight some houses during the previous weekend and only this girl's home was not destroyed. The other girls cut her breast open with knives. I cried for days imagining the pain the girl suffered before dying. The female teachers hated the learners more after this incident. This is the group that was usually the victims of maltreatment from learners, as they had to tow the line and were also soft targets. In retaliation some of them became very hard towards the learners. In some instances sick learners were openly told to seek help from other learners and not to come to teachers. Teachers were so demoralised that they did not care whether they went to class or not. Learners were moving to the next class whether they passed or not. The "back to school" campaign of 1994 saw learners who should have been in primary schools skipping more than two grades, giving them entry to high schools. Teachers had to account for poor Matriculation results. The once motivated teachers became so stressed that some became addicted to narcotic substances.

When I was doing the B.Ed (Hon), we were given a number of topics from which to choose and prepare a presentation. No one was prepared to tackle a topic on

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the informal sector of the economy. Through a game of numbers devised by the lecturer, I ended up with the topic. Though I majored in Economics, I did not study this topic in relation to high school learner's future careers. I had very high marks for the presentation. I was very motivated. The topic was raised again when I was asked to do a presentation on what drives township pupils away from school. I did a case study in my school and discovered that some learners absented themselves from school on certain days to sell at pension pay points. This time my lecturer, Rashida Naidoo, arranged for me to make a presentation on the topic to UDW lecturers at the Senate Chamber. An outstanding researcher, Jonathan Jansen, praised me. After that afternoon I knew my experiences and my knowledge needed to be shared with others through research. I had to further my studies. The topic on the informal sector of the economy was going to be the future topic for my research.

When I was doing my Masters degree at the University of Natal, I was again assigned the same topic for a presentation. This time I was more convinced that this was going to be my research topic. Towards the end of the first year, something happened. A lecturer doing a module on "Changing schools" asked us to write down topics on our real concerns about education. I had to devise a topic there and then as he indicated that he was not interested in any stale topics from the library. I came up with a topic on problems faced by learners from families living in a single room in Clermont Township. In fact I was touched by the reasons given by Kwa-Mashu learners when asked about their poor academic performance. Many of them indicated that there was no space for them to do schoolwork at home. They lived in 4-roomed houses. Indications were that their families were extended and there were many people living in one house. This made me think deeply for I am from Clermont where about seventy percent of the houses are cottages, and families rent single rooms. If learners from f4-roomed houses were experiencing such problems, I wondered how many more problems children from single-room homes experienced.

This became the study for my Masters degree. Findings were that many people were staying in single rooms. Most of the learners from such families were involved in the informal sector of the economy for a living. This was an eye-opener for me. I was so taken aback that for the first time I noticed some youngsters (when I was going to Kwa Mashu) carrying baskets every morning coming from the railway station. Upon enquiring from learners in my school I was given the same explanation as that given by learners from Clermont. Learners sell during the early hours of the day before coming to school. One day, I was asked to pick up matriculation examination papers for my school from the circuit office in 1999. It was about 6.30 a. m. I was shocked to see a number of school-going children pushing trolleys overloaded with some stuff. I felt pity for them. I recognised one of them as a Grade 8 learner. When I talked to him later he indicated that he was selling from a table in front of his home. He bought his goods in the morning before going to school and there was someone at home who helped him when he was at school. This was the boy who towards the end of the year was suspected of selling dagga within the school premises. He vowed that he would not stop selling dagga and that he would rather leave the school. He said this was the main source of income for his family. He did not return to school the following year.

Also in 2000, one of my Grade 12 learners came back a month after being chased away for not paying the school fees. His explanation was that he was still working for his school fees all this time. He was washing cars for undertakers. He only works once a week on a Thursday and earns R50 a day. He was also responsible for his mother. He had to work for four weeks in order to pay R100 school fees. He was hoping that by the time school fees were demanded his mother would have got her pension. His mother had applied for it 6 months before. These stories made me realise that there is a need for all stakeholders in education to know the struggles of these learners. I also realised that no one else is in a position to tell the story except learners themselves. I then decided to embark on the study using the voices of the learners.

I have been a Guidance teacher for a number of years. I had to offer my services during my free periods as I always had a full load as a Science teacher. I have been specialising in study skills and career guidance since these were necessary for Grade 12 teachers. At the end of the year 2000, I was motivated by learners' stories during my very short counselling session during breaks as well as discussions with educators involved in the School Disciplinary Committee. I then decided to fully attend to learners' problems. I had been lucky enough to get an extra Science educator in my department and this reduced my teaching load. As I was responsible for the timetable, I fitted myself into slots to suit my needs. Those needs included the provision of Guidance and Counselling in a proper way. I set aside 3 hours every Wednesday morning for such sessions. It was through these sessions that I was exposed to issues affecting learners in trying to cope with their schoolwork. Again, the issue of providing for learners' survival financially proved to be common in most cases. As before, teachers referred learners to me, but later on there was a snowballing effect where most learners were advised by other learners to see me.

This has resulted in me seeing more than 10 learners a week. There were emergency cases when I had to drop whatever I was doing and attend to learners. At times the stories I listened to left me so depressed that I failed to teach for the whole day. I had heard realities about working school children, child abuse, illegitimacy, the effects of traditional polygamy on children, cultural beliefs (issues such as that of umqhoyiso) affecting girls, exposure of girls to HIV/AIDS as domestic workers caring for sick relatives, crime, and drugs. This involvement together with the focus of my study has changed me.

I was a very strict teacher responsible for discipline and insisting on girls wearing the proper school uniform. For the first time this year I had a number of girls not wearing the school uniform. I have listened to the plight of learners from poverty-stricken families who either need some time before they can buy the

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uniform or are not able to buy it. I have initiated a program where Grade 12 learners donate their uniforms to needy children at the end of the year. This is working for a number of girls who are benefiting from the program. Despite this there are those who remain without the uniform.

I find myself understanding the plight of learners. I have organised a group of teachers to join the "Street Law" workshops at the former University of Natal with me. Two teachers who attended the "Street Law" programme are on the disciplinary committee. Together we started to teach Human Rights to all grades. This we do by sacrificing our time. I have never thought that teaching about some human rights issues can be so fulfilling both to me as an educator and to my Grade 11 learners. Learners have been able to do something to highlight important events for our country at school. On the other hand, a situation has been created where learners are questioning some of the practices at school. I have been part of the group that initiated the drafting of the guide aiming at helping school governing bodies in making informed school policy decisions on issues of religious observance in public schools. Learners from my school indicated that their rights were violated by the manner in which morning prayers were conducted. When I reported the issue during street law seminars we were asked to provide an informed guide for School Governing Bodies. The group from my school submitted the first draft.

I have changed and am no longer that friendly person. Instead I find that people are angered by my presence at school meetings. I am always talking about social issues affecting learners' performance while everyone else is convinced that our learners are very lazy with their schoolwork and that some educators are not doing their duties. At one such meeting some educators were shocked when I provided them with the statistics of homeless girls in Grade 11 only. There are instances where I am in conflict with a practice where a child is told to bring his or her biological parents to school whenever he/she has done something wrong or to explain why school fees are not paid.

At community level, I am very interested in matters pertaining to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. Where I live, I am in the process of arranging for such learners to use the public hall for studying in preparation for examinations. I have discussed the possibility of including some learners in the skills development programmes with my neighbour who is in the ANC women's league committee. I hold discussions with my mother-in-law, who sells at the pension pay points, about some schoolgirls who are also selling. These girls would take the place of those who are not able to go to places that are far away like Gauteng, in the minibus used by the group of sellers. She explains to me how these girls would still come in their school uniforms on Fridays joining older women. They change their clothes and they leave for the whole weekend. They sell day and night at these religious festivities like the one for the St. John's church, which is famous for hawkers. They come back early on Monday, a few hours before going to school. I am now working with a number of organisations on different issues pertaining to the social problems of learners. I have to bear the costs of attending to all learners' needs like taking them to places where they can get help, telephoning necessary organisations on behalf of learners. I use my car to transport learners to the nearby police station and local clinic whenever there is a need.

In 2001 I had the pleasure of being part of a celebration of women doctoral learners at the University of Durban-Westville. The guest speaker was Professor Fatima Meer, a seasoned academic and politician. This occasion had a special effect on me. A new perspective as a researcher was created in me. Hitherto I had my own perceptions about research. I do not know whether it was framed by what I have learned. I usually assume that when you do research, you interact with your participants as guided by certain given research rules. This will end up with you, the researcher, thanking the participants for participating in the study verbally and providing a token in some instances. The researcher comes out with his/her study representing the knowledge s/he did not have before. The end product is the researcher's study being completed. Though the study might have

some impact on you personally, it is nevertheless just a study. You have fulfilled the usual gap by adding or highlighting certain information in whatever field you have been studying.

Prof. Fatima Meer, in her speech, posed the following questions to the audience: "You have done your research and so what? What have you done with your research? What have you done for your participants?" She explained that she was involved in a project with Chatsworth homeless/evicted families. She was part of the body, which was trying to help these people. It all started when she and her group were doing a survey. The purpose of the survey was fulfilled but it did not end there. Something was done for the participants by the researcher. I always thought there is no need to physically interfere with the setting except for gathering knowledge. I thought it was the duty of the interested parties to use findings of the study to make changes. This was further reinforced in me when I studied feminist approaches. One of the standpoints is to empower the disadvantaged group you work with in your study. I then used my own interpretations of Prof Meer's speech. I reviewed my study and ascertained what I can do for these learners. I had to plough back something which some of them will use to improve their lives.

I initiated a project of finding jobs for learners with teachers from school or their friends. I made posters, which learners placed all over the school. I collected data about the type of jobs that can be offered as well as the skills possessed by learners who are in the job market. A number of jobs were created for learners within the school. One of the life history participants in my study, Thando, began working for her class teacher until she finished her Grade 12. The project has snowballed to other schools too. Teachers from my school recommend learners to their friends and contacts. Though this is just a drop in the ocean, I feel that at least I have done something. I have taken what I have learned from my study seriously. I also made it my duty to inform educators in staff meetings about the problems experienced by learners involved in the informal activities.

Working for these learners means providing food, education and shelter for them and their families. The starting point is finding them jobs. Food is a problem, as we all know that food is expensive. In secondary schools learners from disadvantaged communities, unlike their counter parts in primary school, do not have the privilege of being included in the feeding scheme. This has been a project by the Department of Health for the past 3 years. To me this action of providing food for learners in lower classes only is like saying "Now that you are older you have overcome hunger. You can continue with your education on your empty stomach". I perceive this as one of the causes of the involvement of a number of high school learners in criminal activities.

Older learners experience discrimination of some of the state benefits because of their age. The department of social welfare provides a commendable service with its social grants. However, their contribution is geared for the younger learners only. In high school there are AIDS orphans, too, who head families. The high school learners who in most cases are over age do not qualify for foster-parenting schemes. Their younger siblings are given to foster parents leaving them to fend for themselves. Though I am not very knowledgeable about fostering I know that it is possible to eat where your younger siblings are eating. Even if it means eating their leftovers, there is something in your stomach. In this school there are pathetic cases as far as food is concerned. There is for example a boy who walks for seven kilometres to the Kwa Mashu hostel to get food from his late father's friends and relatives. He goes there every afternoon for his supper. It is the only meal he can get in a day. These people are working and they sometimes come back from work late. This means cooking late and the boy gets to eat very late. He always comes to school on an empty stomach.

1 initiated a soup kitchen project as means of dealing with such problems. This project is not taking off smoothly because of financial constrains. I asked educators to adopt some needy learners by providing them with lunch boxes.

Left-over weekend meals from educator's homes are also appreciated. This serves as Monday morning breakfast for some learners. It has become a habit for Grade 12 educators to contribute money at the beginning of the year for this project. Grade 12 learners use this money to buy goods to be sold within the school premises. They raise money for their afternoon tea and jam/peanut butter sandwiches. This is a very difficult project to drive as I have written a number of letters asking for donations from business people, but all the appeals have been in vain. I am not sure whether it is not successful because I do not have appropriate or powerful contacts. I dream that one day someone will hear the pleas of secondary school teachers on the issue of hungry learners in our schools. I raised this at a number of HIV/AIDS workshops as I am from one of the North Durban nodal schools. There is nothing tangible that has come out of this except some promise to look into the matter.

As educators from disadvantaged communities we are used to unfulfilled promises. This time I will not wait until all the current learners in the school have become jailbirds. It might sound odd why I started with Grade 12. These learners have been deprived time-wise of working fruitfully for themselves both at school and at home. Grade 12 educators expect these learners to be at school at all times. Generally learners work during school and after-school hours, on weekends as well as during holidays. In this particular school, Grade 12 learners are expected to be at school as early as 6.45 for their Mathematics morning classes. Most of them are from informal settlements like Richmond Farm and Lindelani, which is quite a distance from school. They have to remain at school until 5 p.m., as there are extra History and Biology classes in the afternoon. At times some educators utilise their breaks to teach. During weekends they are supposed to be at school for all three commercial subjects (Business Economics, Economics and Accounting). All school holidays from March to September are fully booked for subjects by their hardworking educators. These are the factors that lead to such an emphasis and heavy teaching programmes for Grade 12

learners. There is, therefore, no time for hard-up learners to participate in economic activities.

No matter how hard working a learner might be, s/he cannot achieve good results on an empty stomach. Food is the first need under such demanding conditions. A hungry learner is a signpost for a less than 50% pass rate in the Grade 12 examinations. Such results always invite pressure on educators from the Department of Education. The soup kitchen project for Grade 12 was initiated in the year 2001 during the data collection stage of my research. The results have improved progressively ever since, from 28% in 1999, to 31% in the year 2000, to just above 78% in 2002 and 2003. I am very proud of myself for this. I do not need to be praised by anyone for this. Some of my colleagues who were once skeptical about my activities within the school have changed their attitude towards me.

I am vociferous on rapes in our school and on how the police department fails our learners in this matter. I was shocked by the stories told by female learners during the study. Presently I feel that my life is in danger because I have exposed corrupt, lazy and irresponsible police officials. These men and women are very unsympathetic towards the girl child and I am branded as a threat to their jobs. I thank the Department of Education for organising an HIV/AIDS program for school governing bodies (SGBs) and School Management Teams for nodal schools. This workshop, which I have attended twice thus far, has been my highest achievement where I have shouted on top of my voice and I am being heard. During the presentation for the first sessions of the workshop in October 2003 I related the story of a Grade 8 learner from my school who was continuously raped by the same boy from December 2002. Through the help of workshop facilitators the perpetrator was arrested at the beginning of 2004.

9.2 RESEARCHER'S STORY REFLECTED BACK INTO THE STUDY

9.2.1 Family Background and Poverty

Similar to most of the working learners in this study, I never enjoyed family life where there were both parents. My mother was a single parent. She was never formally employed and she relied on selling clothes, chicken and soft drinks. Her children, who juggled school and work, supplemented her small income. My mother was a very hard-working woman who struggled to raise her children on her own under very trying circumstances. She never gave any of her children to relatives to raise. She struggled for all of us to be educated. This is contrary to most of the mothers of learners involved in this study. Those mothers were perceived as lazy, irresponsible, uncaring, cruel and discriminating by most of their working children.

Poverty is one of the reasons highlighted by most working learners for mixing school and work. My life experience was no exception as I started working when I was doing Grade 12. When I was selling meat, my family had to wait for surplus, unsold meat before they cooked dinner. This is similar to the experience of learners who do not know what to cook because their parents buy dinner when they come from work. When all my mother's efforts were exhausted, she devised a strategy where my 3 older brothers had to drop out of school and work. They were given the responsibility of paying for the education of the three younger sisters, including me. Some of the working learners in this study are sacrificing their education for that of their siblings. They are paying and feeding them out of their little earnings. Working learners indicated that their family lives were disturbed once when they were separated from one or both of their parents. In most cases it was because of death, divorce, or parental neglect. I also fall in the last category as my father deserted his family when I was in Grade 2. He was

working and earning enough money to take care of us, but just as in Thobile's case, he was not prepared to do so.

9.2.2 Gendered Activities

The sexual division of labour starts at home where girls have different duties in comparison to boys' duties. It is no coincidence that this guides even the type of work children do. All my brothers started working as gardeners in the nearby white suburb. This is the only type of work they were involved in. This is a paying job and all their earnings were invested in the local stokvel (bank saving clubs used by most Africans in townships to invest their monies on a yearly basis) where my mother was a member. At the end of the year my mother would withhold part of their investment in preparation for their school needs the following year. The rest of the money was given to them to buy themselves nice clothes for Christmas. Girls were involved in different activities. My oldest sister was responsible for the ironing and packing of suitcases with clothes to be sold in addition to doing domestic work for the family. My second sister was a child-minder, responsible for taking and picking up children to and from their perspective pre-primary schools. She was paid R20 a month per child as they were always three. This work was supplemented by selling cooked eggs in school. My third sister was a domestic worker for a white family in the same suburb where my brothers worked. She was paid R10 a day and she worked during holidays and some Saturdays. She also sold izimbeleko at the local bus rank. I started work by selling meat in the local informal settlement. My mother later on decided that I should sell clothes like her in another informal settlement, a few kilometres away from home. On good days I would come back with a lot of money. All the girls' earnings in my family were given to my mother. There was discrimination, as the boys were given some of their money and the girls had to submit everything. My mother would either buy us second-hand clothes or we got the surpluses from her production. Also, the salaries of girls and boys were

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different. Girls earned less than the boys even if they were working more hours. A good example is that of my sister who was a domestic worker for the same family where my younger brother worked. My brother earned R5 more yet my sister, who cleaned the whole double-storey house and did some washing and ironing, earned less.

9.2.3 Impact on Academic Achievement

My experience is different from most of the working learners involved in this study. No one from my family worked during school hours except for my sister who also sold only during the school breaks. This was made possible by the fact that teachers at that time kept children's products in their lockers and these were given back only during the breaks. I have never repeated any grade in school. My mother gave us time to study and this was also made possible by the fact as there were many of us at home, all family chores were shared and done on time. When I was in Grade 12, I stopped selling during the holidays as teachers used to teach during this time. I only worked on Sundays since there were extra classes for Mathematics and Science facilitated by medical learners from the then University of Natal. Thus, unlike learners in this study, it was possible for me to get time. My mother had an interest in the education of her children and by the time I was in grade 12 things were not that bad at home. While the family status improved as the time passed by, that of the learners involved in this study became hopeless with time. One of the reasons may be that they were the first-born in their families and like my brothers they had to drop out of school and contribute towards the education of their younger siblings. While it was possible for my brothers to get jobs after dropping out of school, it is not possible at this time for learners to get jobs as the rate of unemployment is very high. Others indicated that although their older siblings were working, they were irresponsible and selfish. In such instances it is parents who encourage them to drop out of school and work full time.

To know and understand learners involved in the informal sector of the economy is about understanding us as a society. The purpose of knowledge and Science, particularly in Social Science, can be seen as the need to raise consciousness and understanding, to improve communication, promote solidarity and to create conditions for freedom and emancipation. We inquire about the economic activities of learners, not to master and control them but to know who we are and where we have come from. Furthermore, this revealing document of an ex-working learner provides an opportunity for people, particularly those living in the same society and culture and constituted within its structures of power, to critically reflect on their own lives.

9.3 ON CLOSING: SOME WAYS FORWARD

According to the ruling in the Grootboom case (Government of the Republic South Africa and Others vs Grootboom and Others, 2000 (1) SA 46 (CC)), children who are orphaned, abandoned and not in the care of their families for other reasons, have a direct claim against the state to be provided with basic nutrition, shelter, basic health services and social services. No child should go without its basic needs being met due to poverty.

It is inappropriate for working learners to go to school on empty stomachs. The government must extend the feeding scheme projects, which are presently catering for disadvantaged learners in primary schools to secondary schools of the same status. Children who were hungry in primary school do not outgrow hunger just because they are in secondary schools. The state must take its responsibility to prevent these hungry children from exposing themselves to dangerous activities. Proper housing has to be provided for poor people as many of the working learners are from informal settlements, which is not a proper environment for raising children, and is not suitable for doing any school work.

Every child has a right to have access to education on the basis of equal opportunities. The government must be fully responsible for the provision of basic needs (such as water, electricity, and other needs for proper running of the school) for poor communities. These measures will allow schools not to put pressure on poor learners on issues of school fees. Parents and learners with problems have to be given alternative ways of paying school fees like paying in installments as well as exchanging their services for what they owe. Proper monitoring and screening of foster-parenting grants by the Department of Social Welfare, to avoid abuse of such grants, must be implemented. For some of the children who are struggling to survive, there are adult relatives collecting grants for their own consumption. Information on grants must be given properly to the community. People must know whether they qualify for such support and how to apply for it. This will protect poor people from exploitation in the form of bribing departmental officials for what is rightfully theirs. Measures must be devised to ease the process of getting the required documentation, such as birth certificates, to access social grants for children, the aged as well for those who are sick.

The Department of Education within disadvantaged schools must create posts for school counsellors. Such posts have potential to promote the smooth interaction between service providers and the school. Learners should be able to get counselling within the school as well as proper advice on issues such as HIV/AIDS and rape. This will result in schools being proactive in interacting with local social welfare institutions in order to identify and assist needy learners properly.

The school curriculum must be practical in view of the fact that many children are already working. The educational system has failed to raise achievement levels and reduce dropout as well as class repetition, which is mainly in Grade 10 and 11 in some township secondary schools. Mid-year examinations must be properly planned such that teaching continues after examinations. This will sustain the market for working learners while enabling learners to complete the syllabus on

time. There is a need to encourage teacher professionalism by enforcing a constructive culture of teaching and learning. Teaching methods in the classroom have to adapt to the reality of working pupils. There should be no teaching during breaks or any other free time for learners when teachers do not honour their designated periods. Teachers must properly attend to time allocation of work according to the syllabus to avoid teaching during holidays when other learners are working. Schools have to provide flexible timetables to accommodate working learners. Disciplinary measures have to be taken by the department against teachers who demand that learners provide them with services (e.g. braiding) during school hours.

Where land is available, community members must join hands with non-governmental organisations in helping schools develop and maintain their own sports grounds within the school premises. This will make it easy for learners participating in sport to practice within the school rather than leaving school during breaks for practice in community soccer fields. Schools must be adapted to the special needs of the poor by initiating night-schools where there are many working learners. This will enable them to continue with school even after circumstances force them to drop out and work full time.

An integrated approach is needed where, for example, ministries of social welfare, housing, health, finance and education as well as members of the community should work together.

Though studies have been done both in South Africa and abroad on working children, this particular study looked specifically at those who combine school and work. This is the group of children that is missing in the statistics on child work as they are usually counted as learners rather than workers. Very little, if any, has any research has been done on ways in which their involvement in economic activities affects the academic performance of such children.

9.4 LIMITATIONS

During the course of the study it became clear that the question of birth order should have been included as most learners stressed the order of their birth and how it impacted on them. The question of school labour, which dealt with the cleaning of classrooms, was not properly answered. Part of the analysis of the data from questionnaires was done by a computer with the help of someone who does not speak the learners' language, which is isiZulu. I spent hours re-checking as learners decided to answer some questions in isiZulu. It has been such a powerful experience to read and analyse the stories.

9.5 CONCLUSION

The problem of working learners does not lend itself to easy solutions. Poverty rears its ugly head at every turn. It needs to be tackled at different levels of government, that is, from national to local government levels. In this context, poverty alleviation projects would go a long way to address the problem. However, one should harbour no illusions about the complexity of the challenges. There does not seem to be any rules-of-thumb or quick solutions. However, concerted interventions from both the government and the private sector could yield tangible results.

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