



**An investigation into adult learner dropout at a community learning centre in KwaZulu-Natal**

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# Abstract

Adult education is essential to national development. Education is the bedrock of any nation's quest to stem poverty. Adult education affords individuals previously denied access to education another chance at learning and self-development. It helps bridge the gap between the learned and the unlearned and further accelerate the achievement of set national goals and objectives. Thus, this research examines adult education in general, but from the propensity for dropout amongst adult learners. Specifically, the research investigated the adult learner dropout at Khulubuse Community Learning Centre. The study involved thirteen (13) participants who were purposively selected. These participants include five learners who had dropped out, five learners who had completed their studies, and three educators from this adult learning centre.

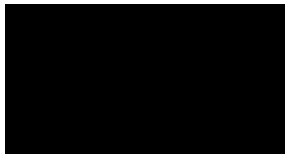
Three research questions guided the study: What are the causes of learner dropout from the AET program at Khulubuse Community Learning Centre CLC? How does teaching and learning at Khulubuse Community Learning Centre CLC contribute to learner dropout? How can learner dropout be prevented at Khulubuse Community Learning Centre CLC? Data were collected using semi-structured interviews. The interviews were thematically analysed. The theoretical framework (Tinto's theory) was used as a lens for analysing data.

This study shows personal learner issues at home such as work obligations, personal circumstances, class-related issues and logistical issues impacted on learners' decisions to drop out. Teaching and learning at the centre, however, had far less impact. The study concluded with recommendations on strategies that could reduce learner drop out at the centre.

# Declaration

I, Precious Primrose Bongiwe Maphumulo, declare that

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs, or other information unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
4. This thesis does not contain other persons' writing unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:
  - a) Their words have been re-written, but the general information attributed to them has been referenced.
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5. This thesis does not contain text, graphics, or tables copied and pasted from the Internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source is detailed in the thesis and the References section.



Student signature

15 July 2024

Date

Dr Anne Harley

Name of supervisor/s



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Signature

# Acknowledgements

I want to give God all the glory and praise. He has done so much for me. He kept me safe throughout the years, through all the sickness and COVID-19. He gave me wisdom, and it is by His Will that I can finish and submit this dissertation. I want to give thanks to

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- My cousin Mrs Lindiwe Magwaza, who pushed me so much to study, and my study mates Lungiswa Malinga and Philisiwe Magaqa, who always motivated me to learn.

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# List of abbreviations

ABET -	Adult Basic Education and Training
AET -	Adult Education and Training
CLC -	Community learning centre
CSD -	Conceptual schema for dropout
DHET -	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoE -	Department of Education
GET -	General education and training
GETC -	General Education and Training Certificate
MDG -	Millennium Development Goals
MID -	Model of institutional departure
NQF -	National Qualifications Framework
SAQA -	South African Qualifications Authority
SDGs -	Sustainable Development Goals
UNESCO -	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF -	United Nations Children's Fund

# Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

I have taught for many years as an educator in the Early Childhood Development Programme in the uMzinyathi District in KwaZulu-Natal, one of nine provinces in South Africa. I have observed that some of my learners drop out of school before completing Grade 9. Completing their basic education through attending a community learning centre (CLC) is the most viable option for them. However, learners sometimes drop out of CLCs before finishing their Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) Level 4, which is the equivalent of Grade 9.

This study arose out of my experience of seeing many adult learners who enthusiastically enrol in the CLCs with clear visions and aspirations to complete what they have started; but as time goes on, they end up dropping out before completing their ABET Level 4. I wanted to explore why these adult learners drop out, and how this could be prevented. I wanted to know whether their dropping out had anything to do with the learning and teaching at the CLC. My study therefore focuses on the causes of adult learner dropout at a CLC in Greytown, KwaZulu-Natal.

## 1.2 Background

Education is very important as a tool that can be used to develop people's lives. According to UNESCO (2014), education is essential in promoting human development. Furthermore, the adoption and implementation of various instruments and frameworks such as the Education for All (EFA) Goals, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has sought to achieve this right (UNESCO, 2014, p. 12).

From its global perspective, the UNICEF report on the 'State of the World's Children' for 2014 revealed that some 57 million primary school-aged children were out of school in 2011 (UNICEF, 2014). The UNICEF report of 2014 additionally pointed out that "only 64% of boys and 61% of girls of secondary school age are enrolled in secondary schools worldwide, and 36% and 30%, respectively, in the least developed countries" (p. 18). Therefore, we can anticipate a continuing high number of adult learners who do not complete their initial education. According to Rumberger (2001), dropping out of school is costly for both the dropout and society, since the prospects of the individual, the family, and the community are negatively affected.

As a result of this perspective, there has been a global focus on adult education for decades. The 1990 World Conference on Education for All resulted in the “Jomtien Declaration”, a framework for action to meet the basic learning needs of all, including adults. The SDG relates to education specifically includes adult education, because of criticisms that the MDGs do not sufficiently include the lifelong concept of education. The 2015 UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education set goals that stated that anyone should be able to study or get educated without having to pay. Anyone, whether young or old, must be able to write and read, and education must be fair for both males and females. However, according to the Fourth *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (UNESCO, 2019), adult education is not prioritised when it comes to money, with more than half of the countries reporting that funding adult education as a proportion of public education had either stayed the same or decreased.

South Africa is a signatory to the UNESCO Charter on *Education for All* and has ratified most international instruments on providing quality education. Section 29 (1) of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (Act 108 of 1996) recognizes that everyone has a right to basic education, including adult basic education. The post-apartheid government introduced different acts and policies to encourage adults to attend adult learning centres to learn basic literacy and numeracy skills (Ndlovu, 2005). The *Adult Basic Education and Training Act* was passed in 2000. However, the *Continuing Education and Training Act* of 2006 (No. 16 of 2006) argued that the Adult Basic Education and Training Act of 2000 was largely ineffective. Therefore, in March 2013, the *Further Education and Training Colleges Amendment Act* (No. 1 of 2013) was signed into law and withdrew the *Adult Basic Education and Training Act* of 2006. The *White Paper on Post-School Education and Training* (DHET, 2013) expanded access to adult education. Adult Education became the responsibility of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in 2015 (Aitchison & Land, 2019). Despite these efforts by the government, CLCs still have a high dropout rate.

When analysing the dropout rates at university and Technical Vocational Education and Training TVET colleges, Khuluvhe and Netshifhefhe (2021) concluded that there is a decline in dropout rates at universities, whereas, at TVET colleges, the low throughput rates could be “attributed to both high levels of repetition and dropout” (p. 15). This reasoning could also be assumed true for the adult centres, considering the high number of learners who drop out of TVET colleges. Adult learners may be affected by similar social and economic factors that lead them to drop out of TVET colleges.

In 2023 the DHET released its annual report on statistics on post-school education and training in South Africa, which indicated that in 2021, 38.4% of learners at Community Educational and Training Centre (CETCs) were enrolled for their National Qualification Framework (NQF) Level 4 programme s. Out of those learners, 19.2% were from KwaZulu-Natal. Of those who registered for the NQF Level 4 examination in 2021, 72.4% wrote the examinations; 61.1% of those who wrote completed the qualification (or 44.2% of those who registered).

Khuluvhe and Netshifhefhe (2021) indicated that females make up a large proportion of learners enrolled at adult centres. This is supported by the DHET report (2023) that points out that 73.7% of learners at NQF Level 4 in 2021 were females. Although both reports do not provide a clear understanding of why this phenomenon exists, they agree that it is something that needs to be further studied.

When comparing the enrolment rate against the completion rate for KwaZulu-Natal, it is notable that the province had the second highest number of enrolments in 2020 and achieved “the largest number of students who registered, wrote and completed NQF Level 4: ABET Level 4 qualification were from KwaZulu-Natal” (DHET, 2022, p. 54).

Table 1.1 reveals learner performance and dropout at Khulubuse adult centre for three consecutive years from 2020 to 2022. The table shows that more than half the students who enrol for Level 4 at the centre drop out, although this is declining. According to Fraser and Killen (2003), it is important to keep evaluating the progress of learners and evaluate issues faced.

*Table 1.1: Learner dropout at Khulubuse adult centre AET Level 4 (from previous admission document)*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Entries</b>	<b>Retained</b>	<b>Dropped out</b>	<b>Dropout Rate (%)</b>
2020	40	15	25	63%
2021	36	17	19	53%
2022	32	19	13	41%

Statistics on post-school education and training in South Africa reflect a dynamic landscape marked by both challenges and opportunities. Enrolment rates have shown improvement over

the years, with more students accessing higher education institutions and vocational training programmes (Statistics South Africa, 2021). However, disparities persist, especially in rural areas and among historically disadvantaged communities, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to ensure equitable access to quality education.

Employment outcomes are another crucial aspect of post-school education statistics in South Africa. The alignment between educational qualifications and job market demands remains a critical issue, with the youth unemployment rate often disproportionately high (DHET, 2020). Efforts to bridge this gap include enhancing skills development programmes, fostering partnerships between educational institutions and industries, and promoting entrepreneurship as a viable career path. The statistics serve as vital indicators for policymakers and stakeholders to design informed strategies aimed at fostering inclusive and sustainable economic development.

### 1.3 Location

I conducted this study at an adult CLC in Greytown, a small town that is about 63 kilometres from Pietermaritzburg, the provincial capital of KwaZulu-Natal. This area falls under the uMvoti local municipality, uMzinyathi district. uMvoti includes both rural and urban areas. According to the census of 2022, Greytown has a population of 15,811 (Stats SA, 2022). Many citizens of the town work in the forest on timber production because it is a main source of employment for the people. There is no previous verifiable research on CLCs in Greytown.

As I have noted, the learner dropout rate is still a problem in many of these centres. Although it is a worldwide phenomenon, the dropout rates are very high in South Africa. This study investigates reasons for adult education and training (AET) learners' dropout rate before completing the NQF Level 4 at Khulubuse Satellite Centre located in the northwest of Greytown.

### 1.4 Rationale and significance of the study

The focus of this study was thus on the reasons for the high dropout rates at an adult learning centre, which I will refer to as Khulubuse Satellite Centre in Greytown. As stated, this study sought to establish why adult learners at this Centre drop out before completing their NQF Level 4. Creswell et al. (2006) state that a research problem is an issue, concern, or problem that predicates the need to conduct research in that area. The main problem that this study was concerned with is the extent to which adult learners drop out before completing NQF

Level 4. Many scholars around the world (Abdulkarim & Ali, 2012; Park & Choi, 2009) have conducted studies on dropout rates among adult learners, and I discuss South African studies in particular on adult learner dropout in Chapter Two. Although there are many studies on dropout amongst adult learners, I am not aware of any studies that have been conducted in the uMzinyathi district. Moreover, there are few research studies conducted to establish the causes for adult learners from disadvantaged communities to drop out, despite the promise of a better life that adult education promises. The study also sought to recommend, through the research findings, strategies that can be used to prevent learner dropout.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) argue that the significance of a study tells readers why the analysis is critical and indicates the rationale for the researcher's choice of a particular problem. This study has the following significance:

1. This study might assist in making recommendations on the strategies that can be used to prevent or reduce learner dropouts from the Greytown area CLC.

I hope that the study's findings, and my recommendations (as discussed in the final section of this thesis), will highlight potential strategies or interventions that could be effective in retaining adult learners. By understanding the specific challenges and needs of the Greytown Area CLC, the CLC itself could hopefully be better equipped to support their learners, and policy makers hopefully will be better equipped to design policies that can be applied to similar context across the region, as I discuss below.

2. The study could also potentially provide adult learning centres with the requisite empirical data to further help them provide support to their adult learners.

By identifying potential strategies, the study's findings could help the CLC included in this study, and other CLCs in similar context, to develop targeted interventions based on the specific needs of adult learners as identified in the study, and identify necessary resources and tools to support their learners more effectively.

3. Findings could help policymakers formulate workable and practical policies to mitigate dropout rates amongst adult learners.

I hope that the study could help policymakers develop policies that are context-specific and based on the realities of adult learners in areas like Greytown Area CLC, as they emerge from the study. The findings could also potentially help policymakers tailor existing policies to address some of the barriers identified by the participants, which are contributing factors to

adult learning dropout. Such policies could help promote lifelong learning and flexible learning pathways to accommodate adult learners' varying needs.

## 1.5 Research objectives

Given the focus and purpose of the study, the objectives were:

1. To identify the causes of learner dropout from the AET programme.
2. To examine teaching and learning strategies that could lead to learner dropout.
3. To establish strategies that could be used to prevent and reduce learner dropout.

## 1.6 Research questions

The study thus sought to answer the following questions:

1. What causes learners to drop out of the AET programme at Khulubuse CLC?
2. To what extent does teaching and learning at Khulubuse CLC contribute to learner dropout?
3. How can learner dropout be prevented at Khulubuse CLC?

## 1.7 Research design

Maree et al. (2016) refer to the research design as the plan for generating, analyzing, and interpreting empirical evidence that will be used to answer the research questions. I employed a qualitative research style which allowed me to explore the depth and complexity of the phenomenon. I interviewed ten adult learners, five of whom had dropped out, and three educators at the centre. I discuss my research design in detail in Chapter Three.

## 1.8 Outline of the remainder of the dissertation

I have chosen to structure the rest of the dissertation as follows:

### **Chapter Two: Literature review and theoretical framework**

Chapter Two discusses the literature review that locates the study in a body of knowledge and provides its conceptual underpinning. I outline the debates concerning adult learner dropout by reviewing related literature. I also discuss the theoretical framework (Tinto's conceptual schema for dropout (CSD) model), which underpins the study and explain how this relates to its aim and objectives, helping me analyse and understand the data I collected.

### **Chapter Three: Research methodology**

This chapter explains the research design and methodology employed in this study. In addition, it discusses data quality issues and ethical considerations.

### **Chapter Four: Data presentation**

In this chapter, I present the data collected during the study in the form of transcripts of the interviews I conducted.

### **Chapter Five: Analysis and interpretation**

This chapter presents my analysis and interpretation of the data collected, using inductive and deductive thematic analysis.

### **Chapter Six: Summary, conclusions, and recommendations**

This final chapter summarises the findings, conclusions reached and recommendations arising from the research.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

Chapter One served as the introduction, and outlined what the study is about, providing the background and rationale and the key research questions and how I went about answering them. The chapter concluded with a summary of the remaining chapters in this dissertation. The following chapter provides a review of the literature relating to the study.

# Chapter Two: Literature review and theoretical framework

## 2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive overview of the existing research and theory related to adult learner dropout at community learning centres, with specific reference to the South African context, and KwaZulu-Natal in particular. This section aims to interrogate existing factors that contribute to adult learner dropout, identify gaps in the current literature, and thus pave the way for the current investigation. The chapter also discusses theoretical frameworks used to understand adult learner dropout that include models of student persistence and retention, particularly Tinto's model.

## 2.2 Literature review

The review begins by providing an overview of the concept of an adult learner and adult education, including the concept of lifelong learning. This is followed by a discussion of existing literature on adult learner dropout that includes global and local views on the phenomenon and its underlying causes. This study considers several factors that have been identified as impacting adult learner dropout: economic factors, personal motivation, institutional factors, and the learning environment.

Many former colonial societies are using education as a key tool to close the gap between adults who, as a result of historical colonial injustice, did not have the opportunity to pursue an education, and those that did (Dhlamini & Heeralal, 2014). In the case of South Africa, the claim is that rather than serving as venues for teaching and learning between 1976 and 1994, schools were instead used as sites for settling political disputes (McKay, 2007). As a result, adult education is desperately needed in South Africa to redress the lack of basic education at the school level. South Africa is also using adult education as an additional development strategy. However, the problem of adult learner dropout continues.

In my review of the literature, I first examine the question of who an adult learner is and discuss various misconceptions and beliefs about adult learners. I then briefly consider the issue of school dropout, which continues to lead to the need for basic adult education, before discussing adult learner dropout and the contributing factors towards this phenomenon, and

thus consider the arguments put forward to increase adult learner retention in more detail. I consider broader literature before specifically turning to studies done on adult learner dropout in South Africa.

### **2.2.1 Adult education and lifelong learning**

Any discussion on adult education needs to first tackle the issue of exactly what an adult is, and what an adult learner is. Knowles (1998, p. 68) defines an adult as “an individual who performs roles associated with adults by culture, an individual who perceives himself or herself to be responsible for his or her own life”. An adult learner is an adult who is enrolled in educational activities after reaching the traditional compulsory education age and is seeking to advance their knowledge, abilities, or credentials (Smith, 2019).

The term andragogy specifically describes the approach to teaching adult learners (Dhlamini, 2012). Adult learners frequently enrol in formal educational institutions to achieve their goals and objectives, because they often have different life experiences and responsibilities than traditional students, which can impact their lives. Their goals and objectives could include acquiring specific skills or knowledge that will enable them to perform better at work and thus improve their lives. For example, adults who believe that learning computer skills would be beneficial may enrol in computer literacy classes (Dhlamini, 2012). Thus, the majority of adult learners are usually committed to their studies and have a strong desire to complete them and gain the necessary knowledge and skills. Nevertheless, adult learners frequently drop out.

Having explored the concept of adult learner, I now turn to the issue of adult education itself. Adult education has been defined in various ways by different scholars. According to Baatjes and Baatjes (2008, p.8) adult education is a “broad field that includes basic development offered through formal, non-formal and informal education means and by a variety of actors - the state, civil society organisations (CSOs), business and industry and private providers”. Merriam and Brockett (2011, p. 9) add that adult education is a “process whereby a person undertakes learning in order to achieve knowledge and skills”. Adult education can be formal, such as that offered within CLCs, or non-formal, such as when a group gets together and organises a learning event outside of a formal space (Baatjes & Baatjes, 2008).

Akintolu et al. (2022) discuss several common misconceptions about adult education. The first of these is the idea that adult education is only for those individuals who did not succeed

in traditional education. When people mistakenly believe that education is a second chance for those who did not excel in traditional education, many adults continue to believe that they can never be taught new information. The second misconception is that adult learners are less motivated or capable than young learners. The effect of this is that adults may have an assumption that they will not be able to participate and perform when they return to traditional classroom settings. Thirdly, adult education has been misconceived as ‘night school’. While night schools have traditionally been associated with adult education due to their flexibility for individuals with daytime commitments, contemporary education offerings have expanded to include innovative formats and technologies to cater to the different learning styles and schedules.

Adult education is also increasingly seen as part of lifelong learning. Lifelong learning is the ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge for personal or professional development throughout an individual's life (Pillay, 2010). It encompasses all forms of learning formal, non-formal, and informal that occur in various settings, such as schools, workplaces, and everyday life experiences (Pillay, 2010). Lifelong learning is essential in adapting to rapid societal, technological, and economic changes and plays a key role in personal empowerment, social inclusion, and employability (Pillay, 2010).

There are thus a number of key concepts that underpin lifelong learning:

*Continuous Learning Process:* Lifelong learning reflects the idea that education does not end with formal schooling but continues throughout life. The European Commission (2001) defines it as the learning activities we undertake throughout life to try to improve our knowledge, skills, and competences in different areas, including personal, civic, social and/or employment-related. This concept recognizes the need for individuals to continually update and adapt their skills and knowledge in a rapidly changing world.

*Formal, Non-Formal, and Informal Learning:* Lifelong learning includes various types of learning (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011). Formal learning occurs in institutionalized settings like schools and universities, where learners follow a structured curriculum and earn credentials. Non-formal learning takes place outside formal education, such as in community workshops, professional development courses, or online learning platforms (Subotzky & Prinsloo, 2011). Informal learning happens through everyday life experiences, such as learning from work, family, or social interactions. Livingstone (1999) highlights that informal learning, while often overlooked, is critical for personal growth and adaptability.

*Adaptability and Employability:* Lifelong learning is seen as increasingly important in the knowledge economy, where technological advancements and globalization demand constant development of new skills. Schuetze and Slowey (2002) argue that lifelong learning enhances employability by allowing individuals to adapt to changing labour market conditions, by, for example, continually updating their digital skills to remain competitive in their fields.

*Personal and Social Development:* Beyond economic benefits, lifelong learning fosters personal growth and social inclusion. Field (2001) emphasizes that lifelong learning contributes to an individual's well-being, confidence, and sense of purpose, promoting active citizenship and participation in community life. Through lifelong learning, individuals can pursue hobbies, cultural activities, or volunteer work, enhancing their quality of life.

However, as with adult education, lifelong learning can be viewed from different perspectives, and may be influenced by very different educational theories, as is reflected in the above discussion. For example, Humanistic education, developed by theorists such as Carl Rogers (1969), argues that education should focus on personal growth and self-actualization. From this perspective, lifelong learning is viewed as a tool for individuals to achieve their full potential and live meaningful lives.

Experiential learning, proposed by David Kolb (1984), emphasizes the importance of learning through experience. It aligns with lifelong learning by recognizing that people learn through their daily lives, not just in classrooms. This process involves reflection, critical thinking, and the application of knowledge to new situations.

The concept of Andragogy, introduced by Malcolm Knowles (1978), argues that there is a specific method and practice of teaching adult learners (as opposed to children). Knowles argued that adults are self-directed learners, motivated by internal goals and life experiences, making lifelong learning an intrinsic aspect of adult education.

Governments and international organizations, like UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Learning, advocate for lifelong learning as a human right and cornerstone for global development (Pillay, 2010). Lifelong learning is seen as fostering continuous personal, social, and professional growth, acknowledging diverse learning styles and adapting to modern demands (Pillay, 2010). Cultivating a lifelong learning culture is seen as crucial for individual empowerment, social inclusion, and sustainable development.

However, while the concept of lifelong learning is widely recognized, challenges remain in its implementation, particularly in developing countries. Boshier (1998) notes that access to lifelong learning opportunities can be hindered by economic constraints, since many individuals may lack the financial resources or time to engage in continuous education. In addition, in many parts of the world, limited access to technology and the internet restricts opportunities for online learning, whilst education systems may not be flexible enough to accommodate non-traditional learners, such as working adults or those in rural areas.

### **2.2.5 Adult education in South Africa**

Adult education in South Africa is profoundly influenced by the country's history. Looking at the historical background of adult education in South Africa helps us to understand the advancements that have been made in adult education from the 1950s to 2015, and especially the transition from the Department of Basic Education to the Department of Higher Education and Training, and the establishments of Community learning Centres.

Prior to 1994, South Africa's apartheid system led to major educational inequalities, with black people receiving poor education (Smith, 2019). Non-formal education (NFE) emerged as a way to oppose apartheid and prepare people for democracy (Smith, 2019). Various groups, including religious organizations, NGOs, and political parties, played a role in providing education outside of the government system (Smith, 2019).

The *Bantu Education Act of 1953* made it illegal to educate black people outside of government schools, but the African National Congress (ANC) proposed the Freedom Charter in 1955 to promote access to education for all. The Charter laid down principles for education in South Africa and set the stage for major improvements in education during the 1990s.

As is clear from the above discussion, adult education and training were formerly a neglected part of the South African education system (Daniels, 2020). During apartheid, the majority of South Africans, particularly those from marginalised communities, had limited access to education. However, after the end of apartheid, the government has made significant efforts to address historical inequalities and improve educational opportunities for all citizens (Rakoma & Schulze, 2015).

After 1994, South Africa faced a significant challenge with high levels of illiteracy among adults, which were seen as leading to widespread unemployment due lack of marketable

skills (Dhlamini, 2012). Thus, in 1994 the Government of National Unity (GNU) established the South Africa Qualifications Authority (SAQA) to ensure high-quality education and training across all levels (Daniels, 2020). Under the GNU, the DoE combined all AET programmes into the NQF as a parallel system to basic education for children (DHET, 2013). In this way, adult education paved the way for youth who are not in school to complete their formal basic education (DoE, 2000).

The ANC government, which came into power after the 1994 democratic elections, prioritized lifelong learning opportunities for all citizens. In response to this, the government implemented various policies and legislative frameworks to support Adult Based Education and Training (ABET). This included the introduction of the *ABET Act* in 2000, which regulated ABET and allowed for the establishment of Public and Private Adult Learning Centres (Dhlamini, 2012). In addition, the Ithuteng campaign was launched in 1996 as a national pilot ABET programme. Overall, these initiatives helped to formalize and strengthen adult education in South Africa, recognizing it as a basic human right essential for reducing unemployment and improving the skills of the population.

In terms of basic education, the South African government introduced various policies and initiatives to provide quality education to children of all backgrounds. For instance, the *Basic Education Act* of 1994 aimed to establish a single, non-racial, and democratic system of education (Daniels, 2020).

In South Africa, adult education now forms part of the post-secondary education system, although it also includes school-level education. South Africa is currently revising and renewing its post-secondary education system. This is related to structural issues that have recently emerged about unemployment, inequality, and poverty, which disproportionately affect young people (Rule et al., 2015). In South Africa, it is believed that if adults develop educationally, and thus economically, the country will not face such high levels of unemployment, poverty, and illiteracy (Dhlamini, 2012).

As part of the global trend towards lifelong learning, discussed above, South Africa has also embraced lifelong learning. In South Africa, the National Development Plan (NDP) emphasizes lifelong learning as a means to address inequality, unemployment, and poverty by enhancing skills development (Pillay, 2010). Programmes such as Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) aim to provide education opportunities for adults who missed out on formal schooling, thereby promoting social inclusion and economic growth (Pillay, 2010).

It is important to note that programmes like ABET continue to be essential within South Africa (and many other countries) because of ongoing problems within the schooling system – and in particular, the problem of learner dropout at the schooling level.

### **2.2.2 School learner dropout**

As was mentioned in the introduction to this literature review, particularly in the context of South Africa, schools were used as a tool to advance the political agenda between 1976 and 1994 (McKay, 2007). This resulted in a high number of adults with little or no schooling, requiring adult education. However, dropping out of school is a global concern, and means that adult education continues to be a necessity. School dropout thus needs to be considered alongside dropout from adult education. In addition, some of the concepts arising from school dropout are useful in looking at adult learner dropout. The global school dropout phenomenon is thus briefly discussed before I specifically look at adult learner dropout in more detail.

Ananga (2020) divides dropouts into two categories: temporary dropouts and permanent dropouts. Temporary dropout is defined as short-term or long-term dropout where the learner leaves school and comes back later to complete school education. Within the temporary dropout category, Ananga (2011) and Evans (2020) distinguish between sporadic and events-based dropout. For example, sporadic dropout is defined as missing a few months of school and then returning to finish. In contrast, event dropout occurs because of life crises such as becoming pregnant, which may cause the learner to drop out for an extended period. Permanent dropout, on the other hand, is when people have no intention of returning to school (Ananga, 2011; Evans, 2020). However, school dropout, whether temporary or permanent, at the primary, secondary, or tertiary levels, has long-term negative consequences.

School dropout rates vary across countries, socioeconomic backgrounds and educational levels; but the issue persists on a significant scale. In the United States of America (US), according to Granovski (2018), approximately 1.2 million students drop out of high school before graduating. Furthermore, approximately 25% of first-year high school students fail to graduate on time. As a result, identifying the risk factors that may lead to dropout and developing early interventions is critical (Kauffman, 1999). McManus (2020) claims that early indicators of the propensity to drop out, such as anxiety, bullying, and poor attendance, have a mounting effect on disengagement and may ultimately cause students to leave school.

To prevent learner dropout, McManus (2020) argues, it is crucial to concentrate on the behavioural, emotional, social, and environmental factors.

In contrast to these reasons for school dropout in developed countries such as the US, studies in countries in Africa have identified several other factors. According to UNICEF (2018), 3.6 million Tanzanian children dropped out of school between 2012 and 2016, with 1.3 million being primary school-age children (7-13 years old) and 2.3 million being adolescents (14-17 years old). This is despite the constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania (2008) guaranteeing education as one of the fundamental rights of every individual. UNICEF (2018) argues that poverty is a major contributor to school dropout, because many children work to support their families, or because financial resources to help children attend school are limited.

Malawi consistently ranks as one of the ten poorest countries globally and one of the lowest-performing nations for literacy in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2019). Primary education in Malawi is compulsory from ages 6-13 years old. However, secondary school is optional, and there is a high dropout among adolescents. Of around 4.6 million learners enrolled in schools throughout Malawi, only 8% complete secondary school (UNICEF, 2018). The rate of dropout is more prevalent among girls compared to boys and is often associated with teen pregnancy and early marriage. Thus UNICEF (2018) argues that it is essential to create interventions focusing on the girl child and proposes that the government of Malawi implement community empowerment programmes such as cooperatives and involve stakeholders to invest in them. The programmes could include recreational activities in school that could keep children within the school system (UNICEF, 2018).

As discussed earlier, during apartheid in South Africa, the ruling National Party did not invest in black children's education, because they were destined to become labourers and members of South Africa's working class (Aitchison, 2003; Baatjes & Mathe, 2004). Many black people were forcibly relocated to segregated townships that were underdeveloped and lacked infrastructure to support their children's education. According to the 2001 census, more than 4.5 million out of 14 million adults had never completed their general education (Daniels, 2018; Rule, 2006; Statistics South Africa, 2003) or never attended school in their lives (Aitchison, 2003; Baatjes, 2003; Statistics South Africa, 2003). However, after 1994, the ANC-led government decided to right the wrongs of the past. Thus, section 29(1) of the South African constitution states that "everyone has a right to basic education, including adult

basic education”. The *South Africa Schools Act* (Act 84 of 1996) section 3(1) states that all children in South Africa must “attend school from the first school day of years in which such learner reaches the age of seven years until the last day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of fifteen years or ninth grade whichever comes first” (DoE, 2000).

Qakisa-Makoe (2005) argues that poverty is not a significant factor in learner dropout at the primary school level because the government covers most of the primary school needs. However, extra costs associated with school, such as uniforms and transportation, contribute to students dropping out – and mostly at the secondary school level: “But the most school dropout in South Africa occurs in grades 10 and 11, resulting in 50% of the learners in any one cohort dropping out before reaching grade 12” (Spaull, 2015, p. 34). This is because, at this level, most cannot afford school necessities such as uniforms, lunch during breaks, or even costs associated with participation in extracurricular activities. These obstacles reflect social disempowerment and devastating experiences of poverty, which are exacerbated by a lack of adequate social support from their families and communities (Van Dijk & Van Driel, 2012).

The different factors leading to school drop-out in different contexts have prompted the proposal of many different strategies to prevent school dropout. Freeman and Simonsen (2015) suggest that implementing personalised learning plans has shown promising results in reducing dropout rates, whilst in a study by García et al. (2018), it was found that mentorship programmes greatly contributed to the reduction of learner dropout in disadvantaged communities. Malama (2016) suggests that strengthening parent and community engagement in schools through regular communication and involvement can be effective in mitigating learner dropout. Hameed et al. (2024) indicate that creating a positive and inclusive school culture has a significant impact on reducing learner dropout rates. According to the UNESCO report (2017), providing financial assistance and scholarships to economically disadvantaged students can be a potential strategy in preventing learner dropout.

### **2.2.3 Adult learner dropout**

As should be clear, when learners drop out from school, their further education is likely to fall largely within the field of adult education. Thus, as long as school dropout continues, the need for basic adult education will continue. This is one of the reasons why adult education remains so important in South Africa. Mutual (2016) argues that challenges within the general education and training band of education appear to be on the rise; the resolution may

thus lie within adult education. Adult education should be utilised as a vehicle to transform adult learners and help them to keep up with change or even influence it. The role of adult education is to produce citizens that will themselves implement change and development.

However, when adults do become involved in adult education, they might not remain – they might drop out. The phenomenon of adult learner dropout is a multifaceted issue influenced by various factors, as highlighted in the broader literature. Demographic variables like age, gender, and socioeconomic status can significantly impact dropout rates among adult learners (Smith, 2018). Balancing work and study commitments often leads to stress and burnout, making it challenging for learners to manage their responsibilities effectively (Smith, 2018; Brown, 2020). This struggle is exacerbated by rigid programme schedules and limited flexibility, which can hinder adult learners' ability to navigate the competing demands (Brown, 2020).

Additionally, personal factors such as health issues and financial constraints play a crucial role (Johnson & Smith, 2019). Health issues can impede academic performance, while financial pressures may force learners to prioritize immediate needs over education (Brown, 2020). The cost of education, such as tuition fees and living expenses, can be a substantial barrier, particularly for those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991). This lack of financial resources often translates into limited access to necessary support services, further impacting retention rates (Wilson, 2017). Moreover, the absence of robust support systems within educational institutions and personal lives can contribute to dropout rates (Brown, 2020). For instance, lack of encouragement and understanding from family and friends can influence learners' decisions to discontinue their studies (Johnson & Smith, 2019). Furthermore, encountering personal and academic difficulties, such as a mismatch between programme goals and learner expectations or unengaging teaching methods, can further exacerbate dropout rates (Idoko, 2018; Givens, 2007).

In essence, addressing adult learner dropout requires a holistic approach that considers not only the educational environment, but also external factors affecting learners' lives. Strategies to promote learner retention should focus on enhancing flexibility, providing adequate support services, addressing financial barriers, aligning programme goals with learner expectations, and implementing engaging and inclusive teaching methodologies that cater to diverse learning styles.

Adult learner dropout refers to the phenomenon where adult students who are actively enrolled in educational programmes discontinue their studies before completion (Brown & Jones, 2020). Adult learner dropout is a persistent issue within the field of adult education, and it occurs in various types of adult education settings, such as college or university programmes, vocational training programmes, and continuing education courses (Dhlamini & Heeralal, 2014). While dropout can vary depending on the programme and population, understanding the factors contributing to this issue is crucial in designing effective adult education interventions. Thus, I explore what the broader literature says about the reasons behind adult learner dropout, and the strategies for promoting learner retention, before discussing studies done specifically on adult learner dropout in South Africa, and strategies for promoting learner retention that arise from the studies.

According to the general literature on adult learner dropout, demographic variables such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status play a significant role in dropout rates (Smith, 2018). Many adult learners juggle work and study commitments simultaneously. This balancing act often leads to high levels of stress and burnout (Smith, 2018). The conflict between work and schedules and class timing, and the limited flexibility in educational programmes, can make it difficult for adult learners to manage their responsibilities effectively (Brown, 2020).

Adult learners often have additional responsibilities, such as career commitments and family obligations, leading to time constraints and increased stress (Johnson & Smith, 2019). The competing demands of their time and energy from these multiple responsibilities and obligations, may lead to feelings of overwhelm and difficulty in balancing their commitments and may lead to dropout (Bulluck, 2017). Another factor is gender inequity, which can also contribute to dropout rates, particularly for female learners facing domestic responsibilities (Brown, 2020). Moreover, adult learner dropout rates can also be influenced by personal factors, such as health issues (Johnson & Smith, 2019). Illness or disability can impede a learner's ability to meet academic demands, while attendant financial pressures may force individuals to prioritize immediate needs over education (Brown, 2020). Financial constraints can greatly impact an adult's education, as tuition fees and living expenses can become significant barriers for adult learners. The cost of education, that includes tuition fees, textbooks, and transportation, may strain their already tight budget, making it difficult for them to continue their studies (Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991).

Learners from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to encounter financial barriers and often lack necessary support services (Wilson, 2017). Adult learners often lack robust systems, both within educational institutions and in their personal lives (Brown, 2020), such as lack of encouragement and understanding from family and friends, which may also contribute to dropout rates (Johnson & Smith, 2019). Personal and academic challenges adult learners may encounter, can also affect their motivation, and a lack of necessary support networks that can provide emotional, academic, and practical assistance exacerbates the situation. Without a strong system, they may feel isolated and unsupported, contributing to their decision to discontinue their studies (Bulluck, 2017). Adult learners may also be academically underprepared. Those who lack adequate academic skills or encounter difficulties adjusting to the learning environment may become discouraged and drop out (Wilson, 2017).

Other issues include a mismatch between the programme and the learner's goal, or unengaging teaching methods, which further contribute to dropout rates. Unmet expectations can be a barrier, because adult learners may enter educational programmes with specific goals in mind, such as career advancement or personal growth. If they feel that these expectations are not being met or that education is not relevant to their needs, they may be more likely to drop out (Idoko, 2018). Another consideration is that each learner will have different learning preferences, such as visual, auditory, or kinaesthetic. If the learning style does not align with the instructional methods used in the programme, it can lead to frustration and difficulty in comprehending and retaining information (Givens, 2007).

The lack of qualified AET trainers and personnel is a significant factor that can hinder the effective running of programmes and it can lead to a lack of engagement and relevance for adult learners, potentially contributing to dropout (Festus & Adekola, 2015). If individuals involved in the day-to-day activities of AET programmes lack the necessary knowledge and skills, it can lead to ineffective instruction and support for adult learners. This may contribute to learner frustration and disengagement, ultimately leading to dropout rates at the learning centre (Festus & Adekola, 2015). Therefore, an absence of qualified AET trainers and personnel in AET programmes can directly impact the success and achievement of the objectives. If learners do not receive effective instruction and support due to the lack of qualified personnel, they may be less likely to persist and complete their education goals, contributing to dropout rates (Festus & Adekola, 2015). This absence of qualified personnel could well be having a direct impact on the success of adult learners at a particular

community learning centre in KwaZulu-Natal. Addressing this personnel issue of qualifications and training could be an important aspect of efforts to reduce dropout rates and improve the overall effectiveness of adult education programmes in the region.

#### **2.2.4 Adult learner retention**

Adult learner retention refers to the strategies and practices aimed at helping adults remain within learning programmes or courses (Roebuck & Reinhard, 2019). It is thus the other side of adult learner dropout and closely relates to it. Learner retention focuses on strategies and interventions designed to improve adult learner persistence and completion rates (Burgers & MacDonald, 2020). By addressing the factors that contribute to dropout, institutions can enhance the learning experience and increase learner retention. The literature argues that it is crucial to identify and implement support mechanisms that can help adult learners overcome barriers and stay engaged. Promoting learner retention thus necessitates a comprehensive approach that addresses both internal and external factors.

Retention involves factors such as motivation, support systems, learning strategies, and overall learning environments, which can contribute to whether adult learners stay committed and remain active in their pursuit of knowledge and skills. I discuss some of the strategies that have been identified that can help improve or promote adult learner retention.

In the first instance, clear learning objectives and outcomes should be provided to help adult learners understand what they will gain from the learning experience (Johnson et al., 2019). To put it another way, the learning environment must be motivating in the sense that elements like knowing one's objectives, being enthusiastic about learning, and the relevance of the subject matter, are present to increase adult learner motivation (Brown, 2020). So, content should be relevant and practical; adults are more likely to remain in their studies and remember information if it is relevant and applicable to their lives and careers (Davis, 2017).

A flexible learning environment with a flexible class schedule, online courses, and blended learning formats should be offered to meet the diverse needs of adult learners. Such adaptability will enable them to more seamlessly integrate their education with other responsibilities (Merriam & Tisdell, 2020). Adult learners can be helped to manage their multiple responsibilities by providing flexible scheduling options, financial aid, and childcare assistance, for instance.

In terms of instruction strategies, adopting learner-centred teaching practices, such as active learning techniques, real-world applications, and adaptive technologies, can increase engagement and motivation. Recognising one's learning style and seeking out materials or resources that enhance learning effectiveness can help retain adult learners (Givens, 2007). Smith (2018) argues that active learning techniques must engage adult learners in hands-on activities. This ensures that adults can apply what they have learned in real-life situations and continue to build upon their knowledge and skills.

Incorporating multimedia resources such as videos or interactive simulations should also be considered because it appeals to various adult learning styles (Lee & Miller, 2019). Policies and programmes that bridge academic gaps and provide foundational support can significantly improve retention rates (Smith, 2018), by addressing the academic unpreparedness of many adult learners.

A supportive learning environment should be promoted or fostered where adult learners feel comfortable to ask questions and seek guidance (Brown & Johnson, 2020). Comprehensive student support services tailored to adult learners to help with their unique needs should be established. Services such as academic advising, counselling, mentoring, and networking opportunities to provide the necessary guidance and encouragement help to reduce the dropout rate (Hu, 2020).

Educational institutions need to provide these comprehensive support services (Wilson, 2017). In addition, building strong support networks through mentoring programmes, academic advising, or peer support groups, can help people feel more connected and less isolated. Creating a sense of community among adult learners is necessary to foster a supportive and engaging learning environment to give adult learners chances to interact with their peers, encouraging social interactions, collaborative learning activities, and networking opportunities can improve retention (Garcia & Brown, 2020).

In the teaching methodology, regular opportunities should be offered for adult learners to reflect on their learning progress and connect new knowledge with prior experience, creating an inclusive and supportive education environment (Wilson, 2016). Incorporating regular assessment methods, such as quizzes or projects, to evaluate adult learners' understanding and reinforce their learning, is useful (Kingston, 2017). Another strategy in the methodology is chunking and repetition, where complex information is broken down into smaller, more manageable chunks to aid comprehension and retention. Regular repetitions of key concepts

and ideas should be included throughout the course to reinforce them (Thomson & Martinez, 2020). Constructive feedback should also be given to adult learners to assist them in understanding their strengths and weaknesses, allowing them to concentrate on areas that require improvement and reinforcing learning (Thomson & Martinez, 2020).

### **2.2.5 Studies on adult learner dropout in South Africa**

In essence, the link between South African basic education and adult education and training after apartheid lies in the intensive effort to rectify historical inequalities and ensure that all individuals, regardless of their background, have access to quality education and training opportunities (Rule et al., 2015). The goal is to strengthen and support families, communities, and individuals to promote an inclusive and prosperous society (Daniels, 2020). However, despite all efforts to stabilize adult education, as discussed earlier, adult learner dropout continues to occur. Tsholofelo and Judas (2014) reported that adult education programmes in Mpumalanga province see a spike in enrolment at the start of the academic year, but as time goes on, some students lose interest and drop out.

According to Givens (2007), it has been established that adults bring unique characteristics to their learning experiences. Understanding the foundational characteristics of adults encompasses their multiple roles and responsibilities, life experiences, different orientations to learning, development trends, and possible anxiety and ambivalence. These characteristics are essential to understanding the needs of adult learners. It is important to also remember that adults participate voluntarily in the learning process and bring expectations to the learning environment.

A study soon after the end of apartheid conducted by Mdluli (1999) suggests that adult learners were victims of formal education dropout and were trapped in the past education system where rural education was given very little attention and support by the government of that time. Students indicated that, in their view, ABET teachers needed to understand them, and devise programmes that would motivate them to reach their goals. Adult learners were also not registered in suitable grades, and so had a problem in relating the past to their present experience and had poor receptive language. This inevitably leads to dropout.

Mokubung (2002) stated that the main finding of his slightly later study was that the main cause for the high drop-out rate of ABET learners at Kgolediyamanka was the violation of adult education principles by educators and programme organizers. Dhlamini and Heeralal

(2014), in their study, argued that the education that adults receive has to be relevant in the sense that it helps them to fight against illiteracy, poverty, and unemployment. Their findings demonstrated that inadequate resources and facilities, and an irrelevant curriculum that does not meet the entrepreneurial needs and different skills of the learners, are contributing to the dropping out of learners.

In a more recent study, Idoko (2018) indicated that factors such as individual drive, the instructor's encouragement and high expectations, relevant topics, and connection to school all contribute to sustaining a learner's persistence.

Rakoma and Schulze (2015) discuss several different factors affecting adult learners in South Africa. They argue that some of these are institutional factors, such as the fact that adult learners face barriers such as physical accessibility issues, limited availability of scheduling options, and/or inaccessible learning material. Physical access issues relate to the physical distance of places of learning. In addition, adult education programmes are badly designed, lacking the specific goals and needs of what adult learners have in mind, and lack an engaging and practical curriculum. All these barriers may later translate into low learner motivation and limited skill acquisition (Rakoma & Schulze, 2015). Furthermore, there is a limited availability of professional instructors who are up to date with best educational practices and new approaches in adult education. Finally, there are limited financial resources allocated to adult education which leads to inadequate staff, outdated resources, and limited programme offerings (Akintolu et al., 2022). These issues can result in a lack of quality learning opportunities for adults and institutions that fail to address these barriers miss out on serving a diverse range of adult learners.

Rakoma and Schulze (2015) state that most adult learners are experiencing inconsistent learner support services. There is also a lack of support services such as counselling. Inadequate or inconsistent provision of this service hurts learner outcomes. Other issues are caused by learners' inability to use new-found knowledge in class to productive business, lack of transportation, lack of childcare facilities, absence of educators and facilitators, no suitable venue to study, amongst others (Rakoma & Schulze, 2015). There are also low attendance rates amongst adult learners, who fail to maintain consistency in attendance, and motivation thus becomes a factor. Rakoma and Schulze (2015) also identify several informational factors. They argue that adult learners in South Africa face the issue of limited technological access. Not all adult learners have access to computers, internet connectivity,

and digital resources, and may experience difficulties in participating on online learning platforms, limiting their opportunities for self-paced learning. In addition, there is a lack of accessible learning materials, textbooks, and educational resources, which further limit adult learning.

There are also dispositional factors that may cause adult learners to withdraw from learning (Rakoma & Schulze, 2015). They may experience a sense of disrespect if educators do not take into account their needs when choosing teaching strategies for example (Akintolu et al., 2022). Sometimes, there may be a lack of motivation and confidence, which could be the result of undone domestic responsibilities, making it difficult to focus on educational requirements (Akintolu et al., 2022).

As Sondlo (2013) emphasizes, discontinuing studies and not finishing a particular programme is dropping out. Retention has to take into account that students differ in various ways such as in their objectives. Stevenson, Walleri and Japely (1985) actually define retention in community and special programmes as related to students' objectives. In their study, Rakoma and Schulze (2015) suggest that flexible scheduling and engaging instruction methods could help deal with at least some of the issues faced by adult learners. They also argue that providing accessible and relevant material that aligns with the learners' interests and needs is crucial for effective instruction (Rakoma & Schulze, 2015). A final point is addressing the insecurities about one's abilities that can hinder progress in adult education, so building a teacher-student relationship may contribute to the learners' confidence, which eventually affects their learning abilities immensely, according to Uleanya (2022).

## 2.3 Theoretical framework

The word 'theory' refers to a set of analytical principles and statements that shape people's views, understanding, and explanations of the world or events (Nilsen, 2015). A theoretical framework in a research study can help categorize and define concepts applicable to the study and map relationships among them (Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2009). Theories assist the researcher in understanding how and why participants behave in a particular way, and the theoretical framework can be used as a lens for collecting and analyzing data (Nilsen, 2015).

There have been several different theories and models related to dropping out after formal schooling. For example, Spady's (1971) Model of the Drop out Process, which focused on university dropout, was one of the first to consider the sociological aspects embedded in the

dropout problem. Spady included in his model both academic and social systems that coexist in a university because they are integral parts of the scenario in which dropout occurs (Nicoletti, 2019).

Pascarella (1980) offers a theoretical long-term model to present the dropout perseverance process that students in higher education go through, with a focus on the informal interaction between students and faculty. Underlying his model is the assumption that informal interaction between student and faculty members would contribute to the student's commitment to the institution as well as improve the social aspect of the student's academic life, which would favour his/her decision to persist (Nicoletti, 2019).

Yet, Bean's model also takes into consideration the vast amount of information that lies beneath the academic life of a student, as some of the previous models do (e.g. Spady's model and Tinto's model). Bean's model (1965) refers to dropout syndrome, a term used to describe a conscious, openly discussed intention to leave an institution coupled with actual departure (Nicoletti, 2019). Bean's model of student attrition (1980) provides a framework for understanding the factors that contribute to student departure from educational programmes.

The model highlights the influence of environmental, institutional, and individual factors on student retention and attrition. According to Bean's model, environmental factors such as socioeconomic background, family support, and job responsibilities can impact a student's ability to persist in their studies. Institutional factors, including academic and social integration, as well as the quality of support services, also play a crucial role in student retention. Additionally, individual factors such as motivation, academic preparedness, and goal clarity can influence a student's decision to stay in or leave a programme.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986) focuses on the role of self-efficacy, or an individual's belief in their ability to succeed, in shaping behaviour. This theory may be relevant to understanding adult learners' motivation and persistence in educational programmes. Bandura's theory suggests that individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to set challenging goals, persevere in the face of obstacles, and exhibit a greater sense of personal agency. In the context of adult learners, self-efficacy can impact their willingness to engage in learning activities, seek out support when needed, and persist in their educational pursuits. Educators and institutions can leverage the principles of social cognitive theory to

enhance the support and resources available to adult learners, ultimately contributing to their success and retention in educational programmes.

The theories of Spady (1970), Pascarella (1980), and Bean (1980) have contributed significantly to our understanding of student dropout rates and the factors influencing them (Nicoletti, 2019). These theories delve into the roles of student performance, involvement, and environment, further enriching the discourse on student retention (Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Metz, 2004). However, in this study, I used Tinto's theory of student dropout. Tinto's model remains one of the most widely used models in examining adult learner dropout. Tinto's work, especially his theory of student departure, has been pivotal in understanding student retention issues in higher education (Metz, 2004). His research, built on national data on institutional retention, has had a lasting impact on subsequent models and studies in this area (Elkin et al., 2000).

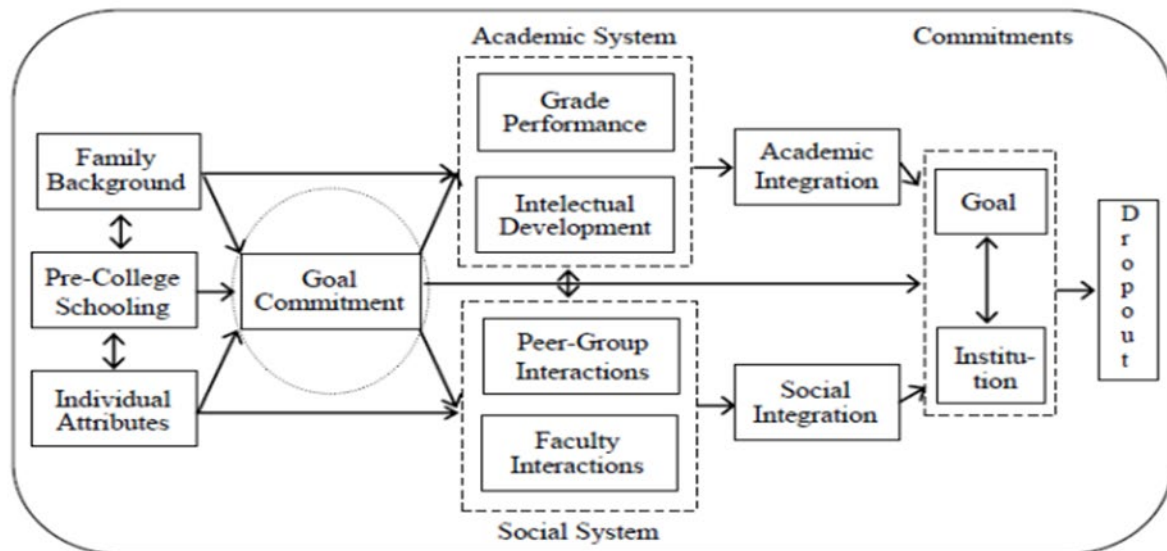
### 2.3.1 Tinto's Model

First developed by Tinto and Cullen in 1973 as the CSD (conceptual schema for dropout) model, Tinto further developed his theoretical model of student dropout in later years. According to Tinto and Cullen (1973), no student plans to leave university (or a CLC) early, but an academic breakdown can result from unforeseen circumstances that happen to a student during their academic career; and a student's educational background, aptitudes, and family history may also have an effect on their journey and cause them to drop out or withdraw academically (Tinto & Cullen, 1973). Their theoretical framework refers to the urge of the students individually to complete the course in the educational institution. According to Tinto and Cullen (1973), the factor that directly impacts students' durability is their integration into the university environment.

There are two different types of integration, namely normative and structural. Normative integration involves students adopting the values, norms, and behavioural expectations of the university. This includes cultural alignment, where students embrace the institution's values, and social integration, where they form meaningful connections with peers, faculty, and staff. Psychological integration occurs as students internalize the university's goals and values, fostering a sense of belonging and community, which supports their persistence and success. The more integration there is between the academic and social spheres, the more likely the student will be eager to finish the course and commit to the institution.

The key concepts of Tinto and Cullen’s original model, as represented in Figure 2.1, are discussed below.

Figure 2.1: Tinto and Cullen's Conceptual Schema for Dropout (CSD) Model (1973)



Tinto (1975) argues that three factors need to be considered in relation to the student before he or she enters further study – family background, individual attributes, and their prior educational experience. A student’s educational background, aptitude, and family history may all affect their journey and cause them to drop out.

According to Tinto (1975), **family background** includes socioeconomic status, parental education levels, family support, and familial responsibilities. These factors significantly influence a student's decision to pursue higher education and their ability to persist once enrolled. For instance, students from low-income households may struggle with financial constraints, while those with caregiving responsibilities might find it difficult to balance academic and family obligations. Cullen (1994) expands on this by noting that strong family support can enhance a student's resilience and commitment to their educational goals.

In relation to adult learners, they may face challenges such as familial responsibilities or lack of support systems, which can impact their academic efforts (Bulluck, 2017).

Tinto and Cullen (1973) include prior educational experience as an important factor. **Pre-college schooling** refers to the quality and type of education a student receives before entering higher education. Tinto (1975) highlights that students who attended well-resourced schools with robust academic programmes are often better prepared for the rigours of college.

This background includes academic performance, engagement in extracurricular activities, and the level of encouragement received from teachers. Cullen (1994) adds that a solid pre-college education fosters essential skills such as critical thinking and time management, which are crucial for college success.

From an adult learner perspective, this element encompasses the educational experiences and achievements of adult learners before enrolling in the Community Learning Centre, and includes factors such as academic performance, educational background, and quality of prior educational experiences. For example, adult learners who have experienced academic challenges or gaps in their prior education may be more susceptible to dropping out if they struggle to keep up with the demands of their current coursework. Understanding the impact of pre-college schooling on adult learner dropout can guide the learning centre in providing targeted academic support and remedial programmes to address skill deficiencies.

**Individual attributes**, the third factor to be considered before a student enters post-school study, encompass a student's characteristics, such as motivation, self-efficacy, and academic ability. Tinto (1975) posits that these traits are crucial determinants of a student's ability to adapt to the academic and social demands of college life. Students with high self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation are more likely to persist despite challenges. Cullen (1994) suggests that understanding these attributes can help institutions develop personalized support systems to enhance student retention.

These three factors are deeply interconnected. A supportive family background can mitigate some of the disadvantages of a less rigorous pre-college education by providing emotional and financial support. Conversely, a strong pre-college education can compensate for less support at home by equipping students with the skills and confidence needed for college success. Individual attributes, such as resilience and adaptability, can help students leverage their backgrounds and schooling experiences to navigate higher education effectively. Critically, these three factors contribute to the student's goal commitment.

**Goal commitment** refers to the degree to which a student is dedicated to completing their educational objectives. Tinto (1975) argues that family background, pre-college schooling, and individual attributes all contribute to shaping a student's commitment to their academic goals. For instance, a student from a supportive family who received a strong pre-college education and possesses high motivation is more likely to remain committed to their goals.

Cullen (1994) emphasizes that institutions can foster goal commitment by helping students clarify their educational and career aspirations through advising and mentorship programmes.

According to Tinto and Cullen's (1973) model, **academic and social integration** are critical to student retention. Tinto (1975) argues that students who are integrated into both the academic and social systems of an institution are more likely to persist. Academic integration involves engagement with the curriculum and faculty, while social integration pertains to involvement in campus life and relationships with peers. Both forms of integration contribute to a student's overall satisfaction and commitment to their educational goals. Tinto's Model of Student Integration (1975) emphasizes the importance of social and academic integration in retaining students in educational institutions. It posits that students are more likely to persist if they feel integrated into the academic and social fabric of the institution. The model suggests that the level of integration can significantly impact a student's decision to continue or discontinue their studies.

The **academic system** within an institution includes the curriculum, teaching methods, assessment strategies, and academic support services. Tinto (1975) identifies two key components within this system: grade performance and intellectual development.

**Grade Performance:** This refers to the student's academic achievements and how well they meet the institution's academic standards. Strong grade performance can enhance a student's self-efficacy and commitment to their educational goals.

**Intellectual Development:** This involves the student's cognitive growth and development of critical thinking skills. Engaging in academic experiences that challenge and stimulate students intellectually can foster a deeper commitment to their studies.

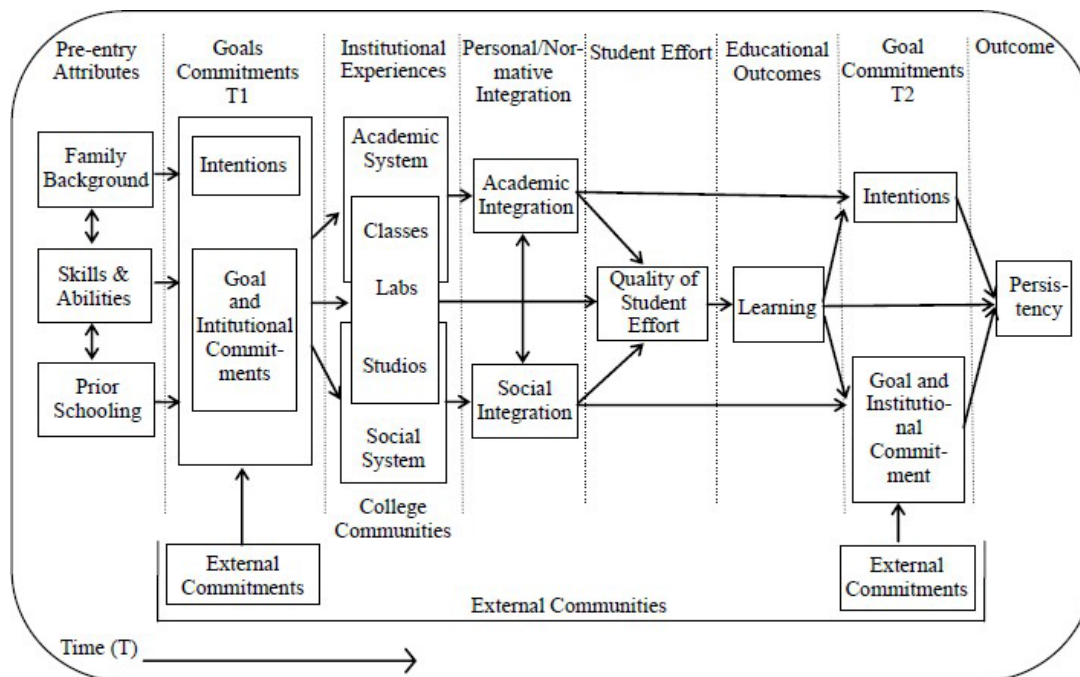
The **social system** comprises the non-academic aspects of college life, including peer relationships, extracurricular activities, and campus culture. Tinto (1975) breaks this down into two components: social integration and peer group interactions.

**Social Integration:** This refers to the extent to which students feel connected and involved in the campus community. Strong social integration can enhance a student's sense of belonging and commitment to the institution.

**Peer Group Interactions:** Positive interactions with peers can provide emotional support, enhance learning through collaborative efforts, and contribute to a satisfying college experience.

Tinto further developed his model in 1997:

Figure 2.2: Tinto's Revised Model (1997)



As can be seen from Figure (2.2), Tinto's Revised Model (1997) incorporates several new elements to enhance our understanding of student persistence and departure.

**Family Background:** As with his earlier model, this element includes socio-economic status, parents' education levels, and family support, all of which influence a student's initial commitment to college (Tinto, 1997).

**Skills & Abilities:** These refer to the academic preparedness and intellectual capabilities that students bring with them to college (Tinto, 1997). It is thus an extension of the individual attributes element of the earlier model.

**Prior Schooling:** This element is the same as that in the earlier model, and encompasses the quality and type of education students receive before entering college, affecting their readiness and adaptability (Tinto, 1997).

As can be seen, 'goal commitments' in the earlier model has now been expanded to include intentions and goal and institutional commitments.

**Intentions:** This box represents the student's initial goals and aspirations, such as career objectives and personal growth (Tinto, 1997).

Goal and Institutional Commitments: This reflects the student's commitment to their educational goals and to the institution itself at the point of entry (Tinto, 1997).

Critically, in his revised model, Tinto recognises how intentions, goals and commitments are affected by External Commitments. Goals and commitments then themselves impact on a student's Institutional Experiences. Under Institutional Experiences, Tinto included Academic System, and Social System. Academic System: These are formal academic engagements that contribute to a student's educational experience (Tinto, 1997). Social System (Social Integration, College Communities): These represent the social interactions and integration within the college community, which are crucial for student support and retention (Tinto, 1997). Classes, Labs, and Studios cut across these two systems.

Similarly, integration includes both an academic and social aspect. Academic Integration reflects how well students are integrating academically, including their performance and intellectual development (Tinto, 1997). Social Integration represents how well students are fitting in socially within the college environment, which can significantly impact their overall experience (Tinto, 1997). As in his earlier model, Tinto (1975) emphasizes that a student's commitment to their goals and the institution are influenced by their experiences within the academic and social systems. A high level of academic and social integration strengthens both types of commitment. When students feel academically challenged and socially supported, they are more likely to develop a strong attachment to the institution and remain focused on their goals.

Tinto then includes a new element, Quality of Student Effort. This emphasizes the importance of the effort students put into their academic and social activities, highlighting that active engagement is critical for success (Tinto, 1997). Quality of Student Effort is affected by academic and social integration, and itself impacts on Learning: This box highlights the outcome of academic integration and student effort, focusing on what students learn and achieve through their educational activities (Tinto, 1997).

Intentions: Similar to T1, this box represents the student's updated goals and aspirations after experiencing college life (Tinto, 1997). Goal and Institutional Commitment: This shows the revised level of commitment to educational goals and the institution, influenced by their experiences and learning outcomes (Tinto, 1997).

Again, Tinto refers to External Commitments: This includes commitments outside the institution that may impact a student's persistence, such as family obligations or job responsibilities (Tinto, 1997).

Persistency: Unlike Tinto's earlier models that ended with the possibility of dropout, the revised model concludes with the concept of persistency, indicating the student's continued enrolment and progress towards their educational goals (Tinto, 1997). Students may decide to drop out if they lack commitment to their goals or the institution, often as a result of insufficient academic or social integration. For instance, a student who struggles academically without adequate support may feel discouraged and question their ability to succeed, leading to decreased goal commitment. Similarly, a lack of social connections can result in feelings of isolation, reducing their attachment to the institution. Addressing these issues through targeted support and intervention programs can help increase student retention by fostering stronger academic and social integration. In his revised model, Tinto recognises that things can change over time (so Time becomes an element on its own); and also the impact of external commitments on a student's goal commitments.

By adding these new elements, Tinto's revised model provides a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing student persistence in higher education. The revised model now considers both academic and social integration, as well as external commitments, offering a nuanced view of how various factors interact to support or hinder student persistence (Tinto, 1997).

In conclusion, Tinto's model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding student retention by highlighting the interplay between family background, pre-college schooling, individual attributes, and the academic and social systems within higher education institutions. By addressing these factors holistically, institutions can develop strategies to enhance student engagement and persistence, ultimately reducing dropout rates.

### 2.3.2 Studies that have used Tinto's model

There are several studies that have used Tinto's model. The most relevant of these to my study is the study by Nala which was conducted to explore factors leading to the retention of learners at Siyaphila Community Learning Centre (CLC). Nala's study argued that for adult learners to be retained in the CLC programme, such students' conditions must be comfortable and they must have hope of being academically and be socially integrated (Nala, 2020).

Nala's study was designed around the three research questions: 1. What motivates an adult learner to enrol and stay in adult Education and Training (AET)? 2. What factors encourage adult learners to continue to participate? And 3. What can be done to maintain/ promote retention in AET centres? Data was collected using observations, semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. The study findings revealed that the student's pre-CLC entry characteristics are pivotal in making these students stay and complete the CLC programme. These pre-CLC characteristics like personal skills, prior schooling, and abilities possessed by the student before registering in the CLCs play a significant role in determining whether the student drops out or completes the CLC programme. The conditions inside the CLC also determine if the student would drop out or stay in the programme. These include educator support, peer support and financial support since most of the students were unemployed. All of these conditions are a reinforcement of what Tinto's model reveal as significant conditions that either make students stay or drop out of the CLCs.

### 2.3.3 Critiques of Tinto's Model

Some writers have questioned Tinto's research, even though it has almost attained "unprecedented status" in the field of higher education student departure studies (Berger & Braxton, 1998). Theorists like Tucker (1999) and Tierney (1992) have criticized Tinto's work for attempting to draw generalizations that are too broad for his data sources or for improperly applying the values of dominant student cultures to minorities.

Tierney's (1992) writings provide an in-depth critique of Tinto's theory. He criticized Tinto's work in several ways, including the sources he employed, their bearing on the thesis's assertions, and his improper use of Van Gennep's (1960) anthropological writings. Tierney notes that Tinto's work should only be applied to students enrolled in four-year programmes at public institutions because Tinto's theory is primarily based on data from this particular institutional type. He contends that Tinto's data source is too inclusive to enable a proper application of his theory to other categories of educational environments, including women's colleges, small or private colleges or universities, and historically black institutions (Tierney, 1992).

Tucker's (1999) critique went further, arguing that the aggregate survey data Tinto used was too general to conclude a person's choice to leave. According to Tucker (1999), there was a lot of variation among people when it came to the factors that influence a decision to stay or leave an institution, so concluding such a large body of data would be inappropriate. Tierney

and Tucker have argued that before Tinto's model is implemented in other institutional settings, it should be tested in other settings, even though they did not advocate for the rejection of Tinto's theory.

Tinto's model places a strong emphasis on social and academic integration as key factors in student persistence (Braxton et al., 1997). However, for adult learners in KwaZulu-Natal, external commitments, such as employment and family responsibilities, may have a greater impact on their ability to persist in education than their level of integration into the academic community.

The applicability of Tinto's model to diverse populations, particularly those with different cultural backgrounds, has also been questioned (Tierney, 1999). Boughey (2009) questions the extent to which Tinto's model can be applied in an African context. Tinto's integration model relies on institutions providing adequate academic and social support (Boughey, 2009). However, many African universities face resource constraints, resulting in overcrowding, limited counselling, and inadequate facilities (Boughey, 2009). This lack of support disproportionately affects adult learners, already marginalized by age and external responsibilities.

African institutions often fail to accommodate adult learners' unique needs' such as flexible schedules, evening classes, or online options (Boughey, 2009). Traditional education models prevail, limiting Tinto's model's applicability. Boughey (2009) also argues that Tinto's model primarily suits younger, traditional students motivated by career advancement. Adult learners have diverse motivations (personal development, role modelling, skill upgrading) that may not align with Tinto's framework. Unlike traditional students, adult learners prioritize academic work over social integration (Boughey, 2009). In the context of KwaZulu-Natal, adult learners may come from a variety of cultural backgrounds, and the model may not adequately account for the cultural capital that they bring to their learning environment. The model assumes a linear process of integration, which may not reflect the complex lives of adult learners in community learning centres, who may experience education in a more cyclical or interrupted fashion (Rendón et al., 2000).

Tinto's model focuses on what happens to students after they enter an institution but pays less attention to pre-entry attributes such as the education experiences encountered before schooling, lack of skills, and motivation. These can all be significant predictors of persistence for adult learners (Bean & Metzner, 1985).

Bean and Metzner's critique seems valid, as Tinto's model emphasizes institutional factors over pre-entry attributes like prior educational experiences, skills, and motivation, which are crucial for adult learners. Tinto's institution-centric approach may overlook individual agency and external influences affecting persistence, especially among adult learners in community learning centres. Thus, Bean and Metzner's emphasis on these pre-entry factors provides a more comprehensive understanding of adult learner persistence. Consequently, they are not overstating the case. Their perspective highlights important gaps in Tinto's model. The model is often viewed as institution-centric, focusing on how institutions can change to promote integration but giving less attention to how student attributes affect persistence (Guiffrida, 2006). This perspective may not fully capture the individual agency and external factors that influence adult learners in community learning centres.

In the context of a community learning centre in KwaZulu-Natal, Tinto's model provides valuable insights into understanding dropout rates among adult learners, despite its origins in traditional-aged college students within formal higher education institutions. While critics argue that Tinto's model may not fully encompass the complexities of adult education in such a culturally diverse region, it remains a useful framework.

Tinto's model emphasizes the importance of integration into the academic community as a key factor in student persistence. This concept resonates with the challenges faced by adult learners in KwaZulu-Natal, where socio-economic factors, cultural expectations, and prior educational experiences intersect. These elements influence how adult learners engage with learning environments, impacting their ability to persist. Furthermore, while Tinto's model may not explicitly address the immediate practical concerns such as employment and family responsibilities that often shape adult learners' decisions, it provides a foundation for understanding how these factors interact with academic integration. By fostering a sense of belonging and support within the learning community, community centres in KwaZulu-Natal can potentially enhance adult learners' persistence and success.

In summary, while Tinto's model may require adaptation to fully capture the nuances of adult education in diverse contexts like KwaZulu-Natal, its focus on academic and social integration remains relevant. By incorporating local cultural perspectives and addressing practical needs alongside academic goals, community learning centres can effectively support adult learners in overcoming barriers to persistence.

## 2.4 Conclusion

In the literature review section of this chapter, I outlined how colonial injustices of the past have influenced education, and, thus, adult education in this country. I examined how the adult learner is defined, and some of the misunderstandings regarding adult learners and learning.

I then went on to consider the phenomenon of learner dropout. Because dropout from schooling is a global phenomenon that continues to impact adult education, I briefly examined high school dropout. I then returned to the key topic of this study, adult learner dropout, discussing its causes among adult learners identified in the broader literature. I specifically looked at studies that have been done on learner dropout in South Africa. In each case, I considered the flip side of dropout, i.e. retention.

In the theoretical framework section of the chapter, I presented Tinto's model as my theoretical framework of choice, viz. Tinto's model. I argued that this model can help us gain a more comprehensive understanding of factors contributing to adult learner dropout at the community learning centre in KwaZulu-Natal. This, in turn, can inform the development of targeted interventions and support strategies to improve learner retention and success.

In the next chapter, I presented the research methodology employed in this research project.

# Chapter Three: Research methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I describe the research design used in this study, beginning by explaining what research design and methodology are, before discussing the research paradigm, style and approach. I then outline the practical procedures applied in the research, including sampling procedures, data generation, data analysis, research quality, ethical considerations, and the limitations of the study.

## 3.2 Research design and methodology

Research design describes the processes for conducting a study, including the when, whom, and circumstances of data collection. It indicates the comprehensive plan and how the research develops that is, what happens to the subject and which data generation methods are used (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

According to Punch (2009), research design refers to how a researcher guards against alternative interpretations of results and tries to rule them out. Conrad and Serlin (2011) posit that the design reflects the entire research process, from conceptualising the problem to the literature review, research questions, methods, and conclusions. Methodology refers to the theory behind the logical sequence of conducting a study. It is thus an essential aspect of research because it provides direction for what the researcher is trying to achieve and details how the researcher applies the requisite tools to achieve the set goals. It is a systematic way of studying how research can be conducted scientifically (Rajasekar et al., 2013).

## 3.3 Research paradigm: Interpretivist

When researchers conduct research, they do it on the premise of a particular research paradigm, which is a belief about reality and knowledge; but it can also involve concepts, such as people's benefit (Willis, 2007). Research paradigms affect the interpretation of research data to gain understanding (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). For any paradigm, how reliable data collection is, and how accurate the data is are key questions. Two key research paradigms that are often used by researchers are positivism (and post-positivism) and interpretivism. Positivism is a paradigm generally used by quantitative research and is based on the ontology and epistemology of the existence of a single truth. The post-positivist

paradigm views how certain experiments can be done to evaluate certain situations. In this paradigm, the objectivity of the researcher is a key factor in preventing validity from being compromised (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). In contrast, interpretivism believes that knowledge is generated, and is in the mind of the participant (Luttrell et al., 2010). According to Barbour (2007), the interpretivist paradigm examines how people experience the world in their subjective ways and insightfully make sense of their experiences. It thus differs from the positivist paradigm which assumes that a single tangible reality exists, one that can be understood, identified, and measured.

According to Flick (2014), interpretivist researchers draw data and conclusions from participants' perspectives. This helps the researcher to understand the phenomenon better. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), an interpretive paradigm is a realistic approach that gives the researcher a clear understanding of how people make sense of their world or make meaning of their particular actions. The aim of this approach is to capture their living and working context (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Reeves and Hedberg (2003) note that the interpretivist paradigm uses the experiences of insiders to understand the world and social reality.

The main focus of this study was to investigate adult learner dropout at a CLC. It involved describing adult learners' experiences of a high dropout at the centre and therefore uses the interpretivist paradigm to study the phenomenon of learner dropout. An interpretive paradigm was the most suitable for this study, as it allowed me to explore the phenomenon of learner dropout from AET programmes by providing interpretations from data obtained from participants about their lived experiences.

### **3.4 Research style: Qualitative**

In research design, researchers recognize three styles: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method research (Saunders et al., 2003). Quantitative research involves the use of mathematical methods to study the phenomenon using numerical data (Yilmaz, 2013). Such research might be used to investigate issues faced by humans or social phenomena and record the findings, explanations or conclusions of the phenomenon, using numerical data such as statistics for analysis and numerically measured values (Creswell, 2014). A qualitative design, by contrast, is interested in how people make sense of their own experiences in the world (Willig, 2013), and therefore fits well with an interpretive paradigm. A qualitative design generally focuses on textual data (Yilmaz, 2013). A mixed method research design is a

mixture of both quantitative and qualitative research. According to Johnson et al. (2007), elements of both quantitative and qualitative research can create a more in-depth understanding.

I adopted a qualitative research style to explore the phenomenon of learner dropout at a CLC. Given that this study aimed to identify the causes of AET dropout and strategies to prevent it, a qualitative style was appropriate for the study.

### 3.5 Research approach: Case study

Researchers use the case study approach to understand complex issues in their real-life setting (Harrison, 2017) to attain an in-depth understanding of problems, events, and phenomena of interest (Crowe et al., 2011). I adopted this approach to better understand the challenges within the context of what adult learners face, which might lead them to drop out.

A case study is a structured, detailed study of a ‘case’, or phenomenon, within a real-world context to produce findings (Yin, 2009). According to Baxter and Jack (2008, p. 545), “determining what the unit of analysis (case) is can be a challenge for both novice and seasoned researchers alike. The case is defined by Miles and Huberman (1994) as, ‘a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context’”. My study is a detailed examination and analysis of a phenomenon – dropout – in the context of a CLC. Case studies allow researchers to collect data in various ways that suit the purpose of the research. Researchers collect detailed information/data over time (Creswell, 2024). This process involves data collection, analysis of findings, and determining conclusions. Rule & John (2011) argue that case study research is a systematic way of finding information to generate knowledge in depth.

According to Yin (2014), there are several different kinds of case studies that can be used in research, namely, exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive case studies. This particular study involved the use of the exploratory case study approach. It thus explored the phenomenon of adult learner dropout in detail in a real-life context at a CLC to understand it.

De Vaus (2001) further explains that the ‘unit of analysis’ in case study research is an event, person, group or decision within its natural setting. This case study focused on individuals’ views of learner dropout in a CLC. The participants in the research, from whom I collected data, were in real-life situations, and this assisted in ensuring the data collected was credible and reliable.

### 3.6 Sampling: Purposive

When collecting data, researchers use sampling methods to choose participants for their study. There are two key sampling methods: probability sampling, which is mainly used in quantitative studies; and non-probability sampling, which is mainly used in qualitative studies. The involvement or not of randomising sampling selection differentiates the different types of sampling.

Probability sampling emphasises the equal possibility of anyone in the population under study being selected. Examples of probability sampling are random sampling and stratified random sampling. Non-probability sampling involves using specific criteria to select specific participants. Examples of non-probability sampling are purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling. I adopted purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling techniques to select participants for this research.

Purposive sampling is a non-random sampling technique in which the researcher solicits persons with specific characteristics to participate in a research study (Johnson & Christensen, 2011). According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), purposive sampling is described as making specific decisions on who or what to include in the sample – i.e. identifying specific criteria for selection. This kind of sampling is frequently used in the interpretivist paradigm. Case studies frequently use purposive or criterion sampling. Convenience sampling is defined as using a sample that is most efficiently and easily reached (Ibid.). Snowball sampling involves participants referring the researcher to other people who may be useful to the research (Merriam, 1998).

As stated, in this study, I used purposive, convenience and snowball sampling. I focused on a CLC close to where I live, to make it easier for me to access likely participants (i.e. convenience sampling). I then used purposive sampling to allow me to select participants based on their expert opinions or direct involvement in the phenomenon I was interested in, and based on my knowledge of the population, its elements, and the research aim (Creswell, 2014). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) argue that in purposive sampling, participants are chosen because they are likely to be knowledgeable about the phenomenon the researcher is investigating. I started the sampling process by approaching the centre manager, with the educators' assistance, and by asking for learners who fit the necessary criteria (i.e. snowball sampling). I included five learners who were still studying, five who had dropped out, and three educators, in my sample.

### 3.7 Data generation method: In-depth interviews

There are several methods for generating data in qualitative research. Those most used are observation and interviews. An interview is a form of formal discussion between two or more people. This discussion often comes in the form of questions and answers on a particular subject or topic. Roshan and Deeptee (2009) refer to it as a dialogue involving two or more individuals, whereby an interviewer obtains information from the interviewee by asking questions. An interview is an essential tool used to collect data about interviewees' experiences (McNamara, 1999), and therefore fits a qualitative, interpretivist research design.

Interviews are possibly the most used method in qualitative research, because they are likely to provide insightful information that the researcher might find helpful. Conducting an interview is necessary if the researcher intends to get detailed information from a few specific interviewees about their opinions and experiences (Driscoll, 2011). The interviewer has a direct opportunity to ask questions and get the correct information (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). Interviews can be done face-to-face, as telephone conversations, and online using in Skype, or videoconferencing. There are different kinds of interviews, viz. unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and structured interviews. Qualitative research uses unplanned open-ended (i.e. less structured) conversations, whereas quantitative research uses closed questions (i.e. structured) to gather data (Creswell, 2014). In this study, I used in-depth semi-structured interviews.

In a semi-structured interview, according to Hancock et al. (2001), open-ended questions are used to get more details. In addition, the researcher does not adhere strictly to the pre-set questions. Instead, they will ask open-ended questions to probe further with the interviewee (Adams, 2015). These interviews allow the flexibility to pursue an idea in more detail (Gill et al., 2008). Semi-structured interviews are more like ordinary conversations, rather than using written questions. This helps enhance the data collected (Brinkman & Kvale, 2005).

For this study, I used audio-digital recordings to conduct telephonic semi-structured interviews with the adult learners and educators at a CLC. I interviewed five learners who were currently studying at the centre and five who had dropped out, as well as three educators (one of whom was the centre manager). I had planned to conduct face-to-face interviews, but because of COVID-19 restrictions, was unable to, and thus used telephonic interviews. I interviewed each participant once, calling them from home, so that I was able to focus my attention on the interview; however, they were not always at their homes, and thus sometimes

distracted. The interviews were relatively brief, lasting on average less than 30 minutes. I prepared a formal set of questions for the interview (see Appendix C), but as I have discussed, prompted additional information as necessary. This was a suitable approach for collecting data for this study because I sought to understand the causes of learner dropout by asking the learners about their experiences. As mentioned, I utilized the help of educators and the centre manager at the CLC to identify the learners. I conducted semi-structured interviews with the centre manager and two of the educators.

To conduct my interviews, I developed an interview schedule with both closed and open-ended questions. The questions were directly related to my research objectives. To help answer my research questions, I developed three interview questions per research question (see Appendix C). I ensured that all questions were understood and clear. I asked probing questions if they answered in a way that was not clear enough for me to easily understand.

### 3.8 Data analysis

According to Taylor and Gibbs (2010), data analysis is about how data is processed, understood, and explained. Data is a set of information that may be in the form of words, pictures, numbers, audio or video (Given, 2008). It is all the information collected in the research process. As Patton (2003) states, researchers obtain qualitative data from different resources, such as media, events, pictures, and emails, but the list is vast. Data analysis involves presenting this data to explain and describe events and occurrences in a simplified and comprehensive manner (Hancock et al., 2001).

Qualitative data analysis pays attention to subjective data and the meaning participants derive from their experiences. According to Creswell (2002), Marshall and Rossman (2016), and Rogers & Goodrick (2010), qualitative data analysis involves preparing and organising data in meaningful ways. It consists of summarising it, interpreting to make sense of it, describing it and finally presenting it and reporting the findings. Data analysis continues to the end of the research process. The point is to find the connection between the research question and research findings (Thomas, 2006).

In this study, the data are in the form of transcripts of the semi-structured interviews. I audio-recorded and transcribed the collected interview data verbatim. Data generation was conducted in isiZulu because most of the participants were comfortable speaking it and after the data were transcribed they were translated into English.

I analysed the data using the thematic analysis technique discussed by McMillan and Schumacher (1993). Thematic analysis identifies, arranges, describes, and reports on themes developed from the data (Braun & Clark, 2006). I analysed the data using several steps. In the first step, I converted the data set obtained from the interviews conducted with the participants into transcripts. This was a demanding activity, but the process helped me to produce textual data that would be easier to analyse. I started with inductive analysis by reading the transcripts to get a sense thereof. I wrote down the ideas and topics that emerged as I read the transcripts (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). In other words, I started searching for meaning by identifying the smallest units of importance in the data. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), these units must be understandable without additional information, except for the knowledge of the researcher's focus of inquiry. The researcher might find that the immense amount of data seems overwhelming, and generating these units can give the assurance that one can make sense of it.

In the second step, I classified the ideas/topics (codes) into themes. A theme refers to a name or title used to describe a piece of writing (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). I then had a set of themes to group or classify the data as the third step. Classification is bringing similar thoughts or ideas together under the same theme (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). After writing down the themes from the data collected, it was easy for me to cross-check if there were repetitions of any.

Finally, I used this temporary classification method on all the data sets (transcripts), and then interpreted or analysed appropriate data under each theme (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). The point is to find the relationships across the data; the relationship can be concepts, themes, or content that crosses the data. The focus is on finding the critical point, catching the issue, and identifying the patterns (Gläser & Laudel, 2013).

Having concluded the inductive analysis, I then employed Tinto's CSD model as a theoretical framework for deductive analysis. Deductive analysis involves applying existing theories or frameworks to analyse data and draw conclusions. According to the literature, deductive analysis allows researchers to test theories or models against empirical data, providing a structured approach to understanding phenomena (Fife, & Gossner, 2024).

Tinto's CSD model helped structure my examination of the factors influencing adult learner dropout, aligning my findings with established theoretical constructs. By systematically applying the CSD model to analyse the data collected through interviews and surveys, I

identified patterns and relationships that supported or challenged the theoretical assumptions, thereby enhancing the study's rigor and theoretical contribution. The data analysis provided an in-depth understanding of the causes of learner dropout at a CLC and allowed me to identify strategies that could prevent it.

### 3.9 Research quality

Qualitative research tackles the issue of validity and reliability through the concept of trustworthiness. How can the research be trusted? Trustworthiness requires that the researcher followed all the procedures and did everything necessary to ensure that data were collected, analysed and reported appropriately and ethically. Qualitative researchers use different techniques to increase the trustworthiness of the research they conducted, that is what qualifies the research to be worthwhile, authentic, and relevant and something that we can learn and benefit from. Trustworthiness usually involves issues such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Some of the procedures that are used to increase trustworthiness in qualitative research are audit trails, triangulation and member checking (Cresswell & Miller, 2000).

Credibility assesses how accurately research findings represent the genuine experiences and realities of participants, ensuring that their voices and perspectives are authentically captured (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Transferability assesses the degree to which research findings can be applied to other contexts (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Dependability involves explaining variations in study findings and addressing discrepancies with previous research, ensuring that the result is consistent and trustworthy (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Confirmability ensures that a researcher's analysis can be verified and replicated by others, including fellow researchers or readers (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

I took the following steps and measures to ensure the trustworthiness of this study. Firstly, I improved its *reliability* by applying the purposive sampling technique to select participants. This ensured that responses and data collected were from participants with the requisite knowledge about the subject matter. Then, to ensure the *credibility* of the data generation instruments, I recorded each interview, which I then transcribed and translated verbatim as a means of ensuring the exact words articulated by the participants were captured. The same set of interview questions were asked of all the participants and all the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure that I did not miss anything that was said during the interviews. This increased the *dependability* of my data.

### 3.10 Ethical considerations

According to Munro (2011), research ethics refers to a set of widely accepted moral principles that offer rules and behavioural expectations of the most appropriate conduct towards participants, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants, and students.

According to Locke et al. (2013), it is essential to ensure no physical or psychological harm to participants occurs during the study. For example, researchers must treat participants with respect and dignity. Researchers must also assure participants that their participation in the research will not harm their reputations in any way. I obtained ethical clearance for this study from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I also obtained a letter from the manager of the CLC granting me access. Furthermore, during this study, I adhered to the following considerations:

I obtained informed consent from the participants. I explained the purpose and duration of the study to each participant before engagement started. I was transparent about participants' right to decline to participate and to withdraw at any time without any adverse consequences or risks at all. I notified them that their involvement was voluntary and there would not be remuneration.

I complied with the requirement to avoid risks, obligations, limitations, or deception of the participants. I ensured that I always abided by the rule of confidentiality of the participants. They were all assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity. I kept all transcripts and recordings safe and locked away for confidentiality.

### 3.11 Limitations

It is generally assumed that any research project or study has limitations. My chosen research design had implications for the research. The study's qualitative design made it difficult to investigate some quantitative issues, such as how particular demographic factors affect dropout rates. A small sample size and the purposeful sampling technique have limited the applicability of the findings to the larger adult learner population in KwaZulu-Natal, but using the case study approach meant that my findings would not be generalizable to other CLCs or to the phenomenon of adult learner dropout. Applying the results to other settings should be done with caution, as the findings might not be representative of all adult learners at the CLC (Smith, 2018).

Subjectivity and bias may be introduced into a study by using an interpretive paradigm and qualitative research methods. The way I interpreted what the participants said could have

influenced the outcomes, thus producing biased conclusions. Researchers need to acknowledge their own biases and take appropriate action to reduce their influence on the research project (Jones, 2019). I tried to reduce the possibility of bias which is discussed under the Research Quality section.

Carrying out qualitative research on a limited sample size can demand a lot of time and resources. The generation and analysis of data may present difficulties for researchers, especially if they are working under time or research constraints. These restrictions might affect the comprehensiveness and depth of the study's conclusions (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Time and resource limitations have certainly limited my study.

In addition to these potential limitations, my study was also affected by specific circumstances. Under COVID-19 conditions, I had to do telephonic interviews, which are generally shorter and less in-depth, and I could not see facial expressions and body language (which can provide additional data). I also lost the audio recordings of my interviews due to technological issues with my cell phone. Fortunately, I had already made verbatim transcripts.

It should thus be noted that this empirical study was based on very limited data that was not triangulated, which compromises the validity and credibility of the study. This has direct implications on the lines of argument, conclusions and recommendations that the study can make.

### 3.12 Conclusion

In this chapter, I explained and justified the interpretivist research paradigm used in the study. The chapter also presented the qualitative research style adopted for the research study and discussed the case study approach, sampling process, and data generation methods, to show how the research was practically conducted. I also outlined the procedures followed to analyse the data, explained ethical research issues and strategies used to ensure compliance with ethical rules. The next chapter presents the data generated.

# Chapter Four: Presentation of the data

## 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the data generated for this study, collected through semi-structured interviews with ten learners (five of whom were still studying, and five who had dropped out), and three educators. The study intended to answer the following research questions:

1. What causes learners to drop out of the AET programme at Khulubuse CLC?
2. To what extent does teaching and learning at Khulubuse CLC contribute to learner dropout?
3. How can learner dropout be prevented at Khulubuse CLC?

As discussed in Chapter Three, I gave all participants in the study pseudonyms. Their biographical details as of 2021 (when the data were collected) are shown in the table below.

*Table 4.1: Participants' biographical details*

<b>Learners who dropped out</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Year enrolled</b>	<b>Year dropped out</b>	<b>Highest qualification</b>	<b>Level enrolled</b>
Lungelo	27	Female	2021	2021	Grade 9	Level 4
Gugu	38	Female	2018	2020	Grade 10	Level 4
Sipho	37	Male	2021	2021	Grade 11	Level 4
Busile	29	Female	2018	2021	Grade 10	Level 4
Kwanele	27	Female	2019	2020	Grade 9	Level 4
<b>Learners who were still studying</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Year enrolled</b>	<b>Status at the time of the study</b>	<b>Highest qualification</b>	<b>Level enrolled</b>
Bongeka	35	Female	2021	Studying	Grade 10	Level 4
Thabile	27	Female	2021	Studying	Grade 11	Level 4
Lindiwe	41	Female	2020	Studying	Grade 9	Level 4
Lindokuhle	40	Female	2021	Studying	Grade 9	Level 4
Ziba	26	Female	2021	Studying	Grade 10	Level 4
<b>Educators</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Year began at centre</b>	<b>Number of years at centre</b>		<b>Role</b>
Thembi	33	Female	2016	6 years	B.Ed	Centre manager and Educator
Lihle	37	Female	2013	9 years	B.Ed	Educator
Nomzamo	48	Female	2018	4 years	Diploma	Educator

Table 4.1 above shows the details of the study participants. Only one of the learners I interviewed was male. Two of the ten learner participants joined the centre in 2018, one in 2019, one in 2020, and six in 2021 (the year I collected the data). Of those who dropped out, two had dropped out in the same year they had enrolled, one dropped out the year after enrolling, one two years after enrolling, and one three years after enrolling. Of the ten learners, four had passed Grade 9, four had passed Grade 10, and two had Grade 11. The three women educators are all from Greytown and live approximately 3 to 10 kilometres from their workplace. They have all worked at the centre for several years. Two of the three teachers have a B.Ed. degree, and one has a Diploma in Education. All of the teachers teach in different primary schools in the area. In the following sections, I present the data generated from the interviews with each of my participants.

## 4.2 Adult learners who dropped out

### 4.2.1 Lungelo

I started to study at Khulubuse in 2021. I was told that Khulubuse is a good adult centre that is also close to my home. I had a problem when I was still a learner at Khulubuse, I fell pregnant, and my boyfriend was also a learner at the centre. We ended up spending a lot of time together because we would go and come back to and from school together to do homework, and when I fell pregnant, I dropped out and I was afraid to go back to study at Khulubuse. I was afraid of how students would look at me while pregnant, but my boyfriend went on with school.

The other reason why I dropped out was that I was doing Level 4 at the Khulubuse Centre, and I was scared that I would fail due to commitment. I was not yet prepared for the examination. Whenever it rains, I won't be able to go to school because I get sick whenever I expose myself to bad weather, I have to stay at home to recover for weeks, meanwhile at school they carry on with studying, and by the time I get back, I could not cover all the work. After a while, I was faced with another trauma of losing both of my parents. When our parents passed on, I needed to find a means of getting money, to cover the funeral and to survive after the funeral, to be able to buy food for my siblings also for me to be able to travel to the hospital to get my medication. We were not financially stable from the beginning because both my parents were not working, we only survived on the grant that we received. So, I needed to look for a job which forced me to drop out, unfortunately, because some days

I will have to work overnight, during the hours of studying and I will not be able to get to school. I will only be free for two days in a month of which I will have to use those days to check on my siblings and my child. These are some of the reasons why I dropped out of the adult learning centre. I never wanted to drop out, I was determined to finish school and obtain good marks with my certificate so I could apply for university and study to be able to apply for a proper job.

From my point of view, teaching and learning at the centre do not affect learners dropping out, because if you come to learn you have to work. This means students should not drop out because they have failed to do their work properly on time. That means they are not serious, they were not determined to finish and get a certificate of completing school.

Dropout can be prevented if every learner here is motivated to study, they are dedicated to what they want to achieve. If students have that dedication, there will be no learners who drop out. Learners just need to be self-motivated, which will help them not drop out and obtain their goals.

I would encourage anyone who is thinking about dropping out by quoting this quote, “education is the key to success, and education is found in your sweat”. All I mean is that there is no need to drop out, under any circumstances, because everything can be fixed, there is no situation or a permanent problem. Keep studying and don’t stop, you will thank yourself at the end.

#### **4.2.2 Gugu**

I came here to Khulubuse CLC in 2018, and I came to do Level 4. At the beginning of the year, there were a lot of students who registered to do Level 4, but towards the end of the year, there were half as many as there used to be. Some of the students dropped out along the way, because of different circumstances that might affect them. The reason why I came to study Level 4 at Khulubuse CLC, was because I dropped out of high school early due to staying with my grandmother, who needed assistance and to be taken care of. However, after joining Khulubuse CLC I was unable to continue my Level 4 studies because of now having too many responsibilities as an adult.

I dropped out because it was hard for me to attend classes. After all, I didn’t have enough money to take care of my basic needs, affecting my academics. I was shocked about how several learners also had to drop out like me due to various reasons. As soon as I heard that

there was a company that was currently recruiting, that was close proximately to where I lived, I decided to go there so I could gain a bit of an income to assist with my finances.

It seemed like I was going to have a bright future if I had carried on with studying.

Unfortunately, I encountered personal issues. At the end of it all, I had no other choice other than to drop out. The biggest issue with my studies is being unable to do my homework, due to being too tired from the distance I travel contributing to my dropout. I could not attend classes after work and walked for a long distance from work, home, and school. I was always drained, which prevented me from focusing on my schoolwork. I also needed the job to cover all my needs.

Teaching and learning are not the cause of learner dropout at Khulubuse. All educators teach very well, and they have no problem; but, with students, it is a different story. They have so many problems which affect learning and teaching. I think it was because they are old and had different responsibilities and they would do anything to survive and some needed money more than completing school.

I think it would be helpful if at the beginning of the year, they placed students according to their level, for example, Level 1 must be in their classroom, and Level 4 in theirs. To prevent learner dropout, the community can help to create a crime prevention team in the community that would probably reduce crime, it will also be comfortable for learners who attend Khulubuse to be safe at night when going home after school, knowing very well that they are guarded by this teams. Students are absent, some are too lazy to finish homework, which will take the teacher time because he/she will not be able to carry on with the work not knowing where the learners did not understand because they haven't done with the homework and some learners have a problem with transport at night, which results in difficulties with learning and teaching. Learners who stay far away will leave the class early so that they can catch the taxi, and some will just not come to school because of transport. Learning and teaching are therefore affected.

It is a good thing to have patience as a person and put yourself first. I regret my decision to drop out as my job ended too, and I am no longer working. If only I had patience and continued studying till I had a certificate at Khulubuse CLC, I wouldn't have any regrets. And I would be now looking for a better job since I will have a certificate which would have helped me to get a well-paying job.

I would tell someone who was thinking of dropping out to be patient, that I regretted dropping out. There is nothing wrong with being patient, and remember education is the weapon of man. Taking a shortcut in life is never a way forward, being patient helps you gain even better things than the things you were planning.

#### **4.2.4 Siphho**

I came to study at Khulubuse in April 2021 and started at Level 4 because I already had Grade 11. My reason for studying was that I wanted to change my life. I have seen or observed many people who have studied at Khulubuse, they are all successful in life, so I thought I was going to be one of them but unfortunately, I did not.

The problem is that I had to drop out because my parent did not work. My family is financially unstable. I do not have a decent job; I also earn very little. My current situation made me decide to go and do Level 4 at Khulubuse CLC. My school timetable clashed with my work timetable. It was clear that I was going to lose my job, my job demanded a lot from my day shift. I had no time for anything besides my work, all this forced me to drop out because I had to focus more at work and I would get tired and I would not have the strength to go to school. The school also needed me to focus but because I would be tired, I wouldn't be able to focus.

My work timetable clashed with my school timetable, and I couldn't leave work, we had no way to survive, I would rather drop out than leave work because I am the breadwinner, so I had to drop out since I needed the money to support my family.

Learning and teaching do not seem to be a problem at Khulubuse CLC. The problem is with some of the adult learners. You find that some adult learners are working while studying, and they find out that they can no longer do both, working in the afternoon and going to study. You realize studying is not going well because some days you come back tired. You just don't go to study in the afternoon, because sometimes you feel that your body is no longer cooperating with you.

Learning and teaching continue without you. Then you see that I would have not dropped out if I collected and done all the work, I missed out on accordingly. Catching up on the schoolwork didn't help because sometimes I was not able to understand the work and the teacher could not stop the whole class from completing other tasks because of me who was absent. The teachers make every effort to ensure that teaching and learning are at the most

appropriate level. They give the time and dedicate themselves to teaching after hours to make learners pass and their complete studies.

#### **4.2.4 Busile**

I dropped out of school in 2018. I had just finished 10<sup>th</sup> grade at school, so I dropped out of studying and stayed at home for one year, and the following year I started studying here at Khulubuse adult centre. I came here to start at Level 4, but I also dropped out before I was promoted. One of the reasons I decided to drop out was that I was not prepared for the examination, I could not understand what the teachers were explaining, which made me fail most of my assessment.

The second reason that made me drop out is that I failed my school-based assessment. I put in everything but still failed because I could not grasp what the teachers were talking about. I wouldn't lie, the teachers adored me. They also encouraged us to come to school every day and gave us lots of hope. It is not only students who miss school when the weather is cold or unfavourable.

Educators also miss school without any prior notice. Teachers will be absent because of the weather and then teaching and learning will be disturbed. You will find that here at Khulubuse a learner could be absent for up to three months and teachers wouldn't have bothered to call and find out what is going on, even though they will encourage us to come and learn. Teacher and learner communication is critically low (poor communication).

Learners take advantage of not having a teacher then they decide to do housework instead. Things would be normal at Khulubuse if they were committed to learning and teaching. I can only tell people who are thinking of dropping out – life is very hard if you are illiterate, and there are no job opportunities. Being educated opens many doors and many opportunities to achieve your personal goals.

People drop out of Khulubuse because of the crime that exists here in the society we live in. It was very unsafe to walk at night, especially if you were a woman. Whenever I am going to school and I see that the street is quiet, I will be absent, because obviously if something happens to me, no one will be available to help me. I just stayed in to protect myself and I never thought that if I was getting mugged and I screamed for help people would come out from the houses to come and help me, they would be scared too because this area is known for big crime, it is never safe for anyone.

Khulubuse only needs to change the learning time to earlier hours or make it known that weekends will be used to cover time lost in studying, just so everyone attending feeling feels safe. I also think that the only thing that can help is for the community to take care of the people of this area by building a small community that will ensure that the community is always safe or a group of people who will walk around at night to catch the people who do the crime. This way will make that area to be safe even for learners, they will feel very comfortable walking at night from school.

#### **4.2.5 Kwanele**

I started in 2019. I came to Khulubuse because they are well known for their successful learners. Khulubuse is also the community learning centre closest to my home. I also realized that it would be easier for me to attend night classes because it was so close to my home.

I came to study Level 3 but I couldn't complete Level 4. I dropped out in the middle of the year. I became too lazy to go to school when the weather was bad because I became numb, I couldn't talk, and I got a cold/flu. Whenever the weather is cold, I suffer so much pain that I can't go to school. My health was very critical during that time.

I don't know what causes a learner to drop out. I dropped out because I had a problem at work and when my shift changed, I couldn't attend all week. Then I realized that I was going to fail and not pass Level 4 and I just dropped it, was hard for me to even try and catch up to the school that I missed because the load was too much and the option, I saw was good for me was to drop drop.

I did not see any problem with teaching and learning at the centre while I was still in school, I saw myself being distracted from working at night, and that was the only thing that stopped me. All three educators cared about us; even now when they see me, they are talking about the same thing they used to say, please come back to school.

I think the learner dropout can be prevented if the starting time was adjusted, and the finishing time. The learner dropout will be prevented if the holidays and weekends are also used for the time lost. Studying at night and not using public holidays as a time to catch up with schoolwork is the only problem that makes most learners drop out. Also, the area in which the school is located is a problem for most students.

I can say to someone who is thinking of dropping out, no matter how hard it is, don't think you are going to back off, you must move on. That will also increase the name of the centre.

## 4.3 Learners still studying

### 4.3.1 Bongeka

I came to study here at Khulubuse in March 2021. I heard about my colleagues who were studying and getting a certificate here at Khulubuse. This year I am doing Level 4.

I have just arrived, and I see that the high rate of adult learner dropout seems to be very high. We were many when we started, but only a few managed to reach Level 4. It seems that they dropped out because of their different problems. Another thing that I could see as the cause of adult learner dropout, is that they are not motivated. It seems that only their teachers help them to be motivated. This increased adult learners dropping out at Khulubuse. Another thing I see as the reason for students leaving school is that they do not find jobs, and they end up dropping out because it was not their intention from the start to study but just to waste away time.

I can encourage them to know that life becomes better when you are educated. Also, you are quick to find a job that will pay better if you are educated. Your life will be better when you are educated, and your children will live a better life if you are educated. One more thing – most of us who were studying there at the centre are people who already had children. It is hard to study when you are old.

I can also indicate that those who were patient in studying ended up getting jobs in governmental departments. Being educated can also make you to be respected in the community. Again, I would advise by saying, if you have children, please do not drop out of the centre because it could have a bad effect on them, because one day, they would want to drop out as you did, and then you would not be able to prevent them from doing so.

The teachers used to ask other students if they knew what was wrong with me, but everyone was clueless as to what was happening as no one knew me well enough.

The dropout of adult learners at Khulubuse CLC can be prevented by the school manager planning that, at least every term, she asks neighbouring CLCs to encourage students about the risk of dropout. They should know how important learning is, they should not drop out due to minor health issues or conditions. That will make it safer for students to drop out. It's

not easy to learn, I agree, but you don't have to be a dropout, you have to carry on pushing. Another thing that can prevent a high dropout rate at Khulubuse CLC, would be if the centre manager asks the Department of Education at a higher institution level to also throw a stone in the wall. To drive their nail to prevent the dropout rate. The department is also working to meet all the needs of students and teachers to prevent dropouts at the Khulubuse CLC.

### **4.3.2 Lindokuhle**

I started to study here at Khulubuse this year (2021). I was inspired by my neighbour who was also a student here at Khulubuse and who is now working because of the certificate that she received here.

I don't have Grade 12 but now I need something like Grade 12.

There are problems we face, but mine are bigger than others, the way I see it. There is a rumour that the adult learners who have been studying here before, until now do not know whether they succeeded or not in their studies, and that alone just demotivated me. We don't know if it is true that why an adult learner finally decided to drop out.

Firstly, I stay far from the school, as summer begins, I will be in trouble myself. When I am going to school, I have to cross the river. When the river is full, I am disturbed and cannot go to school until the river goes down first; only then I will cross, and that sometimes will make me miss a week or two days at school.

I think the adult learner dropout at Khulubuse can be prevented only if the centre manager or educators change the start time and finishing time. Most learners are afraid of travelling at night and most fear for their life. The school is not a very safe place, it is not comfortable for learners to come out at night and travel home feeling safe.

Teaching and learning do not affect learners dropping out simply because every learner comes with a purpose to Khulubuse CLC. Everyone comes knowing what he or she wants and what they are doing here at Khulubuse. Each learner comes here with a different goal that they want to achieve, and it is up to them to obtain that goal. I think even the centre manager is proud of their commitment as they work, there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. They also see the result from the learners who don't drop out, who stay complete the studying at this centre.

What I would say to someone thinking about dropping out is, “Education is the key to success, it is important to read. If you still could learn, you should learn, and thank God for taking this opportunity, because some of them have missed it but can’t find it. Tomorrow, you will thank yourself for your patience. Rather than letting circumstances stop you, you escape from them because you know what you want in your spirit. If you do not finish school, you will not be happy”.

### **4.3.3 Thabile**

I came to study at Khulubuse in April 2021, and I started Level 4 because I already had Grade 11. Most of us are from one area and we are five from the same area. It wouldn’t be good for me to be alone because, in this place where we live, there are a lot of criminals (amaphara) who are always ready to mug people who walk at night. So, walking alone is never safe, we finish around 6 p.m., and here by that time, it is already dark.

The Department of Higher Education needs to ensure that these centre are monitored to ensure that they maintain laid-down standards. The DHET needs to be involved from the beginning to the end to check that everything is going as planned and accordingly. If the Department of Education pays attention to us as AET we will be much more motivated and trustworthy in doing our schoolwork. Also, the department needs to visit us during work hours and see that the studies will be successful. Also, try and check up on students who have been absent from school for days to see what might be the issue and if they have decided to drop out, they should try and motivate or convenience them to come back to school before they leave them. The department also plays a big role in getting learners to finish school, they should treat adult school as learners who study full time.

I wanted to change my life, I have seen or observed many people who have studied at Khulubuse, and they are all successful in life, so I think I will also be one of them. Getting a permanent job that is also well paying because of the certificate obtained at the centre will be a big achievement for me.

The reason most adult learners drop out of school is that it is hard for them to work all day and then go to school at night, making it hard to attend classes, and then they must do homework, as we are already working all day and have no time to spare, also have to find time to play the duties as an adult in the household. Because of the nature of my work, I am facing many challenges, of which the biggest is being tired after work. I am sometimes too

lazy to go and attend classes because I am often tired after spending such a long time at work which is also very demanding and time-consuming.

Teaching and learning have a bearing on student dropout at school. Especially teachers have influence, but they are probably blind [to the problems that learners experience]. Teachers give students plenty of work to do at home. Now the students are also different in their creation because some are quick to catch on and some are slow to catch on, slow learners. The faster ones always come back when they have finished the job and they are the ones who come back unscathed; the others end up feeling like a failure and then dropping out.

Learner dropout can be prevented if teachers also realize that they must give students work that they can all complete in the time available. If they remember that old students pay attention to their homework. If the workload is as high as those students who are studying full-time, that will cause the level of learner dropout to rise unabated.

For someone who wants to drop out, I would just let him or her know that learning is learning, it doesn't matter how old you are, or just learning to read. If you are a student, there are some things that you do not do, for example, partying, you go out of your way because you are busy.

#### **4.3.4 Lindiwe**

I came here to study in 2020, I started in Level 3, then passed Level 3, and now I am doing Level 4.

The thing that made me want to study at Khulubuse CLC is that it is the only centre in the area that I can reach to complete my studies. If the DHET came to Khulubuse CLC regularly, the culture of teaching and learning in the centre could increase. Dropout could be prevented if DHET monitored the centre regularly. The DHET can improve the quality of teaching and learning at the centre by consistently monitoring and being present. When students and educators see the team from DHET regularly, chances are that they will sit up and improve. Teachers feel the pressure of watching eyes and students are encouraged to know that their courses are accredited, thereby leading to improvements. It is a win-win when monitoring and evaluation take place regularly.

This is a free society, but then it depends on how you behave, and what you are famous for in this community. If you are a bad person, the community will treat you differently for them to feel safe.

The real issue is financial problems which may force me to drop out in the future because I am struggling with supporting my siblings, bus fees, and buying stationery.

The reason for learner dropout here at Khulubuse CLC is that students do not want to do the work they are given to do. For example, we have been doing school-based assessment, students who haven't done it are scared, they have a whole lot of work to do; but if you are determined, it is hard to decide to drop out. It is because of laziness that people end up dropping out.

Teaching and learning do not affect learner dropout. All teachers take care of us as students, they show us the way. They do not want anyone to drop out and wish everyone to pass.

If someone wants to leave or drop out, I would advise them by saying, 'No matter what you want to do, it will hurt you for the rest of your life. Read it better, and be patient, because, in the end, you will regret it if you drop out.'

#### **4.3.5 Ziba**

I started here last year, 2021. Currently, I am doing Level 4. I don't have Grade 12 but now I need something like Grade 12.

There are problems we face, but mine are bigger than others, the way I see it. Since I started studying, I feel more burden that weighs on me at home, because now I am the one who looks after my sibling, since our parents passed away. It is difficult to study there because I end up not being able to do my homework when I come back home from school in the afternoon. I chose to study here in Khulubuse CLC because the centre is near my home, and I was told it is really good to study. There is a lot that is required from me as an adult in this family.

I think what causes the adult learners to drop out of Khulubuse is the long walk to school. I always arrive at school tired, and that distracts me and causes me to drop out since I don't have a place to stay close to school. When I get home to do my homework, I do it late and end after nightfall. Because of the long distance, when I get home, I can't go back to my books to recap because I am often tired, I also could not afford to rent a place to stay close to school as I was not financially stable. It doesn't affect me only, most families with people

who drop out of Khulubuse stay far from the school and they don't have any other way than to stay next to the school, while they are still busy with work so that they can support their family and most of them are breadwinners at home.

Teaching and learning do not create learner dropout. Three educators teach us. They take care of us, and they take their time for us. If you are absent, they used to call you to find out where are you, or if there is something wrong with you. Our educators are very concerned about us, and they will encourage us to come back to school to finish learning.

Learner dropout can be prevented by saying, for example, these students who are crossing a river may be offered something to cross the river, maybe advise the local municipality to build the bridge which will help us a lot. I think only the community can come up with a solution, by taking care of people who go out at night. For example, by working together with policemen to stop criminals, or by finding groups of people who can volunteer to walk around at night.

I would encourage someone who is thinking about dropping out to continue with their education because education is the key to success. I can tell him or her to look at me; today I am doing Level 4 here at Khulubuse, and I am about to finish.

## **4.4 Educators**

### **4.4.1 Thembi**

I am one of the educators here at Khulubuse CLC and I am the centre manager as well. I have been teaching here at Khulubuse for 15 years. When I came here, the centre was called by a different name, and then with the change of circumstances it was renamed Khulubuse.

I feel very happy to be a teacher of these adults, although there are some difficult cases along the way, we just face whatever we have and move on.

There is a high rate of learner absenteeism in this centre. The teachers and adult learners might be absent because of weather conditions and teaching and learning are disturbed. The learners work too hard at home and end up getting tired which causes them not to be able to be productive at school. Some students sometimes forget their timetable at Khulubuse adult centre. I found out that most students drop out because they have personal issues, which leads to them dropping out.

Many learners drop out because they have to support themselves and their families, you will find out that they work during the day and will be too tired by the afternoon and can't come to school and focus. Some have to work during the night to earn extra cash, this has a lot of effect on them because they will end up having to choose between earning money and helping at home than studying. Some students will be absent during summer because we will have these heavy rains and they cross the river coming to school and they cannot, they will have to wait until the river comes down but still, they would have missed out on a lot of schoolwork. It seems like they are not committed because someone will not forget her school days. They will go back to the timetable and check the days if they do.

At Khulubuse CLC learners continuously are absent from school and no follow-up is made on the learners' absenteeism. The way they absent themselves, they end up dropping out of the centre without finishing or continuing with their Level 4 class. There is no communication at all between teachers and adult learners at Khulubuse CLC. Learners will not even report that they are dropping out, they will just be absent for months and teachers will find it hard to follow up on them, the communication between a teacher and a learner is very poor.

What I understand is that when you teach adults you have to listen to them, all the time. One of the triggers of a successful academic programme is communication, and I have noticed that there is not much communication between teachers and students, which contributes a lot to adult learner dropout. But I haven't got a straight answer from teachers about why this is lacking. Also, to give the learners a chance to speak out is always the best. I remember when they told me to stop writing on the blackboard, and I had to stop without hesitating, they would tell me they were tired of writing, and if I went on with writing, they would tell me they couldn't see because they were old. They need teachers who would be able to have a patient heart and these kinds of adult people just want to write what is on the board only, they don't want a worksheet.

At the beginning of the year, there were a lot of adult learners who registered in this centre, but now we have a small number because of dropouts. The main reason students drop out is because most students work too hard at home and work, affecting their academics due to personal issues, forgetting that they need to attend classes.

I think only the community can come up with a solution to learner dropout because the problem is in the community, gangsters in the community. For example, yes, my view is

teaching and learning are going very well. Learner dropout will be prevented by asking the local municipality to build safe bridges, so everyone can cross. They can find a way to protect people who walk at night and ask for streetlights when it is dark, also getting rid of these gangsters. Also, maybe, finding young but brave people who will volunteer to walk around at night checking the whole place.

In my view, teaching and learning are going well. Teachers have no problem teaching at Khulubuse adult centre.

#### **4.4.2 Lihle**

I started working here at Khulubuse adult centre in 2013. I am a teacher at Khulubuse adult centre, I feel happy and very well. I have been there for nine years. I often hear about the issues that are there in some adult CLCs, they have a lot of problems that they face.

The only thing that I have become accustomed to is that, if you are teaching older students, you must keep calm. I mean that the conditions of life end up hindering them in their studies as well and I must understand them, because some of the learners took advantage because they see that they can talk to me anyway, and they forget that they came here to study.

There are adult learners who have dropped out because they have different problems, some say what their problem is, and we help them because they only survive through social grants. Completing their studies will make them receive their certificate and get better jobs to support their families.

Perhaps the best way to prevent adult learner dropout is to change the time of study or starting point because they complain that when it gets dark, they are afraid to walk alone. After all, they fear walking in a dark place.

I don't see teaching and learning as contributing to learner dropout, but all teachers have something to take care of to ensure that teaching and learning are done perfectly.

I see that there are many chances that those who have dropped out will come back because their different problems have been taken care of, they have not quarrelled with anyone. Maybe half of those who left will return. If the centre is still there, hope will return.

### 4.4.3 Nomzamo

I started working here at Khulubuse in 2010. I could explain that, well, the society we have created is not educated, it is difficult for some people to even read the instructions given to them in writing. Being a teacher of adults is not a small thing, because before I came to the CLC I thought that I would rest a little. It's normal, I could say that I feel very happy, although the older students want to tell you to stop teaching because they are tired, and they want you to look at it the way they see it.

There is an experience that I have gained, and I have also learned that it is important to listen to the students, especially the older students. There is a great difficulty that we face with adult learners. First of all, they do not come to school regularly, adult learners do not even say that they are not coming to school. It takes patience when you work in this way, if you ask if you are not well known at the adult community learning centre, they just say "It is because problems hold us down and there is no such thing, just patience".

Teaching and learning are not a part of why adult learners drop out; I'm not saying that. The thing that makes them drop out is usually the various problems in their homes, some of which are not easy for them to tell you as their teacher.

Some of them say that when we plead with them, we show them the way and tell them that it will be very dark when the morning comes. But what happens is they come back, and others don't. Some of the adult learners have asked us to help them when they are not busy, and others asked us to help on the weekends so that they are not left behind.

To prevent adult learners' dropout at Khulubuse adult learning centre, it could be that they are determined to know what they want in their lives. Dropout can also be prevented if we as teachers encourage them to try so that even if they have problems, they do not drop out. Also, the Department of Higher Education, if they pay attention to what they have experienced when they visit the centre, will help the students.

The cause of adult learner dropout at Khulubuse CLC many of the adult learner dropouts say that the problem is that they have to deal with so many situations at home that need them. They are looking after their homes financially, and they can't lose their jobs because they are studying. They know that as they are studying, if they pass their Level 4 one day, they will get a better job.

## 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented the data collected through the semi-structured interviews with my research participants: ten adult learners and three educators at the Khulubuse CLC. The following chapter analyses this data and discusses it in relation to the literature review and theoretical framework.

# Chapter Five: Discussion of findings

## 5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented the data generated through the face-to-face semi-structured interviews, the methodology I used to investigate adult learner dropout at a CLC in Greytown. As discussed in Chapter Three, I used these interviews to collect data from thirteen participants. In this chapter I discuss the findings of the study by presenting my analysis of the data collected in relation to the study's research questions:

1. What causes learners to drop out of the AET programme at Khulubuse CLC?
2. To what extent does teaching and learning at Khulubuse CLC contribute to learner dropout?
3. How can learner dropout be prevented at Khulubuse CLC?

I present the findings by the themes that emerged from interviews as part of my inductive analysis. The themes are organized by the research questions they addressed.

*Table 5.1: Research questions and corresponding themes*

<b>Research questions</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Related sub-themes that emerged from participants</b>
1. What are the causes of learner dropout at the AET programme?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Causes of learner dropout</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study-related issues</li> <li>• Family-related issues</li> <li>• Logistical issues</li> <li>• Work-related issues</li> <li>• Personal factors</li> </ul>
2. To what extent does teaching and learning contribute to the learner at Khulubuse CLC?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching and learning contributing to learner dropout</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor communication between educators and learners</li> <li>• Lack of skills training programmes and poorly resourced schools</li> <li>• Demotivation by teachers' absenteeism</li> </ul>
3. How can learner dropout be prevented at Khulubuse CLC?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategies to prevent learner dropout</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring and support by the Department of Education</li> <li>• Strategies for preventing learner dropout</li> </ul>

Table 5.1 above shows the three themes and the nine sub-themes that emerged from the interviews. There are four sub-themes (1-4) relating to RQ1, three sub-themes (5-7) relating

to RQ2, and two sub-themes (8-9) responding to RQ3. I discuss each of these nine sub-themes in detail below.

## 5.2 Causes of learner dropout

### 5.2.1 Study-related issues

When I asked the learners why participants dropped out of school, I got the following responses. For example, Busile remarked thus:

*One of the reasons I decided to drop out was because I was not prepared for the examination, I could not understand what the teachers were explaining, which made me fail most of my assessments. The second reason that made me drop out is that I failed my school-based assessment. I put in everything but still failed because I could not grasp what the teachers were talking about.*

Busile's response revealed that there are no programmes to let students know that failing a course is not the end of their education. On the contrary, most students think that failing one course will probably mean they will fail the others. This point was expressed by another participant, Lungelo, who remarked thus:

*I was doing Level 4 at the Khulubuse centre, and I was scared that I could fail due to commitment. I was not yet prepared for the examination.*

What these participants said is in support of the theoretical framework by Tinto (1975) which states that the individual attributes encompass a student's characteristics which would determine the student's ability to adapt to college life. Students with high self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation are more likely to persist in challenges.

I also noticed that most of the students provided responses that may be regarded as flimsy, but they impacted significantly on their studies. For example, Bongeka said she has a problem when it is cold. She claimed that winters are fierce and that she is unable to attend school as they do not have heaters because they cannot afford them. Like Bongeka, Kwanele had the following remarks:

*I became too lazy to go to school when the weather was bad because I became numb, I couldn't talk, and I got a cold/flu. Whenever the weather is cold, I suffer so much pain that I can't go to school.*

These responses from the participants show that they dropped out from the CLC because they had trouble going to school when the weather was bad, thus affecting their studies. Kwanele would get sick when the weather was cold so much so her body would be in a lot of pain, and she would not go to class. This affected her studies so much that she ended up dropping out of school. What these participants said supports the theoretical framework by Tinto (1975), which states that the individual attributes that encompass a student's characteristics would determine the student's ability to adapt to college life. Students with high self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation are more likely to persist in adversity.

### **5.2.2 Family-related issues**

Another central theme that emerged is financial constraints. Many learners are demotivated by their poor financial background. It often impacts negatively on their academic pursuits. For example, Gugu had this to say:

*I dropped out because it was hard for me to attend classes. After all, I didn't have enough money to take care of my basic needs, affecting my academics.*

Gugu's position is in tandem with studies that state that financial constraints are a major reason why many students drop out, as discussed in Chapter 2. Often, because they need to make ends meet, they are unable to focus on their studies. Their focus instead is on seeking jobs and ensuring that they keep their jobs (Deci & Ryan, 2016). According to Tinto (1975), family background has numerous factors which influence student's decisions to pursue higher education and their ability to persist once enrolled. On the impact of poverty on students' dropout rates, Lungelo said:

*When our parents passed on, I needed to find a means of getting money. We were not financially stable. So, I needed to look for a job which forced me to drop out, unfortunately.*

It is clear that because of where Lungelo comes from, she needed to drop out of school because she is the responsible one at home. Since both of her parents died, no one now helps with what is needed; her parents were never employed, and only survived by grant money. She dropped out and started looking for jobs, but she kept getting piece jobs. She had no chance of getting back to class because everything at home is her responsibility. She needs to feed her siblings and take care of her educational needs, but she cannot play that role while she has to work and study at the same time. This relates to the external factors affecting

students' lives in the theoretical framework by Tinto (1975), as well as his claim that family background includes numerous factors which influence the student's decisions to pursue higher education. Siphos stated the following regarding the same topic:

*I had to drop out because my parent did not work. My family is financially unstable. I do not have a decent job; I also earn very little.*

Due to his family's financial issues, Siphos was forced to drop out of school. He is also the one who must provide for the family. He ended up dropping out of class so he could focus on earning. His responsibilities at home, as a responsible person, compelled him to drop out and go to work. He also needed money to support his parent, so his circumstances forced him to drop out. Adult learners often have additional responsibilities, which can be very stressful such as career commitments and family obligations, leading to time constraints and increased stress (Johnson & Smith, 2019).

Gugu had this to say:

*I didn't have enough money to take care of my basic needs, affecting my academics.*

This response by Gugu reveals that the issue of money in Gugu's household is the major problem that made her stop attending classes.

Legoabe (2007) argues that learners drop out because they believe that there are much more important issues than education. One student in Legoabe's study asked a very important question: "How do I concentrate on my studies if I am hungry?". According to Legoabe (2007), many adult learners drop out due to increased family responsibilities such as rearing the young and working to support the family financially. Therefore, one of the reasons for the high learner dropout from the AET programme is that most learners are full-time employees who are unable to commit to the rigours of education (Legoabe, 2007).

### **5.2.3 Logistical issues**

Most students stated that because they could not afford money to pay for transport directly to the centre, they had to trek several miles to get to the centre, thereby feeling tired and demotivated. This impacts negatively on their studies and leads to them staying away from class. For example, Ziba had this to say:

*Because of the long distance, when I get home, I can't go back to my books to recap because I am often tired. It doesn't affect me only, most families with people who drop*

*out of Khulubuse stay far from the school and they don't have any other way than to stay next to the school, while they are still busy with work so that they can support their family.*

Similarly, Gugu had this to say:

*Teaching and learning are not a reason for learner dropout. Teachers are teaching very well, learners must be motivated to not be lazy, and learners must be provided with a safe living environment. There must be a crime prevention team to protect learners. Learners must be provided with transport.*

Some learners said during the interview that learners would drop out because both teachers and learners would sometimes be too lazy to come to school because of the weather. For example, Busile said:

*Teachers will be absent because of the weather and then teaching and learning will be disturbed.*

Kwanele said:

*I dropped out in the middle of the year. I became too lazy to go to school when the weather was bad.*

Lindokuhle also said:

*I stay far from the school, and as summer begins, I will be in trouble myself. When I am going to school, I have to cross the river. When the river is full, I am disturbed and cannot go to school until the river goes down first; only then I will cross, and that sometimes will make me miss a week or two days at school.*

Busile, Kwanele, and Lindokuhle tell us that one of the main reasons why learners drop out is due to the seasonal weather. The distance of their homes from the centre also has an impact on why they drop out. Learners who are still studying are also facing the same challenges faced by the learners who dropped out but they are strong enough to face these challenges without quitting. Tinto (1975) stated that students with high self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation are more likely to persist despite challenges.

#### 5.2.4 Work-related issues

When I asked the students why they would not focus on class for just a few years and work afterwards, one of the students, Siphso said:

*My work timetable clashed with my school timetable, and I couldn't leave work, we had no other way to survive, I would rather drop out than leave work because I am the breadwinner, so I had to drop out since I needed the money to support my family.*

Due to the poor financial background of some of the students, and considering their background as breadwinners, most of the students affirm that there are no alternatives to dropping out of class as they had to sacrifice to ensure that they put food on the tables of their families. There is a big unemployment issue in South Africa, so when people do get jobs, they hold on tightly to them. Dhlamini and Heeralal (2014), in their study, argued that adult education has helped adults fight against illiteracy, poverty and unemployment; but this cannot work if they are unable to complete their studies.

Siphso added:

*My family is financially unstable. I do not have a decent job; I also earn very little. My current situation made me decide to go and do Level 4 at Khulubuse CLC. My school timetable clashed with my work timetable. It was clear that I was going to lose my job, my job demanded a lot from my day shift. I had no time for anything besides my work, all this forced me to drop out.*

The above responses from this participant show that he dropped out because he didn't have a choice about whether to continue with his studies, because of the direct clash with his school timetable, resulting in him being forced to drop out.

Another participant, Thabile, said because of the challenge posed by work, she is unable to focus on the demands of school. Thabile remarked that a challenging financial background was the reason she has to work twice as hard and long, thereby impacting her studies. Thabile stressed that:

*Because of the nature of my work, I am facing many challenges, of which the biggest is being tired after work. I am sometimes too lazy to go and attend classes because I am often tired after spending a long time at work.*

One of the interviewed educators had this to say:

*The learners work too hard at home and end up getting tired which causes them not to be able to be productive at school. Some students sometimes forget their timetable at Khulubuse adult centre. I found out that most students drop out because they have personal issues, which leads to them dropping out. It seems like they are not committed because someone will not forget her school days. They will go back to the timetable and check the days if they do.*

The participants here reveal that learners drop out due to overworking, which strains their bodies too much and they end up being too tired to go to school. According to the literature review, Anderson (2011) and Legoabe (2017) state that financial considerations, work commitments, family matters, poverty, substance and drug abuse, peer pressure, teenage pregnancy, and bullying all play significant roles in dropout rates.

### **5.2.5 Personal factors**

There is also a flip side to the challenge posed by students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. I found that the effect is not just on financial constraints; there are other spiral effects. For example, Lungelo had this to say:

*I had a problem when I was still a learner at Khulubuse, I fell pregnant, and my boyfriend was also a learner at the centre. We ended up spending a lot of time together because we would go and come back to and from school together, and when I fell pregnant, I dropped out and I was afraid to go back to study at Khulubuse.*

Walking a long distance to school while pregnant led her to drop out because she would get to school tired and then need to sleep. Her exhaustion made her drop out, mainly because she could not focus in class. However, Lungelo was also ‘afraid’ to go back because of how other learners might see her: “I was afraid of how students would look at me while pregnant, but my boyfriend went on with school”.

Lungelo’s views correlate with other studies, such as that done by Akugri (2017), who states that teenage pregnancy affects children attending school. When teenagers fall pregnant, they may be afraid of going back to school. Some are forced to stay behind and take care of their children. According to Raymond and Lesego (2017), young girls are afraid of being judged when they fall pregnant due to the stigma associated with pregnancy at a young age and the lack of support from the child’s father. Therefore, they are forced to leave school and find

employment to support their child. Whilst Lungelo is an adult learner, it is interesting to note that there seems to be a similar pattern.

The issues raised by the interviewed students were corroborated by the interviewed educators. For example, according to Lihle:

*There are adult learners who have dropped out because they have different problems, some say what their problem is, and we help them because they only survive through social grants. Completing their studies will make them receive their certificate and get better jobs to support their families.*

These responses from the participants show that learners dropped out for various reasons. When learners have a supportive family background and strong pre-college education, they can mitigate the disadvantages of less rigorous education which helps them navigate higher education effectively using individual attributes like resilience and adaptability (Tinto, 1975).

### 5.3 Teaching and learning as contributing to learner dropout

The participants were asked to what extent teaching and learning contributed to learner dropout at Khulubuse CLC. The responses provided answers to my second Research Question. I have categorised the responses according to three themes.

#### 5.3.1 Poor communication between educators and learners

Thembi, one of the educators (and the centre manager) had this to say about communication:

*At Khulubuse CLC, a learner could be absent for three months; no one bothered to call to ask what was going on. The way they absent themselves, they end up dropping out of the centre without finishing or continuing with their Level 4 class. There is no communication at all between the teacher and adult learners at Khulubuse CLC. One of the triggers of a successful academic programme is communication, and I have noticed that there is not much communication between teachers and students, which contributes a lot to adult learner dropout. But I haven't got a straight answer from teachers about why this is lacking.*

Nomzamo, another of the educators, also said:

*First of all, they do not come to school regularly, adult learners do not even say that they are not coming to school.*

These responses from educators show that students dropped out of the learning centre because there is no communication between learners and teachers. What the participants said is in support of the theoretical framework by Tinto (1975), which states that academic and social integration are critical to student retention, since both forms of integration contribute to a student's overall satisfaction and commitment to their educational goals.

### **5.3.2 Lack of skills training programmes and poorly resourced centres**

Busile had this to say regarding the commitment of students:

*Things would be normal at Khulubuse if they were committed to learning and teaching.*

The participants stated that the teaching and learning in Khulubuse could be improved if they were committed. As discussed in Chapter 2, Festus and Adekola (2015) stated that the lack of qualified AET trainers is a factor that can hinder the effective running of programmes, which could lead to potential dropout rates. The lack of knowledge and skills could lead to ineffective instruction, which contributes to learner frustration and disagreement.

### **5.3.3 Demotivation by teachers' absenteeism**

Busile, another interviewed adult learner participant, shared the views of the centre manager, when she said the institution does not care for students' welfare:

*It is not only students who miss school when the weather is cold or unfavourable. Educators also miss school without any prior notice. Teachers will be absent because of the weather and then teaching and learning will be disturbed. Learners take advantage of not having a teacher then they decide to do housework instead. Things would be normal at Khulubuse if they were committed to learning and teaching.*

According to the theoretical framework, goal commitment is the degree to which a student is dedicated to completing their educational objectives. Tinto (1975) argues that family background, pre-college schooling, and individual attributes all contribute to shaping a student's commitment to their academic goals.

## **5.4 Prevention of adult learner dropout**

The interview participants were asked how learner dropout can be prevented at Khulubuse CLC. Their responses can be grouped under two themes: monitoring and support by the Department of Education, and learners being certificated on time.

#### **5.4.1 Monitoring and support by the Department of Education**

Although most of the participants – both educators and learners – did not see teaching and learning at the centre as a major cause of learner dropout, some did feel that the centre needed to be more closely monitored by the Department of Higher Education and Training. Thabile, one of the learners who was studying at the centre, remarked thus:

*The Department of Higher Education needs to ensure that these centres are monitored to ensure that they maintain laid-down standards. The DHET needs to be involved from the beginning to the end to check that everything is going as planned and accordingly. If the Department of Education pays attention to us as AET we will be much more motivated and trustworthy in doing our schoolwork. Also, the department needs to visit us during work hours and see that the studies will be successful.*

Lindiwe, another current student, also felt the same way as Thabile. She remarked thus:

*If the DHET came to Khulubuse CLC regularly, the culture of teaching and learning in the centre could increase. Dropout could be prevented if DHET monitored the centre regularly. The DHET can improve the quality of teaching and learning at the centres by consistently monitoring and being present. When students and educators see the team from DHET regularly, chances are that they will sit up and improve. Teachers feel the pressure of watching eyes and students are encouraged to know that their courses are accredited, thereby leading to improvements. It is a win-win when monitoring and evaluation take place regularly.*

The current student participants thus feel that if the Department of Education came to the centre regularly it would help to decrease the dropout rates. This participant agrees with Tinto (1975), that academic and social experiences influence a student's commitment to their goals and the institution. High academic and social integration strengthen both types of commitment because this can help the students remain focused.

#### 5.4.2 Strategies for Preventing Learner Dropout

The participants were asked to explain what they think can be done to minimize the levels of learner dropout from Khulubuse CLC. The participants proposed different strategies that can be used to minimise the level of dropout. This includes adjustment of class times, improved learner motivation, reduction of crime and more engagement by the educators.

A number of participants – both learners and educators - referred to the scheduling of classes as a key area for intervention:

*I think learner dropout at Khulubuse can be prevented only if the centre manager or educators change the start time and finishing time. [Lindokuhle]*

*I think learner dropout can be prevented if the starting time was adjusted, and the finishing time. The learner dropout will be prevented if the holidays and weekends are also used for the last time. [Kwanele]*

*Perhaps the best way to prevent adult learner dropout is to change the time of study or starting point. [Lihle]*

Related to this was the concern about learners not being safe travelling to or from the CLC, because of having to do so in the dark:

*To prevent learner dropout, the community can help to create a crime prevention team in the community that would probably reduce crime, it will also be comfortable for learners who attend Khulubuse to be safe at night when going home after school, knowing very well that they are guarded by this team. [Gugu]*

However, one of the learners who had dropped out seemed to feel that a primary cause of dropout was a lack of motivation by the learners themselves; and therefore only the learners could really do anything to prevent this:

*Dropout can be prevented if every learner here is motivated to study, they are dedicated to what they want to achieve. [Lungelo]*

One of the educators also felt that learner motivation was a problem, but she felt that this should be addressed by the educators and the Department:

*To prevent adult learner dropout at Khulubuse Adult Learning Centre, it could be that they are determined to know what they want in their lives. Dropouts can also*

*be prevented if we as teachers encourage them to try so that even if they have problems, they do not drop out. Also, the Department of Higher Education, if they pay attention to what they have experienced when they visit the centre, will help the students. [Nozamo]*

One of the other learners at the CLC also felt that learners could be motivated by the Centre staff:

*The dropout of adult learners at Khulubuse CLC can be prevented by the school manager planning that, at least every term, she asks neighbouring CLCs to encourage students about the risk of dropout. [Bongeka]*

*Learner dropout can be prevented if teachers also realize that they must give students work that they can all complete in the time available. If they remember that old students pay attention to their homework. If the workload is as high as those students who are studying full-time, that will cause the level of learner dropout to rise unabated. [Thabile]*

The participants' views on how learner dropout can be prevented are similar to those reported by McManus (2020), who shares their point of view on how learner dropout can be prevented. To prevent learner dropout, McManus (2020) argues, it is crucial to concentrate on the behavioural, emotional, social, and environmental factors. According to the UNESCO report (2017), providing financial assistance and scholarships to economically disadvantaged students can be a potential strategy for preventing learner dropout. However, this was not an issue raised by the participants in my study. It is clear from my study that an important solution to preventing further dropouts is to change the time at which classes begin and end.

I argue that there are a number of ways in which this study can make a contribution to the issue of learner dropout at Khulubuse Adult Learning Centre in Greytown, KwaZulu-Natal, or others like it:

1. By making recommendations on the strategies that can be used to prevent or reduce learner dropouts from the Greytown area CLC that can then be used by the CLC and/or policy-makers.

As can be seen from the data presented above, key recommendations would include rescheduling classes to better fit the lives of learners, and ensure their safety; working together with other CLCs in the same area to better motivate learners; ensuring that the

workload placed on learners takes into account their other responsibilities; and fostering a closer relationship between DHET and the CLC.

Highlighting strategies or interventions that could be effective in retaining adult learners, such as flexible scheduling, allows Centre staff to better identify what they are able to do to prevent learner dropout; and policy makers can adopt and scale these strategies across other adult learning centres.

2. By providing the CLC with empirical data to help them provide support to their adult learners.

The data presented above potentially enables the development of targeted interventions based on the specific needs of adult learners. These could include providing learner support services, such as academic advising, mentorship, or psychological counselling; creating support systems for working students; providing childcare facilities; offering transportation subsidies. Identifying such interventions can then inform decisions about resource allocation – for example, policy makers can prioritize funding for adult learning centres to undertake these interventions.

3. By providing policymakers with information to allow them to formulate workable and practical policies to mitigate dropout rates amongst adult learners.

I hope that the study can help policymakers develop policies that are context-specific and based on the realities of adult learners in areas like Greytown Area CLC, where factors such as work commitments, financial pressures, and familial responsibilities significantly affect retention. The findings could also potentially help policymakers tailor existing policies to address barriers like inadequate financial support, lack of flexible learning schedules, or poor learning infrastructure, which as the study has shown, are often contributing factors to adult learning dropout.

Areas in which policy could potentially be developed or enhanced to mitigate against learner dropout might include:

- Policies that promote lifelong learning and flexible learning pathways to accommodate adult learners' varying needs. For example, the study suggests that flexible learning hours could significantly reduce dropout rates, and policy makers could thus implement regulations requiring adult learning centres to offer evening or weekend classes.

- The creation of funding schemes or grants for adult learners to alleviate the financial burden of learning on students, given that the study suggests that financial instability is a key cause of dropout.
- Policies that promote collaboration between local communities, adult learning centres, and policy makers to implement retention strategies that are community-driven and culturally relevant.
- Policies that emphasize the training and professional development of educators in adult learning centres to better understand and address the specific needs of their learners. For instance, if adult learning centres lack trained personal to provide personalized learning assistance, the findings could encourage policy makers to focus on capacity building within these centres.

By understanding the specific challenges and needs of the Greytown Area CLC, policy makers will be better equipped to design policies that can be applied to similar context across the region. However, policy makers need to continuously evaluate dropout prevention strategies, ensuring that they remain adaptable to the evolving needs of adult learners.

## 5.5 Deductive analysis: Tinto's model in relation to the study

I frame the discussion below by using each element of Tinto's 1997 model as a lens for analysing the data that was generated by my study.

**Family background** in Tinto's model refers to the socio-economic status, parental education levels, and family support, which collectively shape a student's initial commitment to college (Tinto, 1997). In the data, socio-economic challenges were prominent, with many participants highlighting financial difficulties as a barrier to persistence. Parental education levels, however, were seldom discussed, suggesting that this was not a significant influence in the context of this study. Similarly, while family support was occasionally mentioned, it was not a recurring theme. This suggests that socio-economic status had more pronounced effect than other family background factors, emphasizing the need for financial support mechanisms within the Community Learning Centre (CLC).

**Skills and Abilities:** Skills and abilities denote the academic preparedness and intellectual capability that students bring with them to college (Tinto, 1997). The data revealed that participants often felt underprepared for the academic rigour, attributing this to gaps in prior schooling or extended breaks in formal education. However, some student exhibited strong

resilience and a willingness to adapt, which underlines the potential for targeted interventions, such as preparatory workshops, to bridge skill gaps and foster academic confidence within the CLC. This is then an additional possible intervention, which did not emerge from my inductive analysis.

**Prior Schooling:** Prior Schooling encompasses the quality and type of education received before entering colleges influencing readiness and adaptability (Tinto, 1997). Participants consistently highlighted the inadequacy of their prior schooling, particularly in under-resourced schools, as a significant challenge. This lack of foundational education impacted their confidence and performance in the CLC. Addressing these disparities through remedial programmes and foundational courses could greatly enhance student retention and success. Again, this did not emerge from my inductive analysis, but from the deductive analysis could clearly be a helpful targeted intervention.

**Intentions:** Intentions refer to students' initial goals and aspirations, such as career objectives and personal growth (Tinto, 1997). Many participants expressed clear aspiration to improve their job prospect and personal development through their studies. However, some noted that their goals evolve, influenced of fostering an environment where students can explore and refine their ambitions.

**Goal and Institutional Commitments:** Goal and institutional commitments reflect a student's dedication to their educational objectives and the institution (Tinto, 1997). While most participants exhibited a strong commitment to achieving their goals, their attachment to the CLC appeared weaker. Limited social integration and inconsistent academic support emerged as factors that weakened institutional loyalty. Strengthening institutional commitment through mentorship programmes and community-building activities could mitigate this issue.

**External Commitments:** External commitments include obligations outside the institution, such as family responsibilities or employment, which can impact persistence (Tinto, 1997). The data revealed that many students struggled to balance these commitments with their studies, with employment demands particularly affecting attendance and performance. As emerged strongly from my inductive analysis, flexible scheduling and tailored support for working students could alleviate these pressures and enhance persistence.

**Institutional Experience:** Tinto's model categorizes institutional experience into the academic system and social system, both of which shape student integration. In terms of the

**academic System**, this comprises formal engagements that contribute to a student's educational journey (Tinto, 1997). Participants frequently highlighted the supportive role of certain educators but also noted inconsistencies in teaching quality and resource availability. This variance affected their academic integration and overall experience, suggesting a need for consistent teaching standards and resource allocation.

The **social system** involves interactions and integration within the college community, including social support networks (Tinto, 1997). Social integration appeared limited, with participants reporting few opportunities for meaningful engagement with peers. This lack of community within the CLC was identified as a potential area for intervention to improve retention and support.

**Quality of Student Effort:** Quality of student effort emphasizes the role of active engagement in academic and social activities (Tinto, 1997). Participants who invest significant effort in their studies reported better outcomes and higher levels of satisfaction. However, external commitments often limited the time and energy students could dedicate to their education. Encouraging effective time management and promoting active participation in both academic and extracurricular activities could enhance overall student effort.

**Learning:** Learning represents the outcomes of academic integration and student effort, focusing on what students achieve through their educational activities (Tinto, 1997). The data demonstrated that students who actively engaged with their coursework and sought support when showed significant academic progress. This highlights the importance of fostering a culture of active learning and providing accessible academic resources.

**Revised intentions and Commitments:** Following their experiences within the institution, students' goals and commitments may evolve (Tinto, 1997). For many participants, initial goals became more refined or ambitious as they gained confidence in their abilities. However, insufficient academic and social integration occasionally led to diminished institutional commitment. Enhancing both integration dimensions could reinforce students' evolving commitments.

**Persistency:** Persistency reflects the students' continued enrolment and progress towards their goals (Thinto, 1997). The data revealed that persistency was most vulnerable among students with significant external commitments or limited academic and social integration. Addressing these barriers through targeted support programs could improve retentions and completion rates within the CLC.

The study identified significant socio-economic challenges and inadequate prior schooling as major barriers to learner persistence, highlighting the need for targeted financial aid and remedial support. Limited social integration within the Community Learning Centre (CLC) was noted as a key weakness, emphasizing the importance of community-building initiatives. External commitments, such as work and family responsibilities, heavily impacted student engagement, indicating the necessity of a flexible academic schedule. Furthermore, the findings underscored the critical role of quality teaching and consistent academic support in fostering both academic integration and institutional loyalty among learners.

## 5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the themes which emerged from my inductive analysis, and how they correspond to my research questions. I discussed each theme, evaluating its consistency with the reviewed literature and the theoretical lens used in this study. I then presented my deductive analysis, using the elements of Tinto's 1997 model as themes.

Chapter Six concludes this study by synthesizing the findings and reflecting on the causes of adult learner dropout at Khulubuse Community Learning Centre (CLC) in Greytown, KwaZulu-Natal.

# Chapter Six: Conclusion

## 6.1 Introduction

As an educator in the Early Childhood Development Programme in the uMzinyathi District of the KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa, I have witnessed a troubling trend: some learners drop out of school before completing Grade 9. For these individuals, attending a Community Learning Centre (CLC) to complete their basic education appears to be the most viable option. However, even within these CLCs, learners often drop out before finishing.

This study stems from my personal experience of seeing many adult learners enrol in CLCs with enthusiasm and clear aspirations to complete their education, only to drop out before achieving their goals. I sought to understand the reasons behind this dropout phenomenon and to explore potential measures to prevent it. Specifically, I wanted to investigate whether the dropout rates were influenced by factors related to the learning and teaching processes at the CLCs. Thus, my study focuses on the causes of adult learner dropout at a Khulubuse Adult Learning Centre in Greytown, KwaZulu-Natal.

It should be noted that this is an empirical study based on very limited data that was not triangulated, which compromises the validity and credibility of the study. These have direct implications for the conclusions and recommendations that can be made.

## 6.2 Summary of key findings

### **RQ 1: What causes learners to drop out of the AET program at Khulubuse CLC?**

The study identified several factors contributing to the dropout rates among adult learners at Khulubuse CLC. Socio-economic challenges were prominent, with many learners citing issues related to financial difficulties as a primary reason for dropping out. The need to support their families often forced them to prioritise work over education. Additionally, learners report a lack of adequate support systems both at home and within the learning environment, which compounded their difficulties in balancing educational pursuits with other responsibilities.

## **RQ 2: To what extent does teaching and learning at Khulubuse CLC contribute to learners' dropout?**

According to the participants teaching and learning strategies at the Khulubuse CLC did not contribute to learner dropout. The participants stated that the educators in the CLC try by all means to support the student. If there were any challenges many were from outside Khulubuse CLC and were not based on how teaching was conducted at Khulubuse CLC except for teacher absenteeism and sometimes the lack of communication between educators and learners also played a role in learner dropout.

## **RQ 3: How can learner dropout be prevented at Khulubuse CLC?**

The study highlighted several strategies that could be employed to prevent and reduce learner dropout at Khulubuse CLC. Enhancing socio-economic support for learners, such as providing financial assistance or flexible learning schedules, could alleviate some of the pressures that lead to dropout. Improving the quality of teaching through professional development for educators and incorporating more interactive and relevant teaching methods would also be beneficial. Creating a more supportive learning environment that addresses the unique needs of adult learners was emphasized as a critical factor in retaining students.

Overall, the findings indicate that a combination of socio-economic factors and inadequate family support systems and contribute to the high dropout rates at Khulubuse CLC. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach that includes improving financial support for learners, enhancing the quality of education, and creating a more supportive and engaging learning environment. The study underscores the importance of tailored interventions that consider the specific challenges faced by adult learners in disadvantaged communities.

Based on the findings, several recommendations are made for interventions to address the dropout issue, discussed in detail in Section 5.4.2 and 5.5. Policymakers should consider providing more robust financial support and resources to CLCs to support these and alleviate socio-economic pressure on learners. Finally, fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment that encourages persistence and resilience among learners is crucial for reducing dropout rates.

## 6.3 Reflection on findings

The findings from this study reveal a multifaceted understanding of the factors contributing to learner dropout at Khulubuse Community Learning Centre. The significant impact of study-related challenges, family obligations, and logistical issues underscores the complex realities faced by adult learners. Many participants articulated feelings of inadequacy and financial strain, often prioritizing work over education due to their responsibilities as breadwinners. This reflects the urgent need for support systems that can address both the academic and socio-economic barriers these learners encounter.

Moreover, the insights into teaching and learning dynamics highlight critical areas for improvement. The lack of communication between educators and learners, coupled with teacher absenteeism, creates an unstable educational environment that exacerbates dropout rates. To foster a culture of persistence, it is essential for educational institutions and the Department of Education to implement robust monitoring and support mechanisms, ensuring that learners receive timely certification and are engaged in a conducive learning environment. These findings call for a holistic approach to adult education that prioritizes learner needs and promotes sustainable educational pathways.

## 6.4 Reflection on the research process

On the positive side, the process was incredibly rewarding, as I gained deep insight into the experiences of adult learners at Khulubuse CLC. Engaging directly with participants allowed me to understand their challenges and motivations profoundly, enriching my perspective on adult education. The collaborative atmosphere during interviews created a sense of community, which was inspiring and affirming, overall, despite the difficulties, this research experience underscored the importance of resilience and adaptability, ultimately leading to personal growth and a more nuanced understanding of the educational landscape.

## 6.5 Possible areas for future research

Further research in the area of adult education at community learning centres should focus on longitudinal studies to track learner progress and retention over time, as well as the impact of targeted interventions on dropout rates. Additionally, exploring the effectiveness of mentorship programs and community support systems could provide valuable insights into

enhancing learner engagement and success. Investigating the role of technology in adult education delivery could also offer new avenues for improving access and learning outcomes, ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing learner persistence in these programmes.

## 6.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has illuminated the complex interplay of factors contributing to learner dropout at the Khulubuse Community Learning Centre. The insights gained reveal that both personal and systematic issues profoundly impact adult learners' educational journeys. As one participant poignantly stated, "If only we had the support we need, we could change our lives through education". This powerful statement underscores the urgent need for effective interventions and sustained support systems to foster a more inclusive and resilient educational environment. By addressing these challenges, we can empower adult learners to not only complete their studies but also transform their lives and communities through education.

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# Appendix A: Gatekeeper permission

## DECLARATION TO GRANT PERMISSION Research Study in Adult Education

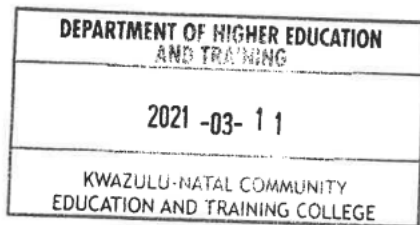
I Dr BSV Mthethwa, Principal of KZN CET College hereby, grant permission to the prospective researcher, on condition that the researcher will share the summary of recommendations with KZN CET College at the conclusion of the study.

[Redacted Signature]


Signature of College Principal

11-03-2021

Date



# Appendix B: Ethical clearance certificate



**UNIVERSITY OF  
KWAZULU-NATAL**  
INYUVESI  
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

12 November 2023

**Precious Primrose Bongiwe Maphumulo (220106700)**  
School Of Education  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear PPB Maphumulo,

**Protocol reference number:** HSSREC/00002806/2021  
**Project title:** An investigation into the Adult learner drop out at a community learning centre.  
**Amended title:** An investigation into adult learner dropout at a community learning centre in KwaZulu-Natal  
**Degree:** Masters

**Approval Notification – Amendment Application**

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 08 November 2023 has now been approved as follows:

- Change in title

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

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

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000  
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587  
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

**INSPIRING GREATNESS**

# Appendix C: Interview schedule

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### Section A (Biographical details)

Name	Age	Sex	Position	Highest qualification	Learners' information		
					Year enrolled	Level enrolled	Year drop-out

### Section B (Interview questions)

1. What is your experience of learners dropping out of Khulubuse CLC?
2. What do you think are the reasons that lead to learners dropping out of Khulubuse CLC?
3. What are learners' expectations as they enrol in Khulubuse CLC?
4. How would you describe learning at Khulubuse CLC?
5. What kind of support is available to learners with learning difficulties at Khulubuse CLC?
6. In terms of teaching and learning at Khulubuse CLC Do Khulubuse educators support learners in any way? If so, which ways?
7. What challenges you think cause learners to drop out?
8. What strategies do you think can be used to minimise learner dropouts at Khulubuse CLC?
9. As we are heading towards the industrial revolution era, what is the centre doing for the students?