

An Examination of the Factors contributing to Learner Dropout at Grade Six Level in Manzini Region Primary Schools



Benkosi Madlela¹ 

¹ Department of Science and Technology Education, University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

ABSTRACT

Learner dropout remains a challenge in Eswatini despite the introduction of free primary education by the government. The study established the factors that contribute to learner dropout at the grade six level in the Manzini region. An interpretivist research philosophy and a qualitative research approach were adopted to collect the study's data. A case study design made it possible to collect detailed data from purposively selected participants in three public primary schools. Interviews were held with two head teachers while nine grade six teachers took part in focus group discussions. Findings revealed that school-related factors like overcrowded classrooms, poor performance and non-availability of practical subjects that aligned with learners' interests and abilities contributed to learner dropout. Findings further revealed that poverty, child labour, peer pressure, teenage pregnancy, lack of parental involvement, and initiation into cultural practices and activities contributed to learner dropout. The study recommended that the government should build more schools and classrooms and hire more qualified teachers to reduce overcrowding in classrooms and the distance walked by learners to school. The government should also support needy learners from disadvantaged backgrounds with basic necessities such as sanitary pads for girls. The Ministry of Education should introduce practical subjects like Carpentry, Art, Music and Dance to cater for the interests and abilities of different learners. Schools should promote parental involvement and core curricula activities to engage, motivate and retain learners. The study contributes to the body of knowledge by suggesting strategies that can mitigate learner dropout which is a widespread challenge in the SADC region and other African countries.

Correspondence

Benkosi Madlela

Email: benkosimadlela@gmail.com

Publication History

Received: 15th April, 2024

Accepted: 10th June, 2024

Published online:

2nd July, 2024

Keywords: *Factors, Learner, Dropout, Manzini, Primary Schools*

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental human right and a foundation that enables children to develop and gain the knowledge, values and skills that they need to reach their full potential, gain economic independence and contribute positively to their communities.¹ The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), Policy views education as the main pillar of socioeconomic development. Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDGs) calls for a good quality, equitable, and free, primary and secondary education for all girls and

¹ UNICEF, "Violence against Children" (2017), <https://www.unicef.org/protection/violence-against-children>.

boys by 2030, leading to effective and relevant learning outcomes.² To achieve this goal, every child must complete their education without dropping out along the way.³ Eswatini Education Sector Strategic Plan 2022–2034, states that primary education begins at the age of six and lasts for seven years. It seeks to ensure that learners acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that are required for general and vocational education and the performance of basic life roles. Eswatini’s primary level education develops learners’ creativity, emotions, intelligence, and the acquisition of socio-cultural and physical skills.⁴

In its quest to offer quality basic education to all learners, the government of Eswatini introduced Free Primary Education (FPE) through the FPE Act, of 2010. The Act bestows the right to free primary education to every child. Section 3 (1) of the Act states that every Swazi child enrolled at a public primary school is entitled to free education at that school beginning with grade 1 up to Grade 7. FPE programme aims to reduce financial, physical, and socio-cultural barriers to education. The programme’s key elements are the provision of qualified teachers, inclusive education suitable for learners with special needs, provision of teaching and learning materials such as exercise books and textbooks, furniture and school grants to cover school feeding, etc.⁵ MOET emphasises the creation of conducive learning conditions in schools that would enable learners to pursue lifelong learning.⁶

Mohlouoa argues that despite the removal of barriers to schooling such as removing fee payments, there are other reasons for learners not to attend school.⁷ Despite the introduction of FPE in Eswatini in 2010, learner dropout is still prevalent in the country’s primary schools. MOET’s 2018 latest report on out-of-school highlights grade six as having the highest dropout rate percentage. This report predicted that the trend was likely to continue for years. The dropout rate in other grades is below 5% while in grade six it is above 10%.⁸ The transition rate from Grade Six in primary school to Form One in secondary school is closer to sixty-three per cent.⁹ Seemingly, the high dropout rate at grade six contributes to the low transition rate from primary school to secondary school. Cervellino notes that school dropout has detrimental consequences for individuals and their societies, as it contributes adversely to young people’s health and well-being.¹⁰ It also increases the risk of marginalisation and social exclusion. Cervellino views early interventions and prevention of school dropouts as advisable. The study explores factors that contribute to the high learner dropout rate at the grade six level in the Manzini region primary schools and generates strategies that could be used to mitigate the situation.

The following questions underlie the study:

1. Which factors contribute to learner dropout at the grade six level in Manzini region primary schools?
2. How can learner dropout be addressed?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learner Dropout

Learner Dropout is the inability of the learner to continue with school, probably due to the learner’s own performance and behaviour or socio-economic conditions. At times the school system is not enabling, and it pushes the learner out of school.¹¹ In Tsomo’s view, learner dropout refers to a learner who leaves school

² Eswatini Ministry of Education and Training – MOET, *Education and Training Policy* (Mbabane: Government Printers, 2018).

³ UNICEF, “Violence against Children.”

⁴ Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini, *Eswatini Education Sector Strategic Plan 2022–2034* (Mbabane Government Printers, 2022).

⁵ Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini, *Eswatini Education Sector Strategic Plan 2022–2034*; Eswatini Ministry of Education and Training – MOET, *Education and Training Policy*.

⁶ Eswatini Ministry of Education and Training – MOET, *A Report on Out-of-School Children in Eswatini* (Mbabane Government Printers, 2018).

⁷ Mamothebesoane Mookho Ntelele Mohlouoa, “Factors Influencing the Dropout Rate in Primary Schools in the Teyateyaneng Region, Lesotho” (University of South Africa, 2014).

⁸ Eswatini Ministry of Education and Training – MOET, *Education and Training Policy*.

⁹ Eswatini Ministry of Education and Training – MOET, *Education and Training Policy*.

¹⁰ Marina Marlen Cervellino, “Universal Strategies to Prevent High School Dropout,” 2019.

¹¹ Haaveshe Nekongo-Nielsen, Nchindo R Mbukusa, and Emmy Tjiramba, “Investigating Factors That Lead to School Dropout in Namibia,” *The Namibia CPD Journal for Educators*, 2018, 99–118.

before the official exit grade level.¹² MOET views dropouts as learners who had earlier been recorded in education data but are no longer at school.¹³

Factors Contributing to Learner Dropout

Ngwakwe argues that enacting effective policies for reducing learner dropout rates requires knowledge of the causative factors.¹⁴ These factors are discussed below:

School Level Factors

Nekongo-Nielsen et al view the school and education systems policies as responsible for learner dropout.¹⁵ Learners who repeat a grade more than once tend to lose interest in school and decide to drop out because they become too old for the grade, lose discipline and start bullying younger learners. Research on learner dropout should focus on characteristics of schools that negatively affect learners, instead of only focusing on the characteristics of the learner.¹⁶ School factors that have been associated with high school dropout rates include a high teacher-learner ratio, poor education quality, overcrowded classrooms, lack of learning materials, and poorly trained teachers.¹⁷ Nekongo-Nielsen et al view long distances to school as another cause of learner dropout.¹⁸ Some schools are far for children to walk especially young children in lower grades who in some areas have to go through mountainous places and thick forests to access schools. Walking for long distances to and from school daily can challenge learners and force them to leave school.

Socio-economic Factors

Vushe and Mohloua view child labour and poverty in households as aggravating learner dropout in schools.¹⁹ ILO estimated that 21.3% of learners between the ages of 10 and 14 in Lesotho were working, girls as domestic workers and boys as herders.²⁰ Nekongo-Nielsen et al argue that children as young as 10 years leave school for employment purposes, earning an income to spend on other basic needs and not necessarily on school-related needs.²¹

Vushe links learner dropout to poverty, high crime rates, and alcohol and drug abuse. Studies on socio-economic situations show that poverty and economic challenges contribute to negative self-concept in terms of academic capabilities.²² This leads to a lack of motivation, failure at school, delinquency, and higher dropout rates.²³ Poverty has an indirect effect on school performance through its association with ill-health. For example, malnutrition may affect learners' motivation and capacity to concentrate. This might lead to limited cognitive development and learning disabilities which might further lead to lower test achievement and repeating of grades.²⁴ Pridmore spells out that learners who lack protein, energy, and certain nutrients in their diets due to hunger and malnutrition do not have the same potential for learning as nourished and healthy learners.²⁵ Disadvantaged learners attend school less frequently and are more

¹² Ntombikazi Gloria Dekeza-Tsomo, "Factors Contributing to the Dropout Rate of Learners at Selected High Schools in King William's Town" (2012).

¹³ Eswatini Ministry of Education and Training – MOET, *Education and Training Policy* .

¹⁴ Collins C Ngwakwe, "A Review of Causes of School Dropouts in Brics Countries: A South African Case," *Corporate Ownership & Control* 12, no. 1 (2014): 911–14.

¹⁵ Nekongo-Nielsen, Mbukusa, and Tjiramba, "Investigating Factors That Lead to School Dropout in Namibia."

¹⁶ Lovemore Vushe, "A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi," 2019.

¹⁷ Vushe, "A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi."

¹⁸ Nekongo-Nielsen, Mbukusa, and Tjiramba, "Investigating Factors That Lead to School Dropout in Namibia."

¹⁹ Vushe, "A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi"; Mohloua, "Factors Influencing the Dropout Rate in Primary Schools in the Teyateyaneng Region, Lesotho."

²⁰ ILO, "Gender and Development," 2017, <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/economic-and-social-development/gender-and-development/lang-en/index.htm>.

²¹ Nekongo-Nielsen, Mbukusa, and Tjiramba, "Investigating Factors That Lead to School Dropout in Namibia."

²² Vushe, "A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi."

²³ Vuyiswa Mgwangqa and Lorraine Lawrence, "Why Do Learners Drop out of School? Learner Perceptions in the Fort Beaufort District, Eastern Cape, South Africa," *Commonwealth Youth and Development* 6, no. 2 (2008): 16–32.

²⁴ Vushe, "A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi."

²⁵ Pat Pridmore, *Access to Conventional Schooling for Children and Young People Affected by HIV and AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Cross-National Review of Recent Research Evidence* (London: SOFIE, Institute of Education, University of London, 2008).

likely to repeat grades and drop out early. Nekongo-Nielsen et al reveal that the absence of feeding schemes in schools contributes to learner dropout.²⁶ If the school feeding scheme is not there, the majority of learners from poor families drop out of school and go to search for food elsewhere.

Family Level Factors

UNESCO notes that lack of parental support, and rejection or neglect by one or both parents who fail to take responsibility for parenthood perpetuate a high learner dropout rate.²⁷ Adopted or foster children who are not blood relatives may also be rejected. Rejected children may suffer from anxiety and psychological issues. UNESCO further notes that children who have been orphaned by AIDS are prone to suffer from discrimination and a lack of resources needed to meet their educational needs. Without the support, care, and guidance from parents, learners end up dropping out of school.²⁸ Nekongo-Nielsen et al. view child-headed families, children taking care of sick relatives, and the educational background of parents as some of the factors that lead to learner dropout.²⁹ Homes with weaker educational backgrounds have less academic support for children. Parents tend to pull their children out of school to take care of sick relatives or to get married prematurely.³⁰

Nekongo-Nielsen et al view family mobility and seasonal migration as a contributing factor to learner dropout.³¹ They reveal that children are pulled out of school due to seasonal migration practised mainly in the Kunene region, where families move to the river during the dry season and inland during the rainy season. Seasonal absenteeism affects learning as learners miss a lot of what is learnt throughout the year. Such learners are forced to repeat grades and eventually drop out of school as they become too old for those grades.³²

Socio-cultural Factors

Begizew and Nekongo-Nielsen et al argue that socio-cultural factors like teenage pregnancy, peer pressure, and indiscipline as well as cultural traditions and practices such as early marriages contribute to the dropout rate in schools.³³ Teachers' stigmatisation and attitudes towards pregnant learners contribute to more pregnant learners dropping out of school, and after giving birth, teenage mothers lack support both at home and school.³⁴ Grant and Hallman argue that the lack of socio-economic opportunities for girls and women results in endorsement for early motherhood.³⁵ Most school girls who fall pregnant drop out of school and do not return to school after a pregnancy-related dropout.³⁶ Nekongo-Nielsen et al posit that peer pressure and indiscipline force learners to engage in destructive behaviours such as alcohol consumption and bullying activities which lead to dropout.³⁷ Begizew argues that in certain cultures girls are driven into marriage with old men by their parents at a tender school-going age.³⁸ In most cases, these school girls are forced to drop out of school and focus on their marriage.

Strategies for Dealing with Learner School Dropout

Begizew, Mohlouoa, and Vushe view the strategies discussed below as ideal for addressing learner dropout:³⁹

²⁶ Nekongo-Nielsen, Mbukusa, and Tjiramba, "Investigating Factors That Lead to School Dropout in Namibia."

²⁷ UNESCO, *Education For All Global Monitoring Report* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2011).

²⁸ UNESCO, *Education For All Global Monitoring Report*.

²⁹ Nekongo-Nielsen, Mbukusa, and Tjiramba, "Investigating Factors That Lead to School Dropout in Namibia."

³⁰ Nekongo-Nielsen, Mbukusa, and Tjiramba, "Investigating Factors That Lead to School Dropout in Namibia."

³¹ Nekongo-Nielsen, Mbukusa, and Tjiramba, "Investigating Factors That Lead to School Dropout in Namibia."

³² Nekongo-Nielsen, Mbukusa, and Tjiramba, "Investigating Factors That Lead to School Dropout in Namibia."

³³ M. Begizew, "Contributing Factors for School Dropout in Primary School; The Cause of Jabi Woreda, WEST Gojjam, Ethiopia" (St. Mary's University, 2015); Nekongo-Nielsen, Mbukusa, and Tjiramba, "Investigating Factors That Lead to School Dropout in Namibia."

³⁴ Nekongo-Nielsen, Mbukusa, and Tjiramba, "Investigating Factors That Lead to School Dropout in Namibia."

³⁵ Monica J Grant and Kelly K Hallman, "Pregnancy-related School Dropout and Prior School Performance in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa," *Studies in Family Planning* 39, no. 4 (2008): 369–82.

³⁶ Grant and Hallman, "Pregnancy-related School Dropout and Prior School Performance in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa."

³⁷ Nekongo-Nielsen, Mbukusa, and Tjiramba, "Investigating Factors That Lead to School Dropout in Namibia."

³⁸ Begizew, "Contributing Factors for School Dropout in Primary School; The Cause of Jabi Woreda, WEST Gojjam, Ethiopia."

³⁹ Begizew, "Contributing Factors for School Dropout in Primary School; The Cause of Jabi Woreda, WEST Gojjam, Ethiopia"; Mohlouoa, "Factors Influencing the Dropout Rate in Primary Schools in the Teyateyaneng Region, Lesotho"; Vushe, "A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi."

Improving Schools and Instructional Delivery

In Begizew's study, 81% of participating dropouts wanted better teachers and smaller classes with more individualised instruction.⁴⁰ More than 55% believed that a lot needed to be done to assist learners who had problems in learning. Some of the learners complained that they had big classes the teachers did not even know their names. They said that smaller classes were necessary, as they would enable teachers to maintain order in the classroom and provide individualised attention and instructional delivery.⁴¹ Mohlouoa argues that the creation of child-friendly schools should be the ultimate goal in motivating children to come to school and to remain there until they complete their primary education.⁴²

Enhancing the Connection between School and Work

Begizew asserts that schools should make what they teach in class more relevant to learners' lives.⁴³ Eighty-one per cent of respondents in Begizew's study said that if schools provided opportunities for real-world learning like internships and service learning projects, they would improve learners' chances of completing school. Most studies have noted that clarifying the links between schools and getting a job may convince more learners to stay at school.⁴⁴ Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training (LMET) argues that the provision of a life skills curriculum is necessary as it has the potential to promote resilience to life challenges that learners face, thus ensuring their stay at school.⁴⁵

Education Campaigns and Constructing Additional Schools and Classrooms

LMET advocates for a government campaign in communities to make primary education popular.⁴⁶ Campaigns would enlighten parents and children about the importance of education. Mohlouoa advises the government to construct more primary schools and classrooms to cater for increased enrolments due to FPE.⁴⁷ This would reduce learner dropout caused by walking long distances to school and overcrowded classes.

Legislation of Compulsory Basic Education and Abolishing Child Labour

Vushe and Mohlouoa state that the government should abolish child labour and enact policies that can reduce learner dropout if universal primary education is to be attained.⁴⁸ LMET calls for compulsory quality education.⁴⁹ It views child labour as robbing children of their childhood while compulsory education plays a protective role for children.

Parental Involvement

In Begizew's study, 71% of respondents viewed parental and guardian involvement in schools as one of the means of keeping learners at school.⁵⁰ Schools and parents should jointly attend to challenges experienced by children before they result in learner dropout. Vushe suggests that events should be organised where parents, learners and teachers forge relationships and share information on the learner's social and academic life.⁵¹ Strong collaboration between schools and parents would offer support to learners. Learners showing signs of withdrawal would be motivated to continue schooling if they are given timely support and counselling.

⁴⁰ Begizew, "Contributing Factors for School Dropout in Primary School; The Cause of Jabi Woreda, WEST Gojjam, Ethiopia."

⁴¹ Begizew, "Contributing Factors for School Dropout in Primary School; The Cause of Jabi Woreda, WEST Gojjam, Ethiopia."

⁴² Mohlouoa, "Factors Influencing the Dropout Rate in Primary Schools in the Teyateyaneng Region, Lesotho."

⁴³ Begizew, "Contributing Factors for School Dropout in Primary School; The Cause of Jabi Woreda, WEST Gojjam, Ethiopia."

⁴⁴ Begizew, "Contributing Factors for School Dropout in Primary School; The Cause of Jabi Woreda, WEST Gojjam, Ethiopia."

⁴⁵ Eswatini Ministry of Education and Training – MOET, *Education and Training Policy*.

⁴⁶ Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training - LMET, *Education Sector Plan* (Maseru: Government Printers, 2009).

⁴⁷ Mohlouoa, "Factors Influencing the Dropout Rate in Primary Schools in the Teyateyaneng Region, Lesotho."

⁴⁸ Vushe, "A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi"; Mohlouoa, "Factors Influencing the Dropout Rate in Primary Schools in the Teyateyaneng Region, Lesotho."

⁴⁹ Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training - LMET, *Education Sector Plan*.

⁵⁰ Begizew, "Contributing Factors for School Dropout in Primary School; The Cause of Jabi Woreda, WEST Gojjam, Ethiopia."

⁵¹ Vushe, "A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi."

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was grounded on the engagement theory.

Engagement Theory

The study was guided by the engagement theory which believes that learners connect with learning activities through interaction with others and through meaningful activities and tasks.⁵² The engagement theory views learners' involvement and commitment to their studies as determined by how interactive and meaningful their school tasks and learning activities are. Vushe states that the use of technology and practical activities rather than theoretical and textbook learning detached from reality increases learner engagement and reduces dropout rates.⁵³ Learners who feel that their schools empower them with creativity, reasoning problem-solving and decision-making skills are more intrinsically motivated to complete school.⁵⁴ In Bridgeland, Dilulio and Morison's study, close to half of learner participants said that they did not find school interesting and had dropped out because they were bored and disengaged at school.⁵⁵ They believed that teachers were not interested in school and their learning. Engagement applies to the level of learners' identification with the school, and the development of positive relationships with peers and educators.⁵⁶

Khodaeifaal identifies three dimensions of learner engagement social engagement, intellectual engagement and academic engagement.⁵⁷ Willms, Friesen and Milton and Dunleavy and Milton view social engagement as a sense of belonging and participation in school life.⁵⁸ It gives learners opportunities to develop social skills, networks and constructive friendships. In this form of engagement, learners participate in school activities and core curriculum activities. This brings the learner's strong sense of belonging to the school community. Intellectual engagement is a cognitive and emotional investment in learning using higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis and construction of new knowledge and solutions to complex problems.⁵⁹ Learners' ability to construct knowledge and solve challenging problems motivates them to continue learning.⁶⁰

Academic engagement refers to the learner's participation in the formal requirements of schooling including school attendance.⁶¹ Dunleavy and Milton express that academic engagement develops learners' personal responsibility and their academic success.⁶² Academically engaged learners rarely skip classes, and study hard to keep their performance and results high. They always attend classes on time, complete and submit their work on time.⁶³ Learners who comply with school requirements usually enjoy positive experiences at school and are motivated to stay at school and complete their studies.

White and Kelly, and Vushe state that parental involvement plays an important role in the success and completion of school by the learner.⁶⁴ Most learners who drop out of school are those whose parents are not engaged in their education. The engagement theory underscores the necessity of making learning

⁵² Aleksandar Tomović, "Engagement Theory Based Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Computer Science Students' Perceptions of Their Learning Engagement Using Mobile Devices," 2021.

⁵³ Vushe, "A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi."

⁵⁴ Vushe, "A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi."

⁵⁵ John M Bridgeland, John J DiIulio Jr, and Karen Burke Morison, "The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts.," *Civic Enterprises*, 2006.

⁵⁶ Bridgeland, DiIulio Jr, and Morison, "The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts."

⁵⁷ Solmaz Khodaeifaal, "Student Engagement: Enhancing Students' Appreciation for Learning and Their Achievement in High Schools," 2017.

⁵⁸ J Douglas Willms, Sharon Friesen, and Penny Milton, *What Did You Do in School Today? Transforming Classrooms through Social, Academic, and Intellectual Engagement. (First National Report)*. (ERIC, 2009); Jodene Dunleavy and Penny Milton, "Student Engagement for Effective Teaching and Deep Learning.," *Education Canada* 48, no. 5 (2008): 4-8.

⁵⁹ Willms, Friesen, and Milton, *What Did You Do in School Today? Transforming Classrooms through Social, Academic, and Intellectual Engagement. (First National Report)*.

⁶⁰ Dunleavy and Milton, "Student Engagement for Effective Teaching and Deep Learning."

⁶¹ Willms, Friesen, and Milton, *What Did You Do in School Today? Transforming Classrooms through Social, Academic, and Intellectual Engagement. (First National Report)*.

⁶² Dunleavy and Milton, "Student Engagement for Effective Teaching and Deep Learning."

⁶³ J. Douglas Willms, "Student Engagement: A Leadership Priority," in *Conversation*, vol. 3, 2011, 1-12.

⁶⁴ Susan Williams White and F Donald Kelly, "The School Counselor's Role in School Dropout Prevention," *Journal of Counseling & Development* 88, no. 2 (2010): 227-35; Vushe, "A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi."

engaging, interactive, interesting, and enjoyable for learners so that they are kept motivated to stay at school and complete their studies.⁶⁵

METHODOLOGY

The study used interpretivism research philosophy which believes in socially constructed multiple realities, and that knowledge is gained through social constructions.⁶⁶ Interpretivism made it possible for the researcher to go to schools and understand learner dropout from the participants' viewpoint, and construct possible solutions together with participants. A qualitative research approach allowed the researcher to collect rich data directly from participants in their natural settings in schools, where learner dropout is occurring.⁶⁷ A case study design enabled the researcher to focus on three selected primary schools in the Manzini region and study them in detail. Two head teachers were interviewed, while nine grade six teachers participated in focus group discussions. All participants were purposively sampled because they had vast knowledge of learner dropout since they dealt with it in their line of duty in schools. Interviews provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena than would not be obtained from purely quantitative methods, such as questionnaires.⁶⁸ Interviews and focus group discussions enabled the researcher to get detailed first-hand information from participants.

Data was analysed in a narrative and verbatim manner.⁶⁹ Ethical guidelines were upheld by protecting participants' identities and the names of their schools. Participants signed a consent form with ethical guidelines before taking part in the study. They were told of their right to withdraw from the study anytime they wanted to without any victimisation.⁷⁰ Data was kept safe in lockable shelves and password-protected computers. Permission to conduct the study was sought from MOET.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the study's findings under the themes that emerged during data analysis and interpretation. Schools were coded as School A, School B and C. Participants were coded as Head Teacher from School A, teacher 1 from School A, teacher 2 from School C, etc.

Learner Dropout

In response to the question: In your understanding, what is learner dropout? Participants said:

It is a situation where a learner leaves school without obtaining qualifications that are in line with their age e.g. if the child leaves school before obtaining a grade 7 qualification (Teacher 2 school A).

I can say learner dropout is, let's say learner is registered ma kusuka umnyaka (at the beginning of the year) and then after some months akaseti esikoleni (he/she stops coming to school (Teacher 1 school B).

Aaa! I think learner dropout is when the learner moves out of school due to a certain situation (Headteacher School C).

Participants' assertions are supported by Nekongo-Nielsen et al., and Tsomo who view learner dropout as referring to a learner who leaves school before the official exit-grade level due to certain conditions.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Vushe, "A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi."

⁶⁶ Adil Abdul Rehman and Khalid Alharthi, "An Introduction to Research Paradigms," *International Journal of Educational Investigations* 3, no. 8 (2016): 51–59; John W Creswell and Cheryl N Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (Sage publications, 2016).

⁶⁷ J. McMillan and S. Schumacher, *Research in Education Evidence Based Inquiry*, 7th ed. (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2014).

⁶⁸ Makere Stewart-Harawira, *The New Imperial Order: Indigenous Responses to Globalization* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008).

⁶⁹ McMillan and Schumacher, *Research in Education Evidence Based Inquiry*.

⁷⁰ McMillan and Schumacher, *Research in Education Evidence Based Inquiry*.

⁷¹ Nekongo-Nielsen, Mbukusa, and Tjiramba, "Investigating Factors That Lead to School Dropout in Namibia"; Dekeza-Tsomo, "Factors Contributing to the Dropout Rate of Learners at Selected High Schools in King William's Town."

Factors that Contribute to Learner Dropout in Schools

Participants gave different factors that contribute to learner dropout. Those factors are discussed under the themes below.

Orphanhood and Child-headed Families

Participants said that most learners were orphaned by AIDS and the Covid-19 pandemic. This resulted in a lack of resources leading to school dropout.

Most parents were lost during the HIV pandemic before ARV therapy. Some parents were lost due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Without parents, children have no support. Some are forced to relocate and stay with relatives in environments that are not conducive for them to continue schooling (Teacher 3 School A).

In this area when the freeway was constructed a lot of girls were impregnated by workers from South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Botswana. Most of them were infected with HIV and AIDS and died leaving children orphaned and living with poor relatives and grandparents. Orphaned children living with poor relatives and those from child-headed families drop out of school to beg in the streets because of poverty (Head Teacher School C).

UNESCO notes that children orphaned by AIDS face discrimination and also lack the resources needed to meet their educational needs.⁷² The loss of parents leaves families headed by children without resources, and this pushes them out of school. Participants said that child-headed families were also a result of separated or divorced parents who moved on with life leaving children behind to fend for themselves.

Unpleasant School Conditions

Participants revealed that an unpleasant school environment that failed to cater for learners' needs and abilities caused learners to drop out.

Some teachers don't cater for less academically gifted learners in class. They rush to finish the syllabuses and leave less gifted learners behind (Teacher 2 School A).

The curriculum only offers Agriculture as a practical subject and does not offer other practical subjects to cater for students who are talented in them. This results in learner frustration and dropout (Headteacher school C).

Overcrowding, lack of resources like consumer science labs, poor teaching, and high failure rate discourage learners and force them to drop out of school (Teacher 1 School A).

Vushe identifies overcrowded classrooms, lack of learning materials, and poor education quality as contributing to the high learner dropout rate.⁷³ Failure to provide resources and practical subjects to cater for learner diversity prejudices and disengages learners. The engagement theory contends that learners who do not find the school interesting tend to disengage and finally drop out.⁷⁴ Learners can only be academically and intellectually engaged if schools teach content that is more relevant to their lives.⁷⁵

Participants viewed abuse at school by teachers and peers as creating an unpleasant school environment that leads to learner dropout.

Abuse at school and along the way may lead to dropout. Verbal and sexual abuse by peers and even male and female teachers may also lead to learner dropout. (Teacher 1 School A).

⁷² UNESCO, *Education For All Global Monitoring Report*.

⁷³ Vushe, "A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi."

⁷⁴ Bridgeland, DiJulio Jr, and Morison, "The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts."

⁷⁵ Begizew, "Contributing Factors for School Dropout in Primary School; The Cause of Jabi Woreda, WEST Gojjam, Ethiopia."

Bridgeland et al argue that learners become engaged at school when they develop positive relationships with teachers and their peers.⁷⁶ If the relationships are poor and abusive, learners are likely to identify less with the school and end up disengaging and dropping out. Teachers who abuse learners are likely to be those who did not receive adequate training. Vushe says that poorly trained teachers contribute to learner dropout.⁷⁷ Such teachers are likely to have shortcomings in learner and classroom management. This may weaken learner engagement and lead to dropout.

Socio-cultural Practices

Participants said that different cultural practices in different communities contribute to learner dropout.

Culture, ukubutseka (conscription) and staying in slumps in the king's residence and partaking in working in the King's fields and dancing isibhaca and ummiso. Children drop out of school and go there. When they grow up some of them can be employed as police or soldiers. So, they don't see the reasons for going to school since some who finish school don't get employed, yet those who stay at the palace have chances of being employed in the army and police (Head Teacher School C).

Some children are diagnosed with spiritual issues that require them to be initiated traditionally like kuthwasa babe tangoma. Ukuthwasa takes time and after that when they are sangomas (traditional healers) they start a new life and do not come back to school (Teacher 2 School A).

Some learners take cattle to the dip tank every Tuesday, and this systematic absenteeism eventually leads to dropout (Teacher 3 School C).

Like in other African countries, socio-cultural practices are highly regarded in Eswatini, and most citizens participate in them. Nekongo-Nielsen et al and Begizew support participants' arguments that sociocultural practices contribute to learner dropout.⁷⁸ This happens mostly if these cultural practices clash with the school calendar. Participants said that in Eswatini some of the cultural practices like dancing *isibhaca* and *ummiso* in the royal palaces are associated with rewards like employment in the army or police. Learners tend to prioritise these practices over education which they view as delivering fewer employment opportunities to graduates.

Poor Performance at School and Lack of Parental Involvement

Participants noted that learners' poor performance at school results in dropout.

Poor performance is another factor that frustrates and forces learners to leave school (Teacher 2 School A).

Nekongo-Nielsen et al assert that learners who struggle with their schoolwork end up leaving school, especially if they are forced to repeat grades due to poor performance.⁷⁹ Participants also noted that lack of parental involvement contributes to learners' poor performance and dropping out of school.

Another factor is that parents no longer support or care about their children. They focus more on their work and do not monitor and motivate children to do their schoolwork. They don't see the value of school. This makes children lose commitment to school (Headteacher School B).

UNESCO identifies lack of parental support as one of the major factors that perpetuate high dropout rates in schools.⁸⁰ Parental involvement promotes learners' success in their school work. Most learners who drop out of school are those whose parents are not engaged in their education.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Bridgeland, Dilulio Jr, and Morison, "The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts."

⁷⁷ Vushe, "A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi."

⁷⁸ Nekongo-Nielsen, Mbukusa, and Tjiramba, "Investigating Factors That Lead to School Dropout in Namibia"; Begizew, "Contributing Factors for School Dropout in Primary School; The Cause of Jabi Woreda, WEST Gojjam, Ethiopia."

⁷⁹ Nekongo-Nielsen, Mbukusa, and Tjiramba, "Investigating Factors That Lead to School Dropout in Namibia."

⁸⁰ UNESCO, *Education For All Global Monitoring Report*.

⁸¹ White and Kelly, "The School Counselor's Role in School Dropout Prevention."

Peer Pressure, Drug Abuse and Gangsterism

Participants said that most children at the grade 6 level reach the adolescent stage and start being influenced by peer pressure to engage in gangsterism and drug abuse.

Most learners in grade 6 reach puberty stage, so they face challenges associated with the adolescent stage such as peer pressure, indiscipline, and drug abuse. With time this leads to dropout (Teacher 1 School B).

The school is located near mountains where people plant dagga and sell it and build nice houses and buy porch cars. Most learners leave school and join drug syndicates. They see the drug business as bringing something more than education which fails to bring employment to graduates (Headteacher School C).

Other dropouts recruit learners to steal, smoke and sell drugs. Last year dropouts used to wait for students at the school gates and forced them to join community gangs (Teacher 3 School C).

Gangster leaders recruit learners and use them to sell drugs because police do not search learners' school bags for drugs. Some of these learners end up dropping out of school once they are recruited. Some are forced by gangs to drop out because what the school teaches opposes what gangs do (Teacher 1 School C).

Participants viewed the high unemployment of graduates as making it easy for drug lords to recruit learners. Learners view drug lords as thriving than unemployed graduates. Vushe reveals that socioeconomic factors like high crime rates, alcohol and drug abuse contribute to learner dropout.⁸² Nekongo-Nielsen et al argue that peer pressure and indiscipline are other contributors to learner dropout.⁸³ They view indiscipline and peer pressure as pushing learners to engage in destructive behaviours such as bullying and alcohol consumption which lead to dropout.

Poverty and Unplanned Pregnancies

Participants saw poverty in communities as one of the contributors to learner dropout.

Another reason which makes children especially girls leave school is that they don't have basic necessities like sanitary pads and transport money due to poverty. Some children come from very far areas, and they don't have transport money (Headteacher School C).

Participants noted that poverty and lack of necessary resources forced children to drop out of school and go to look for work or to beg in the streets.

At grade 6 they start to mature and have energy to work, and they go to look for piece jobs like loading river sand into trucks to earn a living. One student who dropped out of school is working at the car wash (Teacher 4 School C).

Mohlouoa supports participants' assertions on child labour.⁸⁴ Mohlouoa estimates that 21.3% of learners between the ages of 10 and 14 in Lesotho are working. Boys work as herders and girls as domestic workers. Nekongo-Nielsen et al argue that despite the high unemployment rate children as young as 10 years leave school for employment purposes to support their families.⁸⁵ Vushe views learner dropout as linked to socio-economic factors, like poverty. Vushe argues that poverty has an indirect effect on educational attainment through its association with ill-health.⁸⁶ For example, malnutrition may affect

⁸² Vushe, "A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi."

⁸³ Nekongo-Nielsen, Mbukusa, and Tjiramba, "Investigating Factors That Lead to School Dropout in Namibia."

⁸⁴ Mohlouoa, "Factors Influencing the Dropout Rate in Primary Schools in the Teyateyaneng Region, Lesotho."

⁸⁵ Nekongo-Nielsen, Mbukusa, and Tjiramba, "Investigating Factors That Lead to School Dropout in Namibia."

⁸⁶ Vushe, "A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi."

learners' motivation and capacity to concentrate. Disadvantaged learners attend school less frequently and are more likely to repeat grades and drop out early.

Participants noted that the health conditions of learners from poor backgrounds are not attended to until they force learners to drop out of school. They further noted that due to poverty, adolescent stage, and peer pressure, teenage girls engage in early sex and fall pregnant.

Most learners reach the puberty stage at the grade 6 level. At puberty, children want to experience a lot of things e.g. sexually. Some end up staying with boys resulting in teenage pregnancy and dropping out of school (Teacher 3 School A).

Some children want things that their parents can't afford, and they go for sugar daddies who provide those things. This exposes them to the risk of falling pregnant and dropping out of school (Teacher 1 School C).

Though MOET has said that pregnant learners should stay at school, they cannot be comfortable around their peers, because MOET did not prepare learners and teachers to handle pregnant learners. Some teachers and learners say cruel words to pregnant students. A certain learner dropped out when she fell pregnant because her peers were making fun of her (Teacher 3 School C).

Participants' assertions that some learners drop out due to pregnancy are supported by Grant and Hallman, who argue that a lack of socio-economic opportunities for girls and women results in early motherhood.⁸⁷ Most school girls who fall pregnant usually drop out and do not return to school after a pregnancy-related dropout.⁸⁸

Strategies for Dealing with Learner Dropout in Schools

Participants suggested strategies that could be used to deal with learner dropout in schools. These strategies are discussed below.

Introduction of Practical Subjects in the Curriculum

Participants said that not all students are talented in academic subjects. Some students are talented and interested in practical subjects. They believed that such students could be engaged and stay at school if practical subjects that address their abilities and interests were introduced in the curriculum.

Though Agriculture is now taught in primary school, the Ministry of Education should introduce more practical subjects like Carpentry, Music, and Arts to cater for the different abilities and interests of different learners (Teacher 2 School A).

The introduction of practical subjects in the school curriculum is supported by Vushe who argues that practical activities increase learner engagement and reduce dropout.⁸⁹ The engagement theory believes that learners become motivated to complete school if what they are taught enhances their creativity.⁹⁰ Julius Nyerere's philosophy of education with production viewed practical subjects as enhancing learners' creativity and skills needed for survival in their communities. Begizew advises schools to ensure that what is learnt in class is relevant to learners' lives.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Grant and Hallman, "Pregnancy-related School Dropout and Prior School Performance in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa."

⁸⁸ Grant and Hallman, "Pregnancy-related School Dropout and Prior School Performance in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa."

⁸⁹ Vushe, "A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi."

⁹⁰ Vushe, "A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi."

⁹¹ Begizew, "Contributing Factors for School Dropout in Primary School; The Cause of Jabi Woreda, WEST Gojjam, Ethiopia."

Building more Schools and Employing more Teachers

Participants stated that learner dropout related to walking long distances to school, poor infrastructure and overcrowded classrooms could be mitigated if the government builds more schools and employs more qualified teachers.

For overcrowding and high teacher-pupil ratio, the government should build more schools and employ enough qualified teachers. The government should improve infrastructure and provide resources like furniture (Teacher 3 School A)

The official ratio is 1 teacher to 45 learners, but practically it is 1 teacher to 60 or 65 learners on average. Ngalana bangu (in this class they are) 94, so it is 1 teacher to 94 learners. No learning is taking place at all. You have to mark and give feedback. More schools and teachers are needed (Teacher 2 School A).

Participants expressed that it was difficult to identify and address the needs of all learners in overcrowded classrooms. The unaddressed needs of learners resulted in disengagement and eventually drop out. Participants said that such a challenge could be solved if the government could build more schools and employ more qualified teachers. In Begizew's study, 81% of participating dropouts wanted better teachers and smaller classes with more individualised instruction.⁹² Participants said that if the government builds more classrooms and schools in communities, learner dropout caused by overcrowded classrooms and walking long distances to school would be reduced. Mohlouoa advises the government to build more primary schools and classrooms to cater for the increased learner population due to FPE.⁹³

Core-curricular Activities

According to the engagement theory, learners who are socially engaged in core-curriculum activities at school are intrinsically motivated to complete school.⁹⁴ Participants said that encouraging learners to actively participate in sports could heighten their engagement in school activities and motivate them to complete their studies.

Active participation in sports can reduce the dropout rate. Some learners excel in sports than academically. These days we have sports at school and they are excited. They don't absent themselves (Headteacher School B).

There is a student who attends school during the traditional dance period, and after it ends he drops out and comes back the second year during the dance period. The school accepts him back because he is good at dancing and he helps the school to win competitions. The school must promote co-curricular activities to cater for students who are gifted in them. Sports, dance and poetry are very important in life (Teacher 1 School B).

There should be early identification of children's abilities. Those children who are talented in sports, dance and music should be channelled accordingly rather than being forced to do subjects that will frustrate and force them to drop out of school (Teacher 2 School A).

In some countries, they take sports seriously and a child can have a career in sports or music where they are good than forcing them to do things that they are not good at. The government's education is shallow. It should cater for the different talents and abilities of learners (Teacher 3 School C).

Core-curriculum activities give learners a sense of belonging and participation in school life. They are part of social engagement at school that gives learners opportunities to develop social skills, networks

⁹² Begizew, "Contributing Factors for School Dropout in Primary School; The Cause of Jabi Woreda, WEST Gojjam, Ethiopia."

⁹³ Mohlouoa, "Factors Influencing the Dropout Rate in Primary Schools in the Teyateyaneng Region, Lesotho."

⁹⁴ Vushe, "A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi."

and constructive friendships Willms et al.⁹⁵ Such a level of engagement brings the learner's strong sense of belonging to the school community and motivates learners to stay at school.

Parental Involvement and Government Support

Participants said that active parental involvement could significantly reduce learners' dropout rates. White and Kelly believe that parental involvement plays an important role in learners' success at school.⁹⁶

Parental involvement is important in the education of their children. The dropout rate can be reduced if schools can work with parents to solve learners' school or home-based problems (Headteacher School C).

Parents should be involved in solving learner dropout. The school cannot solve this problem alone without parental help. Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) should be introduced. In schools where there are PTAs, the level of parental involvement is high (Teacher 1 School A).

Parental engagement in learners' education contributes to the completion of school by learners.⁹⁷ Involvement of parents was viewed by 71% of respondents in Begizew's (2015) study, as one of the means of keeping learners at school.⁹⁸ Through parental involvement, learners' challenges are identified and solved early before they force learners to drop out. Participants suggested that the government should mobilise parents and encourage them to be involved in school activities.

The government should introduce programmes to sensitise parents about the importance of education because most of them don't attend school activities like open days and parents meetings (Teacher 3 School C).

Vushe calls for the organisation of school events where parents, teachers, and learners engage and share information.⁹⁹ LMET advocates for government campaigns to encourage parents to motivate their children to utilise FPE opportunities.¹⁰⁰ Participants also advised the government to offer basic material support to needy students.

The government should provide sanitary pads to learners. Needy learners who do not have sanitary pads absent themselves when they are on monthly periods until they drop out of school (Teacher 1 School B).

The government should provide grants to children below 18 years. Doing so will help orphans and needy learners. The government should also provide toiletries to learners (Teacher 2 School A).

Participants believed that lack of resources forced children from disadvantaged backgrounds to drop out of school. They viewed government material and financial support as vital in mitigating the situation. In addition, they advised the government to enact policies that can reduce learner dropout. Mohlouoa argues that if universal primary education is to be attained, the government should enact a policy abolishing child labour.¹⁰¹ LMET views child labour as robbing children of their childhood and calls for the introduction of policies that support compulsory quality education as a protective measure for children.¹⁰²

⁹⁵ Willms, Friesen, and Milton, *What Did You Do in School Today? Transforming Classrooms through Social, Academic, and Intellectual Engagement. (First National Report).*

⁹⁶ White and Kelly, "The School Counselor's Role in School Dropout Prevention."

⁹⁷ Vushe, "A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi," 17.

⁹⁸ Begizew, "Contributing Factors for School Dropout in Primary School; The Cause of Jabi Woreda, WEST Gojjam, Ethiopia."

⁹⁹ Vushe, "A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi."

¹⁰⁰ Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training - LMET, *Education Sector Plan.*

¹⁰¹ Mohlouoa, "Factors Influencing the Dropout Rate in Primary Schools in the Teyateyaneng Region, Lesotho."

¹⁰² Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training - LMET, *Education Sector Plan.*

Counselling and Career Guidance

Participants said that learner dropout could be mitigated by offering counselling and career guidance services to learners.

Each school should have a social worker or psychologist to counsel learners who have challenges (School C Teacher 1).

Counselling services should be introduced in schools for orphaned and bullied learners, learners who are bullies and teachers who abuse learners (Teacher 2 School A).

Learners should be counselled about how to handle the adolescent stage and the consequences of failing to do so. Traditionally, boys and girls were oriented in traditional schools and taught how to handle themselves at the puberty stage (Teacher 1 School B).

There should be career expos in primary schools to expose learners to different careers so that they can be motivated to work towards those careers (Teacher 2 School C).

Participants believed that counselling and career guidance could be used as tools for controlling learners' adolescent behaviour and motivating learners to stay at school and shape their careers. Mdluli views career guidance and student counselling as services that are capable of reducing learner dropout.¹⁰³ Utphall says that counselling improves learners' performance and encourages them to stay at school.¹⁰⁴

Discussion Summary

Based on the findings it was established that learner dropout is caused by several different factors. Some of these factors are school-related such as overcrowded classes, walking long distances to school and lack of practical subjects that cater for learners' different abilities. Some of the factors are socio-economic like lack of parental involvement, peer pressure, drug abuse and gangsterism, poverty and unplanned pregnancies. Some of the factors are socio-cultural like initiation into cultural activities like training as a traditional healer that takes learners out of school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings and literature review it is recommended that:

The government should:

- Build more schools and classrooms and hire more qualified teachers to reduce long distances walked by learners to school, overcrowding in classrooms and high learner-teacher ratio.
- Run education campaigns and encourage parents to be involved in school activities and the education of their children.
- Provide basic necessities to learners, especially sanitary pads for girls.

MOET should:

- Introduce more practical subjects such as Carpentry, Art, Music and Dance to cater for different interests and abilities of learners.

Schools should:

- Promote core-curriculum activities to improve learner engagement and participation in school activities.
- Form Parent Teacher Associations to strengthen parental involvement in school activities.

¹⁰³ K. J. Mdluli, "Managing Student Dropout Rates at a Technical Vocational Education and Training College in KwaZulu-Natal" (University of South Africa, 2017).

¹⁰⁴ Katharine E Utphall, "The Effect of Student/Counselor Ratios on Student Dropout Rates in a Sample of Wisconsin Public High Schools," 2006.

- Introduce guidance and counselling services to give learners career guidance, and to help them cope with encountered challenges.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that despite the introduction of Free Primary Education in Eswatini, the learner dropout rate remains prevalent in the Manzini region primary schools. It was also concluded that school-related factors as well as socio-cultural and socio-economic factors contributed to learner dropout in primary schools. The study further concluded that learner dropout could be mitigated through government support of learners from poor backgrounds, and building of more primary schools and classrooms, parental involvement, and curriculum reform through introducing more practical subjects and giving attention to core-curriculum activities to cater for learners' diverse abilities and interests.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Begizew, M. "Contributing Factors for School Dropout in Primary School; The Cause of Jabi Woreda, WEST Gojjam, Ethiopia." St. Mary's University, 2015.
- Bridgeland, John M, John J DiIulio Jr, and Karen Burke Morison. "The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts." *Civic Enterprises*, 2006.
- Cervellino, Marina Marlen. "Universal Strategies to Prevent High School Dropout," 2019.
- Creswell, John W, and Cheryl N Poth. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. Sage publications, 2016.
- Dekeza-Tsomo, Ntombikazi Gloria. "Factors Contributing to the Dropout Rate of Learners at Selected High Schools in King William's Town," 2012.
- Dunleavy, Jodene, and Penny Milton. "Student Engagement for Effective Teaching and Deep Learning." *Education Canada* 48, no. 5 (2008): 4–8.
- Eswatini Ministry of Education and Training – MOET. *A Report on Out-of-School Children in Eswatini*. Mbabane Government Printers, 2018.
- . *Education and Training Policy*. Mbabane: Government Printers, 2018.
- Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini. *Eswatini Education Sector Strategic Plan 2022–2034*. Mbabane Government Printers, 2022.
- Grant, Monica J, and Kelly K Hallman. "Pregnancy-related School Dropout and Prior School Performance in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa." *Studies in Family Planning* 39, no. 4 (2008): 369–82.
- ILO. "Gender and Development," 2017. <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/economic-and-social-development/gender-and-development/lang-en/index.htm>.
- Khodaeifaal, Solmaz. "Student Engagement: Enhancing Students' Appreciation for Learning and Their Achievement in High Schools," 2017.
- Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training - LMET. *Education Sector Plan*. Maseru: Government Printers, 2009.
- McMillan, J., and S. Schumacher. *Research in Education Evidence Based Inquiry*. 7th ed. Harlow: Pearson Education, 2014.
- Mdluli, K. J. "Managing Student Dropout Rates at a Technical Vocational Education and Training College in KwaZulu-Natal." University of South Africa, 2017.
- Mgwangqa, Vuyiswa, and Lorraine Lawrence. "Why Do Learners Drop out of School? Learner Perceptions in the Fort Beaufort District, Eastern Cape, South Africa." *Commonwealth Youth and Development* 6, no. 2 (2008): 16–32.
- Mohlouoa, Mamothebesoane Mookho Ntelele. "Factors Influencing the Dropout Rate in Primary Schools in the Teyateyaneng Region, Lesotho." University of South Africa, 2014.
- Nekongo-Nielsen, Haaveshe, Nchindo R Mbukusa, and Emmy Tjiramba. "Investigating Factors That Lead to School Dropout in Namibia." *The Namibia CPD Journal for Educators*, 2018, 99–118.
- Ngwakwe, Collins C. "A Review of Causes of School Dropouts in Brics Countries: A South African Case." *Corporate Ownership & Control* 12, no. 1 (2014): 911–14.
- Pridmore, Pat. *Access to Conventional Schooling for Children and Young People Affected by HIV and AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Cross-National Review of Recent Research Evidence*. London:

- SOFIE, Institute of Education, University of London, 2008.
- Rehman, Adil Abdul, and Khalid Alharthi. "An Introduction to Research Paradigms." *International Journal of Educational Investigations* 3, no. 8 (2016): 51–59.
- Stewart-Harawira, Makere. *The New Imperial Order: Indigenous Responses to Globalization*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008.
- Tomović, Aleksandar. "Engagement Theory Based Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Computer Science Students' Perceptions of Their Learning Engagement Using Mobile Devices," 2021.
- UNESCO. *Education For All Global Monitoring Report*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2011.
- UNICEF. "Violence against Children," 2017. <https://www.unicef.org/protection/violence-against-children>.
- Utphall, Katharine E. "The Effect of Student/Counselor Ratios on Student Droupout Rates in a Sample of Wisconsin Public High Schools," 2006.
- Vushe, Lovemore. "A Qualitative Exploration of the Personal, Schooling and Structural Factors Contributing to High School Learner Dropout in Philippi," 2019.
- White, Susan Williams, and F Donald Kelly. "The School Counselor's Role in School Dropout Prevention." *Journal of Counseling & Development* 88, no. 2 (2010): 227–35.
- Willms, J Douglas. "Student Engagement: A Leadership Priority." In *Conversation*, 3:1–12, 2011.
- Willms, J Douglas, Sharon Friesen, and Penny Milton. *What Did You Do in School Today? Transforming Classrooms through Social, Academic, and Intellectual Engagement.(First National Report)*. ERIC, 2009.

ABOUT AUTHOR

Dr. Benkosi Madlela has published book chapters and articles in the DHET-accredited journals. He is also a peer reviewer. His publications focus on the use of technology in education, inclusive education, curriculum reform through indigenization as well as open distance and online education. He is registered with the South African Council of Educators (SACE).