Adolescents at risk of dropping out in a high-risk community secondary school

Diana Inglis
Department of Educational Psychology, Stellenbosch University
Email: diana@inglis.co.za

Andrew Lewis
Department of Educational Psychology, Stellenbosch University
Email: lewisa@sun.ac.za

A qualitative research methodology and case-study design was used in this investigation of the subjective experiences of adolescent learners at risk of dropping out of school during the post-compulsory phase of their education at a specific school in the Western Cape. Results that emerged from this study indicated that the participants experienced several barriers to learning embedded within interconnected systems, which placed them at risk of dropping out of school. These barriers included the following: single-parent families, family conflict, lack of parental support, emotional challenges due to unfavourable home circumstances and substance (ab)use. The practical implications of the results are that, in order to support at-risk adolescents in a high-risk environment and to prevent them from dropping out of school, the focus should be on systemic protective factors.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

High-school dropout is a phenomenon that occurs in several countries within formal educational systems (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana 2010: 176; Masitsa 2006:166; Suh & Suh 2006: 11-20; Progress Report 2007; Townsend, Flisher, Chikobvu, Lombard & King 2008:21-32). Individual, family, neighbourhood, school environment and educational engagement and other societal factors have an influence on the academic achievements of learners and their decisions to remain in school, yet, in South Africa the dropout rate remains high (Townsend *et al.* 2008:22) with several of these and other factors not contributing to retain learners in the education system (RSA 2011).

Apartheid's legacy has disadvantaged many groups in the South African society and despite the major political changes towards redress and social justice that have taken place since 1994, several communities still experience considerable challenges, placing many learners at risk of dropping out of school. Examples of this legacy include a history of poverty, violence, crime, sexual abuse, substance (ab)use and unemployment. According to Normand (2007:14-15), these challenges could have an effect on the physical, social and emotional development of the youth and often result in breaking down traditional families and the lack of parental support for the youth. McWhirter *et al.* (2007:6) point out that dysfunctional families, poor schools, negative social interactions, and other psychological stressors can place youth at risk of future negative outcomes.

In this context, "at risk" refers to situations where certain dynamics could cause learners to drop out of school unless effective intervention takes place. Youth living in such conditions may therefore be regarded as at risk of possible negative outcomes. Children living in high-risk communities are exposed to several psychological stressors, such as dysfunctional families, poor schools, substance (ab)use and negative social interactions. The community in this study – a high-risk community situated in Stellenbosch, Western Cape, South Africa – reflected these aspects.

Results from a pilot study conducted by the first author in 2007 in the same context suggested that supportive and positive relationships seemed to encourage high-school attendance in this specific Western Cape, high-risk community. In the light thereof, it was the aim of this study to expand on this research and get a more thorough contextual understanding of the dropout phenomenon and investigate contributory factors within this context, an aspect insufficiently researched in Southern Africa (Donald *et al.* 2010:74). As this research was conducted in a high school, the focus was on adolescents at risk of dropping out.

Learners are influenced differently by the systems involved in their lives: their families and the way they were raised, the moral and cultural values that impacted on them and the schools they attended. From this they construct meaning

and develop an understanding of what happens in society. This brings to the fore the fact that the accumulation of physical, cognitive, social and contextual changes associated with adolescence may cause some academic, behavioural, attitudinal and mental-health challenges, which could compromise school performance and place learners at risk of losing interest and leaving school early (Jozefowicz-Simbeni 2008:51-53).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Dropping out of school implies leaving before the attainment of a formal education certificate (Inglis 2009:13). *Disengaged* dropouts show relatively high achievement grades, despite a lack of involvement in school matters, and minimal educational aspirations. *Low-achiever* dropouts have very little commitment to education, achieve poor grades, but do not demonstrate too many behavioural challenges. *Quiet* dropouts display few external challenges, but perform poorly at school. They appear to regard school attendance and school involvement as important and do not often misbehave or require discipline, yet, teachers and school officials are usually unaware of them experiencing challenges until they drop out of school. *Maladjusted* dropouts are often disciplined due to misbehaviour. They show poor commitment to education and school performance and lack of involvement (McWhirter *et al.* 2007:134).

Learners start to drop out of school in larger numbers from the age of 15 onwards, with a downward curve continuing between 16 and 19 years of age (Fleisch, Shindler & Perry 2008:4; RSA 2011). Closer to the context of this research, Flisher *et al.* (2004, as cited in Townsend *et al.* 2008:22), note 60% of high-school learners in Cape Town, South Africa, having dropped out of school before attaining their Grade 12 certificates.

Several separate, yet interconnected factors, contribute towards school dropout (Donald *et al.* 2010:174-176). Socio-economic and other environmental factors are risk factors that are most frequently associated with family stress and school failure that are often linked to school dropout (McWhirter *et al.* 2007:174-176). Even though poverty cannot be isolated as a critical cause of learners dropping out of school, its impact on their ability to perform at an academic level, leads to repeated failure and eventually dropping out of school due to limited resources (Masitsa 2006:167). Furthermore, adolescents from child-headed families (largely due to HIV/

AIDS) tend not to complete educational tasks, and fail their examinations, which invariably lead to poor self-esteem and subsequent dropout (Pillay & Nesengeni 2006:132).

McWhirter *et al.* (2007:133) point out that at-risk problems, such as school dropout, drug and alcohol abuse, risky sexual activities and other delinquent behaviours, interact and reinforce one another. Persistent psycho-social stressors, combined with dysfunctional families, negative social interactions and negative individual attitudes and behaviours, can push an individual towards higher levels of risk. Living in high-risk communities, combined with individual characteristics, such as aggression, anxiety and other affective problems, could encourage learners to participate in self-destructive behaviour and subsequent dropout. Learners who drop out of school are thus at great risk of drug dependency, delinquency and other destructive behaviours. Such challenges are often intergenerational and often re-occur in communities.

Given this, some students demonstrate resilience, and manage to attain academic achievements despite challenging circumstances. Randolph, Fraser and Orthner (2006:937) note that family practices, such as educational support, may act as protective factors for high-school completion in the context of poverty. Research by Dass-Brailsford (2005:580-586) showed that the following factors helped students to achieve academic success despite adversity: individual characteristics, such as goal orientation; initiative, motivation and self-knowledge about personal agency; family support and role models; and supportive schools and communities.

Dropping out of school appears to be due to the complex interaction or a culmination of variables, including those within the individual. According to McWhirter *et al.* (2007:127-128), early experiences may have an impact on a learner's sense of agency and self-concept, which could in turn have a direct influence on school performance, relationships with teachers and peers, and later decisions to stay in school. Even though individual factors are personal, they could be affected by other factors, such as teacher-learner interactions, school rules and interactions with parents, low self-esteem, negative attitudes towards school, and low educational and work aspirations (Ou & Reynolds 2008: 200-201).

McIntosh, Flannery, Sugai, Braun and Cochrane (2008:243) explored the relationships between academics and problem behaviour in the transition from middle school to high school

noting that this was a challenging time of development when learners at risk of dropping out of school are faced with several challenges. In addition, challenging behaviour presented as a distinctive barrier to school graduation and learners with emotional and/or behavioural problems appeared to be twice as likely to drop out of school (McIntosh *et al.* 2008:244).

Several family characteristics can also contribute towards school dropout. These are single-parent households, inadequate parental support, learners not living with their parents, divorced or separated parents, loss of parents and family conflicts. Learners who drop out of school are often those with parents who are less involved in their education, do not model educational attainment, and provide little educational support in general. Children taking on adult roles are also associated with higher dropout rates (Masitsa 2006:166; The Progress Report 2007; Ou & Reynolds 2008:201).

Staff and Kreager (2008:446,447) found that peer status in adolescence is associated with achievement and adjustment at school level. They suggest that disadvantaged boys are likely to gain some form of peer status through violence, and that such membership in violent groups undermines educational achievement. Townsend *et al*. (2008:22) examined the relationship between physical and psychological bullying behaviours and high-school dropout in Cape Town and found that girls who were both bullies and victims of bullying were at a greater risk of dropping out of school.

A number of school factors have been associated with school dropout, such as overcrowded classrooms, poorly trained teachers, high teacher-learner ratios and the lack of learning materials (UNESCO 2007; Masitsa 2004:168).

Studies have explored the relationship between high-school dropout and the use and abuse of substances that showed a consistent relationship between high school dropout and substance use (Green & Ensminger 2006:1168-1178; Townsend *et al*. 2008:22-23).

Teenage pregnancy is also related to leaving school early (Manlove 1998:189) and appears to be a challenge, especially in developing countries (Pillay & Nesengani 2006:132). Grant and Hallman (2008:380-381) examined the likelihood of school dropout and subsequent enrolment among pregnant schoolgirls in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, and found that young learners who were committed to their school and education and experienced a sense of belonging, were less likely to become pregnant while attending school. South African research conducted for *The Progress Report* (2007) found that young women who are more engaged in their education and do become pregnant, are less likely to leave school as a result.

Furthermore, learners who drop out of school may experience dissatisfaction with themselves, the environment and their lack of opportunities. They may in turn regret their decision to leave school because of negative consequences, such as having to live in lower socio-economic circumstances. In addition, it increases the likelihood of unwanted pregnancies, alcohol and drug abuse, criminal activities, and other social challenges. As parents, early school leavers may have to work drawn out hours in order to provide for their families, which would make it difficult to spend quality time with their children and may have a negative effect on their relationships with their families. As individuals who dropped out |of school have lower personal occupational aspirations than their peers who graduated, they may in turn also have lower educational expectations for their own children (McWhirter *et al.* 2007:130-134).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This study was conducted within the qualitative paradigm that supports "constructionist interpretation" (Ungar 2003:1-25). Qualitative research is based on interpretations of specific issues (Draper 2004:642), which are, in this case, risk factors leading to high-school dropout in a specific context (a high-risk community in the Stellenbosch area of the Western Cape, South Africa). A case study design was used to achieve this aim collecting data by semi-structured individual and focus group interviews and individual collages to enhance reliability and validity in (cf. Babbie & Mouton 2001:274-276). Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with at-risk adolescent learners (N=8) selected through purposive sampling. A community member (N=1) and a teacher focus group (N=2) supplemented the data.

Ethical principles were adhered to by obtaining written informed consent from the Western Cape Education Department, the school and the participants. Ethical clearance for this research project was given by Stellenbosch University.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Community setting of research

The community selected for this study is situated on the outskirts of Stellenbosch in the Western Cape, and its circumstances are greatly the result of the Apartheid era's policy of separate development. It is a predominantly coloured community that started out as squatters on the mountain area after 1945. It is divided into different sub-residential areas. Sub-economic and economic housing schemes, as well as flats, were built later on (Community profile – Kindersorg Suid Afrika 2009).

This community was identified as a high-risk community due to high levels of gang activities, *shebeens* [liquor bar in an informal settlement], challenging living conditions, poverty, generally high school dropout figures, alcohol and drug (ab)use and poor police control. Furthermore, some areas in the community are situated at the river's edge, which pose health and safety problems. The close proximity of the railway station and industrial area also pose a danger to the children and their general health. In addition, the area has a very large population for a relatively small area, which results in overcrowded houses, full schools, lack of jobs and various social problems. Many residents are poor, and depend on pensions to pay rent, water and electricity. A lack of educational opportunities results in a low economic status and communal sharing of living space (Community profile - Kindersorg Suid-Afrika 2009).

Religion in this community is multi-denominational, and seems to be a binding factor amongst many residents. Most families are extended and do tend to take responsibility for each other. A formal network, such as doctors, dentists, a day hospital, ambulance services and the police force exists. There is a primary and a secondary school in the area (Community profile - Kindersorg Suid-Afrika 2009).

This community and school were selected after confirmation from the acting headmaster of the current high school (Interview March 12, 2009) that half of the learners enrolled in Grade 8 drop out of high school before completing Grade 12. It was therefore evident that many learners in this area were at risk of dropping out of school during the post-compulsory phase of their schooling.

The acting headmaster (Interview March 12, 2009) described the school setting as follows: 1290 learners and 44 teachers (all qualified) are at the school. The classes consist of forty to forty-seven learners. Fifty percent of learners had dropped out over a five-year period. Reasons included socio-economic challenges such as single parenting, lack of discipline at home, substance (ab)use and poverty. The community worker agreed with these reasons for high school dropout in this specific school as stated above and reiterated that many of the learners live in overcrowded living conditions, which, in her opinion, added pressure to the lives of the learners (Interview March 6, 2009).

DISCUSSION OF DATA

Individual characteristics contributing to and mediating dropout

Several of the participants in this study had a history of academic difficulties and had either repeated a year, or were repeating a grade at the time that the study was conducted. This suggested that they were at risk of dropping out of school. Yet, despite this, most of the participants in this study regarded finishing school as important, and expressed the desire to complete their studies. In addition, most of them indicated that they had definite future and work aspirations. One learner, Abe said:

> ek voel sterk daaroor om skool klaar te maak (I feel strongly about it to finish school),
> while lastly: Ek wil klaarmaak en dan gaan my pa my stuur op 'n kursus maar ek gaan nie college toe nie...leer om hare te doen...met bloudraaiers en so....(I want to finish and then my dad will send me on a course, but I am not going to college…learn to do hair…with blowdryers and so….) (Lily).

Dass-Brailsford (2005:581) found that individual characteristics, such as goal orientation, initiative, motivation and understanding of the self as having a measure of agency, assisted learners in attaining academic achievement. All the participants aspired to future work opportunities that would enable them to improve their personal, financial and home circumstances. This ability to develop future ideals for themselves could be evidence of increased motivation for attending school. Jozefowicz-Simbeni (2008:56) stated that adolescents' ability to develop such future hopes and ideals for themselves and other people can act as a motivator with relation to school performance. This might explain why, even though the participants of this study were at risk of dropping out of school due to academic difficulties and other barriers to learning, they continued to show some enthusiasm for school.

Furthermore, despite the above individual mediating factors, several of the participants in the study referred to experiencing personal

difficulties on a daily basis, which had an impact on their ability to cope at home and at school. This appeared to place them at risk of not completing school. These were: undesired living conditions at home, embarrassing behaviour by family members, conflict, health difficulties and substance abuse and its implications. Masitsa (2006:174) identified factors related to the home environment as the most important causes of school dropout.

Substance use and abuse emerged as an important contributor to experiencing personal difficulties in this research. Six of the eight participants identified as being at risk of dropping out of school indicated that they had used illegal substances previously. It became evident during the research process that the learners had realised the possible dangers of methamphetamine (*Tik*) use, and that they were aware of the negative impact it had on their behaviour and their interest in school. One learner noted:

> Ek het glue gesnuif en tik gebruik en gerook. Maar ek het uitgevind daai goed is nie vir my nie. Ek het saam met verkeerde vriende geloop. Ons het dorp toe gegaan en gesteel en sulke dinge en laities gerob. En gehardloop uit die dorp uit...van die middle van die jaar in standard 5 toe hou ek op...(I sniffed glue, used tik and smoked. But I found that that stuff was not for me. I socialised with the wrong friends. We went to town and thieved and so on and robbed young boys. And ran out of town...,from the middle of the year in standard five (Grade 7–DI & AL) I stopped...) (Chaz).

Four of the participants reported that they were successful and had stopped the use of illegal substances. The focus group participants in this study reported a high prevalence of aggressive and oppositional behaviour amongst, especially the Grade 10 to 12 learners in the specific school, which often resulted in them [the teachers] enforcing disciplinary measures in the form of detention, which presented challenges for teachers. The challenging learner behaviour was attributed to the high prevalence of methamphetamine use. It therefore became evident from the findings that substance use and abuse greatly contributed to the learners' lack of interest in school, absenteeism, and aggressive and oppositional behaviour, which may result in them dropping out of school. Townsend *et al.* (2008:27) notes this relationship between high school dropout and substance use and abuse.

Family system factors contributing to and mediating school dropout

A positive finding that surfaced from the individual interviews was that some of the participants received emotional and financial support and encouragement from family members to continue school. Six of them mentioned how they especially valued the support that they received from especially their mothers. Despite experiencing challenging family conditions, three participants spoke in particular about the support and encouragement they received to attend school. This minimised their tendency to drop out of school. It therefore seemed as if most of the participants had a positive connection with someone in the family, which appeared to help them cope with their daily challenges. Responses in this context being:

> My ma het gesê ek moet kies of ek moet nie daar loop nie. Toe luister ek maar vir my ma. My vriende was kwaad vir my (My mother said I must choose or I must not go there.The I gave up and listened to my mother. My friends were angry at me) (Candice).

Masitsa (2006:174-175) found the role of the family to be critical to the success of learners at school. He indicated that parental involvement and support are crucial for the learner's academic performance. Strong emotional parent-child relationships have also been identified by Boon and Cook (2008:82) as promoting motivation, attentiveness and perseverance at school, and competent care-giving was mentioned as an important factor to ensure academic success despite being disadvantaged socio-economically.

This study did show that all the participants experienced family difficulties, and the majority of the participants had to cope with challenging family circumstances on a daily basis. Most of the participants came from single-parent families where the father was absent. Some were raised by their grandparents, which reportedly resulted in a lack of discipline. Households also consisted of several extended family members who contributed to the challenging circumstances and who placed strain on limited resources. The family conditions were characterised by family conflict and troubled sibling relationships where participants often felt that they were treated unfairly. Violation of trust, disrespectful siblings, substance (ab)use and lack of money were described as major contributors to taxing family relationships. This appeared to affect the learners' ability to cope with the academic pressure, caused concentration difficulties, led to absenteeism and one of the participants indicated that he considered leaving school to earn money for the household for these reasons. Gouws, Kruger and Burger (2000:146) point out that a lack of family support may result in poor academic performance at school, low self-esteem

and poor social adjustment and antisocial behaviour. Limited support structures and high conflict in parent-child relationships can affect normal adolescent development in a negative manner (Sadock & Sadock 2007:35-44). Some of the participants did however speak about having strong bonds with their parents.

> Ek het 'n goeie verhouding met my Pa en met my Ma. Hulle moedig my aan met my skoolwerk. My ouma en oupa bly ook by ons. Hulle is sterk kerkmense en speel 'n goeie rol in my lewe...ons baklei nie baie by die huis nie (I have a good relationship with my father and with my mother. They encourage me with my school work. My grandmother and grandfather also live with us. They are strong church people and play a good role in my life...we do not quarrel a lot at home) (Sam).

Yet, despite this, several of the participants mentioned regular substance (ab)use by their parents, and spoke about being embarrassed by their behaviour. Sadock and Sadock (2007:1295) identified parent modelling of substance use, family conflict, a lack of parental supervision and stressful life events as some of the psychosocial risk factors for the onset and severity of substance (ab)use amongst adolescents. This is relevant to this study as most of the participants reported living under such conditions, having used substances and the effects it had on their lives. It did seem as if most of the participants had a positive connection with someone in the family, which appeared to help them cope with their daily challenges. On the other hand, it did appear as if the family circumstances and socio-economic situations made it challenging to provide a caring environment.

Peer group system factors contributing to and mediating dropout

Contrary to expectations, the participants did not identify peer relationships as a main motivator for attending school. Most of the participants spoke about the negative influence that their friends had on their lives, especially in terms of substance abuse. To one learner:

> ek het agter my vriende geloop. Ek het nie huiswerk en so gedoen nie. Toe ek by die huis gekom het, het ek net uitgetrek en dan loop pyp en dan speel ek (I followed my friends. I did not do homework and so. When I got home, I undressed, piped [smoking marijuana]and played) (Abe).

Results from this study indicated that some of the participants seemed to have adopted coping strategies in dealing with (negative) peer pressure. Most of the participants had come to the realisation that it was easier to avoid peer pressure by staying at home during the afternoons and by having fewer, significant friends. Peer groups provide a platform for young adolescents to experiment their social and interpersonal interaction skills that they can eventually use in the adult world. Peer groups that engage in anti-social behaviour can present problems to individuals as it can be difficult to resist the pressure when they are part of such activities (McWhirter *et al.* 2007:130).

School system factors contributing to and mediating school dropout

The focus group participants from this study mentioned that the teacher-learner ratio at their school was too high, and that it made it difficult for teachers to provide individual attention to learners. The participants of the individual interviews, however, did not regard it as a major problem. The results from this study indicated that learners appeared to respond more positively when they felt accepted, respected and supported by teachers. The value of positive teacher-learner relationships was an important theme that surfaced from the findings of this study in general. Most of the participants experienced the teachers in this context as supportive and helpful:

> Hulle is baie goed...gee mens ordentlik klas en hulle is nie te streng nie (They are very good...teach us in proper manner and are not too strict) (Jake).

Very few of the participants viewed the teachers as unsupportive or commented on having been treated unfairly by teachers.

> Party van hulle is behulpsaam, party is so-so juffrou (some of them are helpful, some are so-so, Miss) (Jimmy).

Half of the participants, however, felt that the degree of mutual respect could be increased. The focus group participants agreed with the above, but pointed out that the teachers at the school of study fulfilled a more substantial role than teachers at other schools in the surrounding environment. As several learners could not always rely on positive role-models at home, teachers at school needed to fulfil this role and mirror respect, demonstrate values, and model the expected and socially acceptable behaviour and norms to learners. Knesting (2008:3-10) found that a caring school environment where teachers engaged and listened actively to learners, played a positive role in the prevention of school dropout.

Involvement in extra-mural activities seemed to be a strong motivator for school attendance as several learners enjoyed participating in especially soccer, netball and athletics. Some participants expressed the desire to have more opportunities to participate in extra-mural art and cultural

activities. Learners who drop out of school are less likely to be involved in extracurricular activities; this may be an area that should receive attention (McWhirter *et al.* 2007:131).

Local community factors contributing to and mediating dropout

Several environmental and community issues impacted on the lives of these learners. Participants mentioned a decrease in gang activity at that point in time, but indicated that violence was still prevalent in the community. Substance abuse and teenage pregnancies were identified as important problems in the community, which could affect school attendance. The focus group participants identified a need for additional supportive community programmes, as the existing ones were burdened.

The negative consequences of unemployment in this community context were experienced by all the participants. Most of them referred to the lack of money for basic needs and having to live in a high-risk community where unfavourable conditions of poverty prevailed. McWhirter *et al.* (2007:131) pointed out that living in such high-risk communities, combined with other psychological stressors and dysfunctional families, could push individuals to higher levels of risk, and eventually to leave school. Even though poverty could be experienced as a psychological stressor, some learners may manage to accomplish academic achievements if they are goal-orientated, motivated or received support from their parents, school and community (Randolph *et al.* 2006:937; Dass-Brailsford, 2005:588).

Educational system factors contributing to or mediating dropout

International trends had an impact on the development of a new approach towards education in South Africa. This involved a shift towards integration and inclusion. The new focus was to develop a system that would cater for the needs of each and every learner, would accommodate diversity and aim to overcome possible barriers to learning (Swart 2004:235).

The focus group participants indicated clearly that no learners were ever refused entry to the school:

> Die skool moet die lig wees vir die gemeenskap...die kinders moet behoort aan iets, so dis eintlik waaroor dit gaan, want hier is soveel kinders wat uit gesinne kom waar die ouers nie eers praat met die kinders nie (the school must be the light for the community...the children must belong to something, so that is actually what it is all about, because here are so many children who come from families where the parents not even speak to the children).

Findings indicated that all teachers at the school were adequately and professionally qualified. The individual participants agreed that the resources at the school were sufficient, but the focus group participants pointed out that the library, research and sport facilities needed upgrading.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study showed that the general individual challenges cannot be separated from the challenges set by barriers to learning and the connecting social systems, such as that of the school and the community.

The importance of a good home environment was emphasised. The participants of this research spoke positively about the teacher-learner relationships and the support that they received from them, which appeared to mitigate learners dropping out from school. It became evident that a greater and holistic demand needed to be placed on teachers at the school to take an active role in mediating dropout and encouraging learners to complete their school programmes.

Substance (ab)use and challenging home conditions were identified as important contributors in this context to emotional stress, loss of interest in school and eventual school dropout. Teachers at the school provided a positive and supportive environment, which partially protected the participants from the psychological effects of such unsupportive environments and reduced the risk of dropping out of school. Donald *et al.* (2010:188) note: "Fostering a positive learning environment is equally important so that the school (and community – authors) does not become yet another set of experiences from which children are driven to escape".

Finally, the governmental policy of inclusive education appeared to have been implemented at the school of study. The management at the school where the study was conducted also indicated that they were working towards creating a community school where learners will feel safe, included and supported – aspects necessary in preventing dropout.

REFERENCES

Babbie, E & Mouton, J. 2001. *The Practise of Social Research*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Boon, HJ & Cook, J. 2008. Risk or resilience? What makes a difference? *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 35(1):81-102. Retrieved from EBSCOHOST on March 16, 2009.

Dass-Brailsford, P. 2005. Exploring resiliency: academic achievement among disadvantaged black youth in South Africa. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 35(3):574-591. Retrieved on April 14, 2009 from EBSCOHOST.

Donald, D, Lazarus, S & Lolwana, P. 2010. *Educational psychology in social context*. 4th Edition. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Draper, AK. 2004. The principles and application of qualitative research. *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society*, 63:641-646.

Fleisch, B, Shindler, J & Perry, H. 2008/2009. Children out of school:evidence from the community survey. *South African Child Guage*, 2008/2009:41-49.

Flisher, AJ, Townsend, L, Chikobvu, P, Lombard, C & King, G. 2004. Substance use and high school dropout. Poster presentation at the American Public Health Association 132nd annual meeting, Washington DC, November 6-10.

Gouws, E, Kruger, N & Burger, S. 2000. *The adolescent*. (2nd Ed). Johannesburg: Heinemann.

Grant, M & Hallman, K. 2008. Pregnancy-related school dropout and prior school performance in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. *Studies in Family Planning*, 39(4):369-381.

Green, KM & Ensminger, ME. 2006. Adult social behavioural effects of heavy adolescent marijuana use among African Americans. *Developmental Psychology*, 42(6):1168-1178. Retrieved March 20, from EBSCOHOST database.

Inglis, D. 2009. Exploring the dropout phenomenon in a secondary school situated in a high-risk community. MEdPsych unpublished dissertation. Stellenbosch University.

Interview with Headmaster: 6 March 2009.

Interview with Headmaster: 12 March 2009.

Jozefowicz-Simbeni, DMH. 2008. An ecological and developmental perspective on dropout risk factors in early adolescence: role of school social workers in dropout prevention efforts. *Children & Schools*, 30(1):49-62. Retrieved from EBSCOHOST on March 18, 2009.

Kindersorg Suid-Afrika 2009. Community profile 2009.

Knesting, K. 2008. Students at risk for school dropout: supporting their persistence. *Preventing School Failure*, 52(4): 3-10. Retrieved from EBSCOHOST on April 14, 2009.

Manlove, J. 1998. The influence of high school dropout and school disengagement on the risk of school-age pregnancy. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 8(2):187-220. Retrieved on March 16, 2007 from EBSCOHOST database.

Masitsa, G. 2004. Four critical causes of underachievement in township secondary schools. *Acta Academia*, 36(1),:213-245. Retrieved from SABINET on March 23, 2007.

Masitsa, G. 2006. Drop-out in township secondary schools: educators' perspectives. *Acta Academica*, 38(3):165-191. Retrieved in February, 2008 from SAePublications.

McIntosh, K, Flannery, KB, Sugai, G, Braun, DH, & Cochrane, KL. 2008. Relationships between academics and problem behaviour in the transition from middle school to high school. *Journal of Positive Behaviour Interventions*, 10(4):243-254. Retrieved from EBSCOHOST database on March 18, 2009.

McWhirter, JJ, McWhirter, BT, McWhirter, EH & McWhirter, RJ. 2007. *At risk youth*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Brooks/Cole.

Normand, C. 2007. Exploring the resilience in youth living in a high-risk community. Unpublished MEd Psych dissertation Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch.

Ou, S & Reynolds, AJ. 2008. Predictors of educational attainment in the Chicago longitudinal study. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 23(2):199-229. Retrieved on March 16, 2009.

Progress Report to the Minister of Education October, 2007. Ministerial Committee on learner retention in the South African schooling system.

Pillay, J. & Nesengani, RI. 2006. The educational challenges facing early adolescents who head families in rural Limpopo Province. *Education as Change*, 10(2):131-147 Retrieved March 16, 2007 from EBSCOHOST database.

RSA. 2011. Report on dropout and learner retention strategy. Portfolio Committee on Education, June. Pretoria: Department of Basic Education.

Randolph, KA, Fraser, MW & Orthner, DK. 2006. A strategy for assessing the impact of time-varying family risk factors on high school dropout. *Journal of Family Issues*, 27(7):933-949. Retrieved from SAGE Publications on March 16, 2007.

Sadock, BJ & Sadock, VA. 2007. *Kaplan & Sadock's synopsis of psychiatry: behavioural sciences/clinical psychiatry*. 10th Edition. USA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

Staff, J & Kreager, DA. 2008. Too cool for school? Violence, peer status and high school dropout. *Social Forces*, (87)1:445-471. Retrieved from ProQuest Education Journals on February 10, 2009.

Suh, S & Suh, J. 2006. Educational engagement and degree attainment among high school dropouts. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 29(3):11-20. Retrieved on March 17, 2007 from EBSCOHOST database.

Swart, E. 2004. Inclusive Education. In: Eloff, I. & Ebersöhn, L. *Keys to educational psychology*. Cape Town: UCT Press:230-247.

Townsend, L, Flisher, AJ, Chikobvu, P, Lombard, C & King, G. 2008. The relationship between bullying behaviours and high school dropout in Cape Town, South Africa. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 38(1), 21-32. Retrieved on April 2008 from EBSCOHOST database.

UNESCO. 2007. *Summary report: Education for all global monitoring report 2007*. Paris: UNESCO.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. 2006. The condition of education 2006 (NCES 2006-071). Available from: http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=16 (Accessed 10 May 2007).

Ungar, M. 2004. A constructionist discourse on resilience: multiple contexts, multiple realities among at-risk children and youth. *Youth & Society*, 35(3):341-365.