

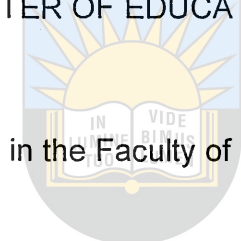
Practices of School Management Teams in managing learner attendance: A case of
three rural high schools in the King Williams Town Education District.

by

Thozamile Alfred Botha

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION



in the Faculty of

EDUCATION
Together in Excellence
at the

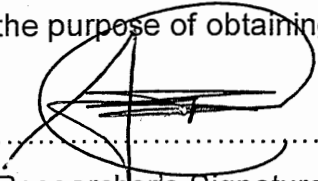
UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE

SUPERVISOR: Dr M.P. Mavuso

January 2015

DECLARATION

I, Thozamile Alfred Botha, declare that the contents of this dissertation constitute my own original work except where acknowledgements indicate otherwise and that the whole work or any part of it has been or shall be submitted to any other institution for the purpose of obtaining a degree.


.....
Researcher's Signature

14/04/2015
.....
Date



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I wish to express my sincere appreciation to persons who contributed towards my completion of this research project.

First of all, I would like to thank God who made it possible for me to study at the University of Fort Hare. A special word of gratitude goes to my supervisor Dr M.P. Mavuso, for all the support and guidance which was so crucial for me to complete this study. I wish to say a word of appreciation to the Dean of the Faculty of Education for the financial support I got during the data collection stage. I also wish to relay many thanks to the School Management Teams of the selected schools who took part in the study. Thank you for being part of the study and making the study a success. I also appreciate the support that I received from the staff members in the Faculty of Education at the University of Fort Hare.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late father, Mr T.J. Botha and my late mother Mrs N.M. Botha, whose courage, determination, love and support remains my source of inspiration for ever. I promise to study further and will always remember and love them. May their souls rest in peace.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
HOD	Head of Department
KWT	King Williams Town
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SMT	School Management Team
SNP	School Nutrition Programme
UNAIDS	United Nations Programme on HIV/Aids
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation



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ABSTRACT

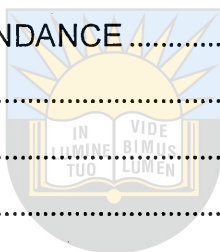
The aim of this study was to investigate the practices of School Management Teams (SMTs) in managing learner attendance in three rural high schools in King Williams Town District of Education. A qualitative research approach through a case study design was used and a sample of 12 participants was purposively drawn from the three selected high schools. Semi-structured interviews (face-to-face and focus group), documentary analysis and semi structured questionnaire were used to collect data. The results of the study indicated that there is a problem of learner non-attendance in the three rural high schools. The data showed that socio-economic factors such as poverty, lack of parental involvement, and distance learners have to travel to school were causes of learner non-attendance. It emerged from the data that in most cases, SMTs had no clear strategy of managing learner attendance in schools as in some cases learner would slip out of school without being noticed. SMT members did not seem to be proactive in dealing with issues of learner attendance and the principals were regarded as the only persons who should deal with learners who transgressed national learner attendance policy. SMTs seemed to rely on the School Nutrition Programme (SNP) as a way of combating absenteeism in schools. The issue of dealing with problems related to causes of learner absenteeism was regarded as the responsibility of the Life Orientation teacher. The data also revealed that SMTs focused on control rather than devising strategies to combat learner attendance and this was manifested by the regular marking of class registers. However, there were no indications that the information obtained from the marking of class registers helped the SMTs to effectively manage learner attendance.

Keywords: Learner attendance, Learner, Management, School Management Team, Leadership, Absenteeism.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Many factors play a role in learner achievement, directly and indirectly and research has shown that in developing countries such as South Africa, dropout and repetition rates appear to be most common among learners from low socio-economic backgrounds. In such countries, causes of high wastage and poor student performance include poverty, malnutrition, absenteeism, inappropriate curriculum and examinations, badly trained teachers, lack of textbooks and overcrowded classrooms (Legotlo, Maaga & Sebogo, 2002). Some of those variables can be controlled to a certain degree by learners, parents, and educators and/or school management teams, that is, school climate and curriculum (Roy, 2003). Other factors have a greater impact or effect, factors such as socio-economic conditions. Learner absenteeism is one variable that can be affected by school leadership and management, meaning that managing learner attendance effectively can have a positive effect on the rate of learner absenteeism. The aim of this study was to investigate the practices of school management teams (SMTs) in managing learner attendance.

Learner attendance has the greatest influence on learner achievement (Borland & Howsen, 1998). All learners are obligated to be present at school so that they can participate and engage in effective learning. It is not only the responsibility of parents to ensure that their children attend school regularly. SMTs are also tasked to engage in practices that assist schools in managing learner attendance effectively (Mphahlele, 2005). This study therefore sought to explore how the practices of SMTs in managing learner attendance at the selected rural high schools improve school attendance which is crucial to learner academic outcomes. SMTs are the school management teams that comprise the school head and senior teachers or head of divisions (HODs). These officials were chosen to explore the role they play in ensuring that learners attend school regularly.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Learner achievement is affected in a negative way by absenteeism. Learners' truancy in elementary and high school often leads to poor academic performance. This means that poor attendance in school buildings is determined to be one of the factors leading to student test scores much lower than classmates (DeKalb, 1999). Ensuring that learners attend school regularly must be a priority of all schools in the country. In a general sense, attendance means to go regularly to or being present at school (South African Schools Act 84, 1996) (SASA). It is implicit in the Act that attendance means participating in the full, applicable and compulsory educational programmes of the school, unless there is some other ground justifying a learner's non-attendance, for example, due to illness and lawful suspension (SASA, 1996). Failure to attend school has serious negative consequences for learners and the society from which they come (Musser, 2011). The management of learner attendance is an administrative phenomenon of which schools ought to take cognisance. Lack of management of learner attendance may lead to absenteeism which is a serious consequence of lack of management of learner attendance. It is the duty of the school to protect every learner's fundamental right to education and a learner is obliged to attend school punctually and regularly unless there is a valid reason for his/her absence. The Policy on Learner Attendance, effective from 1 January 2011, is compulsory for implementation by all Public Schools (Department of Basic Education, 2010) (DBE). This policy seeks to promote punctual and regular attendance at public schools and sets out procedures for managing and monitoring learner attendance, including during the examination periods. The South African Schools Act (Section 3) provides for action to be taken by the Head of Department, if a learner does not attend school without a valid explanation (DBE, 2014).

The national policy on learner attendance states that class registers must be used as official records of learner attendance and absence. Registers must be used to monitor the attendance of learners at schools (DBE, 2010). Schools must promote punctual and regular school attendance and provide standardised procedures for recording and monitoring learner attendance (DoE, 2007). However, learners seem to absent themselves from schools despite the fact the policy requires that the

principal manage their attendance (South African Schools Act, 1996). The policy states that the principal can delegate the management of learner attendance to his/her deputies and head of divisions (HODs). The SMT is assumed to do all the management tasks of the school including learner attendance in promoting a culture of teaching and learning (Naidoo, 1999). Though the national policy states that the principal can delegate the task of managing learner attendance, it does not specify how SMTs must manage learners' attendance other than controlling class and completing the period registers. Furthermore, there seems to be no provincial policy on how schools should manage learner attendance. Based on national learner attendance policy, schools are expected to develop their policies on learner attendance (DoE, 2010). SMTs should share the overall responsibility for monitoring teaching and learning with the Principals and where they operate successfully, they have great potential to improve classroom practice through HODs sharing their ideas, developing school-wide policies and enacting consistent practice throughout the school (Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu & van Rooyen, 2009). Though SMTs are tasked to manage schools, it seems as if there is a problem with their management of learner attendance as there is a serious problem of learner absenteeism in South African (Bush et al., 2009). Hence this study sought to investigate how SMTs as school managers manage learner attendance in schools given that each school has to develop its own policy on learner attendance.

Absenteeism is the failure by a student to regularly attend school during agreed times or participate in a meaningful manner in his or her planned education programme (Sheldon, 2007). There is chronic non-attendance a situation where a student is absent for 10 days or more per term (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). Chronic absenteeism means missing 10% of a school year for any reason. Truancy is also regarded as absenteeism which is a situation where learners deliberately arrive late at school, bunk classes or leave the school premises during school hours without permission (Wittenberg, 2005). Absenteeism is generalised, with researchers categorising absenteeism as either school non-attendance, disaffection, school refusal, school phobia (Whitney, 1998). These are the consequences of lack of management of learner attendance. This study therefore sought to investigate how SMTs manage learner attendance.

There is a dearth of literature on how SMTs manage learner attendance in schools. Many writers have researched about learner absenteeism (Sheldon, 2007; Nauer, White & Yerneni, 2008 & Gottfried, 2010). For instance, Gottfried (2010) researched on the consequences of lack of management of learner attendance, that was, learner absenteeism. Gottfried (2010) indicated that in high income countries, with good administrative systems the extent of learner absenteeism can be easily calculated. The learner absence rates were estimated at between 3% to 6% in high income countries (Sheldon, 2007). Gottfried (2010) further indicated that in the USA, the absence rate was around 5%; in Canada 6%; in Israel 5.8%; in Ireland around 5.5% and in England the learner absent rate was 2.6%. Low income countries have high absenteeism rates as compared to high income countries (Nauer, White, & Yerneni, 2008). Absence rates in a number of countries averaged 19% with a range from 11% to 28% (Gottfried, 2011). In this study, Peru had an 11% absence rate, Ecuador 14%; Zambia 17%; India 25%; Uganda 27% and Kenya 28% (Nauer, White, & Yerneni, 2008). While the national rates were high, there was variation depending on geographic location and the socio-economic conditions of schools (DoE, 2010). Despite the extensive literature which has emerged around issues of learners' absenteeism (Hallam & Roaf, 1995; Thambirajah, Grandison & De Hayes, 2008), at the current moment, in South Africa, literature on the management of learner attendance in schools is limited. Hence, this study focused on the practices of SMTs in managing learner attendance. A study by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry and Joint Education Trust (2007) highlighted that South Africa has not undertaken dedicated studies to measure the extent of learner absenteeism, and the administrative data from South African schools was incomplete. A study into learner absenteeism, commissioned by the Department of Education, found that the prevalence of learner absenteeism in South African schools was between 5% and 15% in 2007 (Weideman, Goga, Lopez, Mayet, Macun & Barry, 2007). This means that there is a problem that needs to be systematically investigated on how learner attendance is managed.

According to the South African Schools Act (1996), parents and guardians in South Africa are compelled to ensure that learners for whom they were responsible must attend school from the first school day of the year in which such a learner reaches the age of seven years until the last school day of the year in which such a learner

reaches the age of fifteen years or the ninth grade, whichever comes first. The Act further compels head of schools to employ several measures if learners fail to attend school. Such measures include an investigation into the circumstances of the learner's absence from school, the adoption of appropriate measures to remedy the situation and the issuing of written notices to the parent/s of the learner where necessary (SASA, 1996).

Regular attendances at school where learners interact with peers and teachers are an important determinant of learner achievement. Being absent from school has negative consequences for the learners involved and the people around them. Learners who are frequently absent are at risk of not achieving their educational, social or psychological potential and their future career prospects are limited (Musser, 2011). Most of them end up breaking the laws and end up in jail. Only when learners are ill or after extraordinary events such as the death of parents or close family members are learners permitted to absent themselves at schools. Learners are supposed to be in class every schooling day. However this has not been the case among learners in South Africa.



The scale of school non-attendance in South Africa is serious and certainly requires urgent attention. President Zuma's State of the Nation Address (2009) and the Development Bank of Southern Africa Education Road Map (2007) highlighted concerns relating to learners being in school and in class. However, absenteeism rates in African countries have been found to be much higher than other countries, sometimes as high as 50% (Weideman, Goga, Lopez, Macun & Barry, 2007).

South African schools are characterised by high absenteeism rates and this is affecting the quality of life in the country. Therefore this study explored the practices of SMTs in managing learner attendance. The existence of high learner absenteeism in schools suggests that there is a systematic problem that needs to be systematically investigated in the way SMTs manage learners' attendance.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

SASA (1996) stipulates that parents and guardians are compelled to ensure that learners for whom they are responsible attend school from the first school day of the

year. Furthermore, policy requires that schools must have standardised procedures for recording and monitoring learner attendance. As school managers, SMTs are expected to, among other things manage learner attendance. However, South Africa has the highest learner non-attendance rate in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region Weiderman, et al, (2007). The report by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry and the Joint Education Trust (2007) highlighted that such a high rate of learner non-attendance has affected the provision of better quality education in South Africa. Learners are seen roaming in the streets during times they are supposed to be in class. Poor academic performances have been recorded mostly in the Eastern Cape Province and this may be as a result of the failure of learners to attend school.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.4.1 Main question

How do SMTs manage learner attendance in schools?

1.4.2 Sub questions

- What role do SMTs play in assisting teachers to manage learner attendance?
- What are the practices of SMTs in implementing learner attendance policies?
- How do schools' learner attendance policies enable SMTs to manage learner attendance?

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study sought to achieve the following objectives:

- To establish how SMTs manage learner attendance;
- To investigate the role played by SMTs in assisting teachers in managing learner attendance;
- To explore the practices of SMTs in implementing the learner attendance policies;



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- To investigate how school policies on learner attendance assist SMTs in managing learner attendance.

1.6 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main aim of the study was to investigate how SMTs manage learner attendance in schools. It sought to explore the practices of SMT in managing learner attendance. It also sought to uncover how SMTs implement school policies on learner attendance and how these policies assist them.

1.7 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The high rate of learner absenteeism which is the consequence of lack of management of learner attendance triggered the researcher's interest in conducting this research. The increasing complexity of schools as organisations has subjected the SMTs to changing demands, especially in respect of its management tasks (South African Democratic Teachers' Union, 2001). Educational transformation has not been without some problems in the Eastern Cape. Learner attendance is one aspect that needs to be managed for schools to produce quality results. However, learner absenteeism in the South Africa schools seems to be prevalent, ranging between 5% and 15% in 2007 (Weideman, Goga, Lopez, Mayet, Macun & Berry, 2007).

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

After exploring the practices of SMT in the management of learner attendance, the researcher hoped to come up with some suggestions on how best can learner attendance be managed. It was hoped that the study would provide recommendations to SMTs on how they could improve the management of learner attendance at their schools. It was also hoped that the findings of this study would not only benefit the King Williams Town Educational District but the community and the province at large as insights on how to best manage learner attendance could be applied.

1.9 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Delimitations in research are those characteristics selected by the researcher to define the boundaries of the study (Churchill & Brown, 2007). The study sought to explore the practices of SMTs in managing learner attendance. This study focused only on the SMTs of the selected high schools in King Williams Town Education District. The study was delimited to only rural high schools and also the only variable under study was the management of learner attendance and no other variable or phenomenon was studied.

1.10 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study had its own limitations which are discussed below. Durrheim (2006) argued that the aim of sampling is to select a sample that is representative of the population about which the researcher aims to draw conclusions. Since most SMTs experts were purposively sampled, not all possible participants had an equal chance of being selected to participate in the study, implying that the sample was compromised. The researcher used non-probability convenience and purposive sampling. Therefore, the sample was never representative of the population from which the researcher aimed to draw conclusions. This implies that it may be difficult to generalise the results of this study to a broader population of SMT members in South Africa at large. However, despite the limitations, the study can be of practical significance by providing valuable information about the rate of non-attendance in local schools as well as how SMTs can effectively manage such a phenomenon. Also, generalisability was made more difficult as the study was a small scale case study where only three rural high schools were selected.

1.11 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

1.11.1 Learner

A learner is an educand who must learn through intentional, conscious, active, purposeful and willing involvement in his or her education. A learner in this study

refers to a student who is taking courses in high school that lead towards university or college entrance (DoE, 2001).

1.11.2 Learner attendance

Attendance means to go regularly to or being present in a class or school event (SASA, 1996). A learner is present when he or she was available in class or at another location in or outside the school and participating in a school-led and controlled activity (Jones, 2008).

1.11.3 Learner absenteeism

Learner absenteeism means a learner is not in class or is not in when a class or period register is marked (Nauer, White, & Yerneni, 2008).

1.11.4 School Management Team

It is a group of senior staff that involves a cross-section of experienced administrative professionals in a structured decision making process (Wallace & Hall, 1994). In this study, an SMT was a team made up of the principal, deputy principal and heads of departments (HODs) at the schools who were charged with duties involving organisation and decision making, leadership and policy formulation at schools.

1.11.5 Management

Management means to coordinate the efforts of people to accomplish goals and objectives using available resources efficiently and effectively (Robbins, Odendaal, & Roodt, 2003).

1.12 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The study is structured as follows:

Chapter one: Introduction and background of the study

This chapter mainly deals with the introduction of the study and its background. The chapter introduces the reader to terms like School Management Teams (SMTs) and learner attendance. The reasons for selecting this particular study were also clearly

stated in this chapter. The chapter includes the problem statement of the research, research questions, the significance and the rationale of the study.

Chapter two: Literature review

This chapter focuses on the reviewed literature that was related to the research topic and the views of other authors regarding learner attendance and SMT practices in managing learner attendance. The chapter provides a literature review based on approaches, strategies and practices adopted by SMTs in managing learner attendance. The readings are taken from books, dissertations, journals and internet sources so as to get more relevant information about the study.

Chapter three: Research methodology and design

In this chapter, the research methodology applied in this study will be discussed. The research methods, techniques and sampling procedures, sample size, the population and the instruments used in this study will be discussed in this section. The data analysis technique will also be discussed.



Chapter four: Presentations of findings

Chapter four focuses on the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the collected data and research results using qualitative in-depth analysis.

Chapter five: Summary, conclusions and recommendations

Chapter five draws conclusions from the whole study and makes recommendations to facilitate improved learner attendance. The limitations of this study will also be discussed as well as solutions to overcome such limitations in the future.

1.13 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the study. Subsections such as the background of the study, the research problem, the rationale as well as the research questions were covered in this chapter. The chapter also provided brief definitions of the key research words used in this study. The following chapter focuses on reviewing related literature.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on reviewing the literature related to this study. The literature was reviewed to enable the researcher to have a thorough understanding of the topic under study. Reviewing previous literature enabled the researcher to identify similar work done within the area of the study thus identifying knowledge gaps that demand further investigation. This process also enabled the researcher to compare previous findings and critique existing findings and suggest further studies. Before the literature is reviewed various theories that support the present study are discussed.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section discusses the relevant theoretical lenses of the study. In discussing the relevant theories which are Fayol's administrative theory and systems theory the researcher related them to the current study.

2.2.1 Fayol's administrative theory (1937)

Fayol's administrative theory served as one of the lenses of the study. In this theory, emphasis is placed on the administrative function of management. The fact that SMT is in charge of the staff makes it an administrative staff and thus centre of the school, Fayol (1937) argued that, even if a firm has perfect machinery and manufacturing processes, it is doomed to failure if it is run by an inefficient staff. In order to show how the administrative function works in an industrial concern, Fayol (1937) took a simile from physiology. Further to the argument the scholar highlights that an organisation is like a man's nervous system, which is not visible to a superficial observer. None of our senses can follow its action, and yet, although the muscles possess energy of their own, they cease to contract if the nervous system stops working Fayol (1937). Without the central nervous system the human body would become inactive. The theory purports that it is present and active in every organ

every part of each organ coordinates impulses from lower nerve centers or reflex centers to the brain. The order is then sent out from these centers or from the brain and, moving in the opposite direction, reaches the muscle, which is to perform the movement. "A leader who is a good administrator but technically mediocre is generally much more useful to the enterprise than if he were a brilliant technician but a mediocre administrator" (Wren & Bedeian, 2009, 214). Thus, according to Fayol, a firm's performance depends more on its leaders' managerial ability than technical abilities. This study sought to investigate how SMTs perform their administrative duties of managing learner attendance. Fayol argued that management principles include unity of command, hierarchical transmission of orders, and separation of powers among distinct departments and centralisation or decentralisation. Furthermore, foresight, the act of forecasting, planning, and budgeting are crucial for any organisation and that the value of organisation charts, meetings and reports, and an accurate and rapid accounting system should be upheld. Fayol viewed management as more than devising systems and methods for increasing throughput. For Fayol, management involved all the activities associated with producing, distributing, and selling a product which is teaching and learning in this case. A manager needs to be able to formulate plans, organise plant and equipment, deal with people, and much more. Fayol noted managerial ability as essential for organisational success. According to Fayol (1937), managerial ability depends on certain qualities:

- Physical qualities: health, vigor, address (literally, manner of behaving)
- Mental qualities: ability to understand and learn, judgment, mental vigor, and adaptability
- Moral qualities: energy, firmness, willingness to accept responsibility, initiative, loyalty, tact, dignity
- General education: general acquaintance with matters not belonging exclusively to the function performed
- Special knowledge: that peculiar to the function, be it technical, commercial, financial or managerial
- Experience: knowledge arising from the work proper; the recollection of lessons a person has derived from things.

Fayol even illustrated what he believed to be the relative importance of technical and managerial abilities for employees with different levels of authority. As he explained, at the worker level, technical ability was most important; but as individuals moved up the hierarchy the relative importance of managerial ability increases while the need for technical ability decreases. The higher the level of authority, the more dominant the need for managerial ability (Wren & Bedien, 2009).

In relation to the present study, Fayol (1937) outlined that the administrative function is a process. The SMT has an administrative function of developing and implementing policies that are aimed at promoting learner attendance. Failure to develop and monitor the implementation of such policies will result in school systems collapsing. The SMTs must identify the problem of poor learner attendance and devise a strategy on how to curb the problem. If they do not come up with a strategy, policies or measures, the problem of poor learner attendance will escalate. In that respect there is need to constantly monitor the implementation process and also make the learner aware of the implications of not attending the school. Therefore without the proper administration from SMTs, learners are more likely not to attend classes and schools become doomed to failure.

2.2.2 Systems theory

Another theory that was used in this study was systems theory. Systems theory is less of a management methodology as it is a way of analysing and thinking about organisations (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972). It puts forth the premise that organisations, like living organisms, are made up of numerous component subsystems that must work together in harmony for the larger system to succeed (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972). Systems theory states that organisational success relies on synergy, interrelations and interdependence between different subsystems. As arguably the most valuable component of a company, employees make up various vital subsystems within an organisation. Departments, work groups, business units, facilities and individual employees can all be considered component systems of the organisations.

Systems theory is a way of elaborating increasingly complex systems across a continuum that encompasses the person-environment. Systems theory can be

understood as a way which also enables people to understand the components and dynamics of client systems in order to interpret problems and develop balanced intervention strategies, with the goal of enhancing the 'goodness of fit' between individuals and their environments (Anderson, Carter, & Lowe, 1999). The systems concept can be a useful way of thinking about the managing. It provides a framework for visualising internal and external environmental factors as an integrated whole (Von Bertalanffy, 1973). It allows recognition of the proper place and function of subsystems. The systems within which businessmen must operate are necessarily complex. However, management via systems concepts fosters a way of thinking which, on the one hand, helps to dissolve some of the complexity and, on the other hand, helps the manager recognise the nature of the complex problems and thereby operate within the perceived environment Anderson, Carter, & Lowe, (1999). It is important to recognise the integrated nature of specific systems, including the fact that each system has both inputs and outputs and can be viewed as a self-contained unit (Von Bertalanffy, 1973). But, it is also important to recognise that business systems are a part of larger systems possibly industry-wide, or including several, maybe many, companies and/or industries, or even society as a whole. Furthermore, business systems are in a constant state of change they are created, operated, revised, and often eliminated.

A system is an organised or complex whole, an assemblage or combination of things or parts forming a complex or unitary whole (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972). In addition to that notion the term 'system' covers an extremely broad spectrum of concepts. While much research has been focused on the analysis of minute segments of knowledge, there has been increasing interest in developing larger frames of reference for synthesising the results of such research Kast & Rosenzweig (1972). Thus, attention has been focused more and more on overall systems as frames of reference for analytical work in various areas. It is our contention that a similar process can be useful for managers. Whereas managers often have been focusing attention on particular functions in specialised areas, they may lose sight of the overall objectives of the business and the role of their particular business in even larger systems Anderson, Carter, & Lowe, (1999). These individuals can do a better job of carrying out their own responsibilities if they are aware of the 'big picture'. The focus of systems management is on providing a better picture of the network of

subsystems and interrelated parts which go together to form a complex whole Anderson, Carter, & Lowe, (1999).

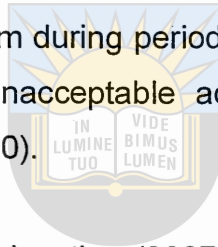
With reference to the current study the systems management theory can be a useful theory to support this study. The system in the current study is the schools. The major components of systems theory are interdependence and synergy. The SMT members should not only work alone in trying to fight non-attendance but must involve other members of the schools in order to produce initiatives that can help the whole system, which is the school, achieve its goals. With synergy the SMT must work together with various people to bring about synergistic thoughts and actions that will bring about new ideas and new initiatives that can be helpful in solving learner non-attendance in schools Friedman and Allen (2010). Furthermore, systems theory served as a lens for this study because, as has been stated above, an organisation, a school in this case, is made up of systems and learner attendance is one of them. The core business of school is teaching and learning. Focusing on teaching and learning only will be a blunder on the side of school managers. This means that learner attendance like many other components of the system (school) affects teaching and learning. Therefore, school managers should look into all the components of the school if they want their organisation to succeed. Friedman and Allen (2010, p.3) argued that "systems theory also enables us to understand the components and dynamics of client systems in order to interpret problems and develop balanced intervention strategies, with the goal of enhancing the 'goodness of fit' between individuals and their environments." Laszlo and Krippner (1998), basing their definition on Ackoffs proposition, further argued that a system is a set of two or more interrelated elements in which each element has an effect on the functioning of the whole, affected by at least one other element in the system.

2.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section reviews the literature on some related studies that have been conducted by other writers. These studies include learner absenteeism and its causes. It was also necessary to review literature on leadership and management as this study was about SMTs who are in the leadership position of the schools.

2.3.1 Learner absenteeism

Since this study is about the management of learner attendance in schools, it was necessary that the researcher reviewed a literature on learner absenteeism. In reviewing literature on learner absenteeism, the researcher came up with some definitions of this concept. Hallam and Roaf, (1995), and Thambirajah and De Hayes, (2008) noted that school non-attendance carries the same meaning as school absenteeism. Non-attendance in South African schools is a serious concern for the Ministry of Education and is one of the challenges that most schools face. Students who are frequently absent are at risk of not achieving their educational, social and psychological potential and their future seems to be dim because they may place themselves at risk of harm during periods of absence, and they are more likely to be involved in socially unacceptable activities or behaviours (Rhodes, Thomas, Lemieux, Cain & Guin, 2010).



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The South African Department of Education (2007, p.20) indicates that a learner is considered absent when "he or she is not at school the entire day". A learner is deemed to be absent when s/he is not in class or is not present when a class or period register is marked (Nauer, White, & Yerneni, 2008). The term absenteeism is substantial and varied. The concept learner non-attendance is often used as a collective concept that includes various types of absenteeism. Full absenteeism refers to absence from class for the entire day (Moseki, 2004). Full absenteeism is when a learner never comes to school for the whole day. When a learner absents himself or herself from school fully it means he or she won't attend or come to school at all.

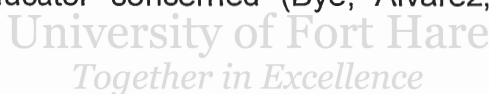
Based on the literature reviewed and the definitions employed in other studies, the present study adopts the simple definition of learner absenteeism. According to this present study a learner is absent when the learner is not at school for an entire day. This is also the definition currently employed by the South African Department of Education (2007) and the three schools surveyed for this study when recording attendance.

A distinction could be made between authorised and unauthorised absenteeism and between partial and full absenteeism. As principals and SMTs are tasked as per

DBE (Department of Basic Education) policy to manage learner attendance in South African public schools learner absenteeism is in a way a part of the focus of this study. However, this study unlike other studies, did not focus only on learner absenteeism; it also focused on how SMTs manage learner attendance. Learner absenteeism can be categorised into unauthorised absenteeism, authorised absenteeism, partial absenteeism and full absenteeism.

2.3.1.1 Unauthorised absenteeism

Unauthorised absenteeism refers to the frequent absence from class without any good reason (Gottfried, 2011). Unauthorised absenteeism is the non-attendance that occurs when learners absent themselves from school without a valid reason, that is, they have not been permitted to absent themselves from school. Unauthorised non-attendance refers to when a learner is absent and no explanation is given or the explanation provided is unacceptable. This is also referred to as absent without authorisation from the educator concerned (Bye, Alvarez, Haynes, & Sweigart, 2010).



Other authors define unauthorised absence from school as truancy, a situation where learners deliberately, arrive late at school, bunk classes or leave the school premises during school hours without permission (Frick & Dickens, 2006). Unauthorised absence is a situation where a learner is absent from school, during school hours, without acceptable permission from an educator or any other authorised representative of the school (Whitney, 1998). This includes all unjustified absence such as lateness, absence from the classroom during school hours without known reason (Thambirajah et al., 2008). This study therefore sought to explore how SMTs managed learner attendance in relation to unauthorised learner absenteeism. This means that the researcher wanted to establish what the SMTs do when learners are absent from school without authorisation. The study also investigated if the SMTs were effectively using the information they obtain from unauthorised learner absenteeism and if this information was of assistance their learner attendance management initiatives.

2.3.1.2 Authorised absenteeism

Authorised absenteeism refers to absence endorsed and authorised by the school either before or after it has taken place (Teasly, 2004). Authorised absenteeism refers to a situation where the school, with the knowledge of the parent, is responsible for granting permission for leave of absence to the learner (Reid, 2007). Authorised absenteeism is when a learner is absent from school, during school hours, with permission from an educator or from any other authorised representative of the school, meaning that the school has given approval in advance for the learner to be absent or has accepted an explanation offered as reasonable justification for the absence (Reid, 2007). Emergencies such as sudden illness are the ones that can result in authorised absenteeism (Reid, 2007). Authorised absence from school can be defined as legitimate. Authorised absenteeism is when students absent themselves from school for a valid reason that is well known by both the parents and educators. This study therefore aimed to explore how SMTs practice the management of learner attendance given the fact that in some instance learners have to be authorised to absent themselves from attending school.

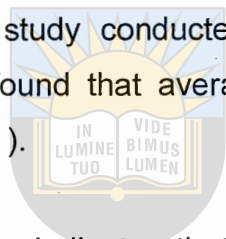
2.3.1.3 Partial absenteeism

Partial absenteeism refers to absence for a part of the day that is, attending half of the subjects (Lyon & Cotler, 2007). Partial absenteeism is when a learner is absent from school for some part of the day. This refers to the absenteeism when a learner either comes to school in the afternoon and avoids morning classes or comes to school for morning classes and fails to attend afternoon classes. This study sought to investigate how SMTs deal with issues of partial absenteeism by learners and if their practices were of value to the creation of positive learning environment.

2.4 LEARNER NON-ATTENDANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Poor learner performance in the South African education system particularly in Grade 12 examinations represents a challenge to all South Africans (Legotlo, Maaga,& Sebegu, 2002). Therefore, the need to gain a better picture of the causes and solutions to the problem cannot be over-emphasised. Hence, the research was

conducted to collect qualitative data to determine how SMTs manage learner attendance in schools. The South African education system is based on the assumption that barring illness or an extraordinary event such as the death of parents or close family members, learners are supposed to be in class every schooling day (Wittenberg, 2005). However, this has not been the case among learners in South Africa. The scale of the learner non-attendance problem in South Africa is serious and certainly requires urgent attention. Rates of absenteeism vary from school to school, from region to region, and between developed and undeveloped countries. In developed nations non-attendance rates usually range from between 6% and 8% (South Africa DoE, 2007). Non-attendance rates in South Africa have been found to vary between approximately 5% and 15% (Weideman et al, 2007). A baseline attendance study conducted by the Provincial Education Department in the Eastern Cape found that average learner attendance is 95% (absentee rate 5%) (Budlende, 2006).



Most of the research in South Africa indicates that 20% of learners arrive late for school and are not at school by 8h30 (Moseki, 2004). The majority of absences in South Africa are authorised absences though partial absences occur. It was reported in one study that partial absenteeism occurs mostly in science subjects. Students absent themselves from difficult subjects such as mathematics and biology and this contributes to partial absenteeism.

Undoubtedly it can be argued that learner non-attendance has a negative impact to the results of the learners. It is essential to look into the causes and the various factors which result in learner absenteeism. These factors are socio-economic factors, poverty, background, geographical location, poor management of learners' attendance. Non-attendance can be considered as caused either by the family itself or by the administrative matters of the school. Such consideration therefore has been identified as major causes to absenteeism.

2.5 REASONS FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

Various factors contribute to learners not attending school. Personal, socio-economic and school factors have been regarded as the major factors causing non-attendance

of learners in schools (van Wyk & Lemmer, 2009). These factors are discussed in detail below.

2.5.1 Personal factors

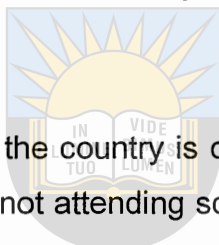
One important individual factor that leads to learners not attending school is learners' illness (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2008). When learners are ill or sick, this warrants a valid reason for authorised absenteeism (Reid, 2007). Learners will not be deemed absent from school when they are sick to the extent that they cannot attend school. Halam and Roaf (1995) noted that illness is an acceptable reason for not attending school. Certain diseases that can be spread to other learners such as chicken pox are valid diseases that permit students not to attend school. Such diseases require permission from the educators for learners not to attend school.

Age is one other demographic factor that results in learners not attending school. Various studies have shown that old learners do not attend school as compared to young learners (Malcolm, Wilson, Davidson & Kirk, 2003). It is reported that most of the unauthorised absenteeism are recorded with old learners rather than young learners. Mostly aged learners engage in socially unacceptable behaviours where they engage in selling drugs, thus leading them to arrive late at school, or not attend at all. Young learners seem to be afraid of the authorities to the extent that they try by all means to be at school at all times. In South Africa, most of the students roaming the streets during school time are older learners rather than young learners. This shows that older learners engage in more non-attendance that is unauthorised as compared to young learners.

Learners also often lack self-confidence and are much dependent on their parents thus resulting in decreased learners' self-esteem (Lyon & Cotler, 2007). Usually, learners who fear failure and have learning problems are more likely not to attend school than learners who are geniuses (Thambirajah et al., 2008). It is also believed that learners who find it difficult to interact with fellow learners because of developmental problems more often miss school than learners who have high self-esteem.

2.5.2 Socio-economic factors

Poverty is one factor that inhibits learners from attending school in South Africa. One study conducted in the Eastern Cape reported that poverty is one thing that stops learners from attending school. Most learners from rural schools are from poor backgrounds where parents cannot afford to pay school fees. School fees and associated costs of school materials and uniforms that learners are expected to have for attendance at school, are among the barriers discouraging learners from attending school. Access to school is compromised by costs of school fees, uniforms, transport and costs of clinic visits (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). Mostly students from rural schools are sent away from school because they fail to pay school fees (Railsback, 2007).

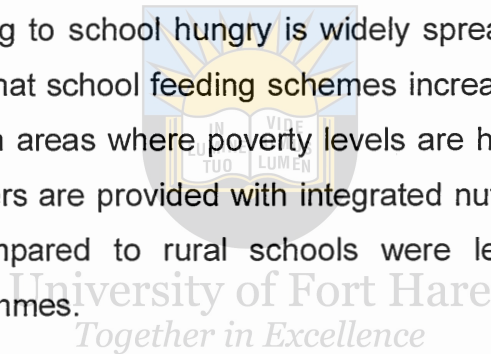


The HIV and AIDS pandemic facing the country is one social factor that contributes to the increased number of learners not attending school. It is reported that HIV and AIDS is a factor increasingly impacting on learner non-attendance in Southern Africa as a whole (UNAIDS, 2006). According to information from the Human Sciences Research Council, in South Africa, 5.6% of children aged 2-18 years are subject to the prevalence of HIV (DoE, 2007). The prevalence is higher in the age group 0-9 years and the school attendance of children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS is increasingly affected (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). A report by UNAIDS (2006) on children aged between 13 to 18 in Uganda found that these children have a parent or both parents living with HIV-AIDs. The increased HIV epidemic results in declined school attendance as children have to cater for their sick parents.

Lack of transport among most rural learners affects their attendance in schools. Transport as a factor may lead to learners arriving late for school or not arriving at all for the day. This results in partial absenteeism in most cases as children miss some or other classes because they could not be at school in time. Most learners in rural schools have to travel long distances to make it to school thus presenting a major challenge to them to attend school daily. The Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005) reported that the walk to school is a bridge between home and formal education and the bridge is threatening especially to girls who are vulnerable. The vulnerability can be in a form of the rape cases and abuse of the girl child on the way to and from

school. The unsafe conditions that are associated with long walks to school affect learner attendance at school. This indicates that walking long distances under rainy conditions among other conditions is one obstacle that affects learner attendance at schools.

Food security is one other factor contributing to learner non-attendance in schools. Due to increased poverty rates in South Africa mostly in rural areas most learners are forced to go to school with barely a cup of tea or nothing at all to eat (Wittenberg, 2005). Some learners attend school after only having porridge at home. Poor nutrition results in learners being unhealthy at school with signs of starvation, skin diseases and other health related conditions (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). The issue of children going to school hungry is widely spread in South Africa, and UNESCO (2009) reports that school feeding schemes increase learner participation in education, particularly in areas where poverty levels are high. It is evident that in rural schools where learners are provided with integrated nutrition programmes, the attendance is better compared to rural schools where learners are not given integrated nutrition programmes.



Teenage pregnancy is another factor contributing to learner's non-attendance. Basically, having a child at a young age has an immediate and long-term disadvantage for a young woman. A study in Brazil indicated that early pregnancy was the primary reason for leaving school (Kearney, 2008). Most of the young ladies who have unwanted pregnancies are forced not to attend school due to pregnancy-related sicknesses. They also have to miss school to cater for their newly born babies, thus affecting their progress in school. Most learners who become mothers might permanently quit school while some return to school and find it difficult to progress.

One factor that is more important to this study that affects learner attendance is quality of life for learners in urban and rural areas. The Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005) study in South Africa reported that non-attendance is higher in rural areas when compared with urban areas. In South Africa, children who live on farms, especially in rural areas, are reportedly much less likely to attend school than children living in urban areas (Zafar, Kgobe, Napo & Parker, 2006). Attendance of

learners improves due to migration from commercial farming areas to homelands and from homelands to urban informal areas. Children located in schools in inner deep rural areas are more involved in economic domestic work-related activities than those in commercial areas (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). Such learners are exposed to poor road and transport networks leaving them with no choice but to walk long distances to school, which definitely affects their attendance rate at schools (UNESCO, 2009).

Child labour is one other factor that can lead to learner non-attendance (Teasly, 2004). With the increased poverty in rural areas some learners are forced not to attend school in order to find temporary employment that can help the family have something to eat. Usually, older learners are confronted with this problem as they are often forced to look after the younger ones, especially in homes where parents might have died from HIV, so the older children have no option but to find employment in order to feed the family. It is reported that among the most common reasons for children not attending school in South Africa, especially in rural areas, is that their families need them to work (HRSC, 2005). It is also reported that the existence of plentiful well-paid jobs that require little or low education influences a child to be absent and eventually drop out of school (Kearney, 2008). Poverty stricken learners are more likely to indulge in child labour as a way of financially supporting themselves.

2.5.3 School factors

There is increased violence; bullying and sexual abuse in South African schools and this might be a factor leading to learner's non-attendance in schools (DoE, 2007). Violence and bullying in schools result in a loss of interest in school, increasing absenteeism and eventually dropping out of school altogether (Buchel, 2006). Learners who are sexually abused, bullied or are victims of violence, often lose interest in school and this results in them fearing to attend school, thus decreased attendance of such learners. In South Africa, bullying is predominant in urban areas where racial divides are still strong (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). Discrimination is dominant in such schools such that learners who feel they are being excluded from the others find no reason to attend school daily, thus

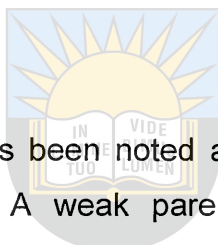
contributing to the non-attendance of such learners. Female learners are subjected to sexual advances by male teachers, thus contributing to their decreased attendance in schools. According to the South African Human Rights Commission (2006), female learners are subject to sexual harassment by male teachers as they are coerced to engage in sexual activities for money or food. Such behaviour by teachers contributes to the decreased attendance of female learners in schools as they fear being sexually abused by their teachers. Also, most learners from rural schools miss school because they fear being laughed at by other learners because of their social and economic backgrounds. Poverty stricken learners are subject to such kind of abuse and this contributes to their decreased attendance at school.

The punishment that children receive for late coming is another factor contributing to non-attendance of learners in schools. Punishment results in full absenteeism of learners as they fear that if they arrive late for classes they will be punished. Therefore, such learners resort to not attending school at all. Kearney (2008) confirms that highly punitive measures contribute to learner absenteeism. Kearney (2008) also asserts that inconsistency and minimal consequences for non-attendance lead to learners not attending school. Excessive use of corporal punishment can lead to consistent teacher violence and this could also influence learner non-attendance. In schools where corporal punishment is still practised; guilty learners are more likely not to attend school as they fear punishment (Moseki, 2004). Learners who fear being punished either for late coming or for other miscellaneous behaviour are more likely not to attend school at all.

The relationship that exists between a learner and an educator also contributes significantly to learner non-attendance. When a positive healthy relationship exists between a learner and an educator, such a learner will attend school more often. However, if a negative unhealthy relationship exists between a learner and an educator, such a learner is more likely to miss school more often. Usually, negative relationships between learners and educators result in educators offering derogatory remarks that demotivate learners from attending school on a daily basis (Kearney, 2008). Negative attitudes displayed by educators towards learners drive certain learners out of school. Insults and humiliating remarks by educators lead to school non-attendance (Moseki, 2004).

The relationship that also exists between a learner's parent and the school may contribute to non-attendance. In situations where there is poor communication between parents and the school, there is no co-operation and this contributes significantly to learner non-attendance. If learners see that their parents are not concerned with activities at school, are not involved and do not engage in building relationships with the learners, educator, such learners may stay away from school knowing that their parents won't be concerned (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). Parental involvement is one factor that contributes significantly to learner's attendance therefore, if learners see that their parents are not involved, they won't attend school.

2.5.4 Family factors



A weak parent-child relationship has been noted as one of the causes of learner non-attendance (Chisholm, 2004). A weak parent-child relationship contributes significantly to a parent's decreased involvement in a learner's education. Basically, in the rural areas where learners live with their grandparents, there is a weak relationship that exists between the two and this might add significantly to learners' non-attendance in schools. Usually, people who are not concerned with school or who never succeeded in school are not likely to get involved in learners' education, to the extent that such learners might be reluctant to attend school (Togo, 2009). UNESCO (2009) reports that where parent-child relationships are strongly established, and where parents have a greater interest in their children's education, children are more likely to attend school (Chisholm, 2004).

Learners whose parents are alcohol and drug abusers accumulate high absenteeism rates. Parental alcohol and drug abuse and domestic violence are grouped under potential family factors that influence learners' participation in education. It is believed that drug users and alcoholics are abusive to such an extent that they abuse their children, hence resulting in decreased attendance. Non-attendance for learners from alcoholics and drug users might be caused by the fact that such parents probably spend all the money on drugs, leaving school children without food, fees and uniforms for school, thus contributing to their non-attendance in school (Williams, 2011).

South Africa is characterised by single parent households. It is reported that learners who emerge from single parent-headed households are more likely to report higher levels of absenteeism than learners from two-parented-headed households (Togo, 2009). With the increased levels of poverty and HIV/AIDS, learners who come from poverty stricken homes where the single available parent is suffering from HIV are vulnerable to such impacts, thus contributing significantly to their non-attendance in schools (UNAIDS, 2006). Consequently, the learner will be forced to assume the role of the head of the household in order to cater for the sick parent thus impacting heavily on his/her education. So, if the other parent is available, this burden will normally fall on that parent, thus the learner will be able to attend school.

2.5.5 Environmental factors

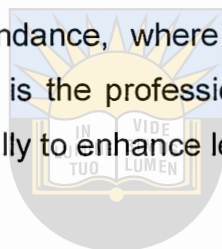
In the rural schools, environmental factors contribute significantly to learner non-attendance. Extreme weather conditions that are hazardous to learners can result in learner non-attendance. For instance, floods, heavy thunderstorms and snow can inhibit some learners from attending school (Hogan, 2008). Students from rural schools who have to walk long distances may arrive late or not attend school due to unfavourable weather conditions such as heavy rains.

2.6 ROLES OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS

Good school management is an essential aspect of any education service. Good management practices coupled with sustained development and effective structures, systems and procedures are likely to lead to an improved culture of teaching and learning and, ultimately, the improvement of learner attendance and academic performance (Abbas, 2009). SMTs are responsible for the management and administrative functions which are planning, controlling and leading the activities at schools. These are the responsibilities on which the effectiveness of the school's management is assessed.

2.6.1 Planning

Planning is one of the major functions performed by SMTs. The Department of Education (DoE) (2000) views planning as a way of maintaining activities in a school and of setting new ways for development and growth. Planning is the cornerstone for any improvement initiatives within an educational institution (Naicker & Waddy, 2002). Planning is beneficial to schools as they become proactive to problems rather than become reactive (Wallace & Hall, 1994). Planning in schools is done at management level and presented to lower levels for scrutiny. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the SMT to plan the activities of the school. This means that in order for SMTs to enhance learner attendance, it is crucial to have a thorough plan to work towards reducing learner non-attendance, where high standards and excellent learner attendance are the norm. It is the professional role of SMTs to engage in strategic planning designed specifically to enhance learner attendance.



2.6.2 Leadership

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According to Barnard (1938), leadership is the ability of a leader or superior to influence the behaviour of subordinates and persuade them to follow a particular course of action in order to attain organisational goals. In other words, leadership is the ability to inspire others to transform plans freely and enthusiastically into reality. Thus, SMT members are leaders in schools. They perform a management function or role of leading in schools.

The SMT members as leaders in a school must know how to accomplish the mission and vision of their school, through the way in which they provide guidance to other members of the school community (Walters, 1993). SMTs are responsible for developing a vision that promotes learner attendance and sees to it that it leads all responsible members of the school to ensure that such a vision is achieved in the school. According to leadership theory, the SMT members must inspire the parents and the learners to transform policies and plans for learner attendance freely and enthusiastically into reality. SMTs are expected to ensure that discipline is maintained in schools, so, they should display high leadership qualities. The management of learner attendance aims at preserving discipline in schools and

therefore needs officials who have good leadership qualities. SMTs have to influence teachers and other stakeholders to participate effectively in the management of learner attendance in schools. It is therefore necessary that the researcher explores leadership styles as this study is about the management of learner attendance in schools. The following sections will discuss the various leadership styles.

2.6.2.1 Autocratic leadership style

This is the type of leadership in which the management employs coercive tactics to enforce rules, uses Machiavellian cunning to manipulate people and decision making, and rewards loyalty over merit. Control is the primary management strategy employed by autocratic leaders. This form of leadership emphasises objectivity in the workplace, tends to be impervious to human problems, is insensitive to race and gender, and displays little emotion or affection toward employees. Also, autocratic leaders believe that people must be forced to work, closely supervised, and rewarded or punished based on individual productivity. They believe in a top-down, line and staff organisational chart with clear levels of authority and reporting processes. This is also known as an authoritarian leadership style (Banties & Driver, 2013). However, leaders should use this as little as possible because it can erode the motivation and loyalty of followers.

This style is appropriate in the following situations: in emergencies and when there is a shortage of time, when employees are well motivated and the leader has already earned the trust of the followers and when the leader has all the information needed to solve the problem.

The SMT must encourage the learners and the parent to participate in the management of learner non-attendance. Sometimes, forcing learners and parents could cause more problems than managing the existing ones. The tone must be set at the top and be communicated to all stakeholders procedurally and not by force. All the situations mentioned above when applying this leadership style do not relate to the SMTs in the three rural schools used in this study. For instance, the SMT members have time to manage learner non-attendance but both learners and parents were not motivated. The last situation mentioned was that they must have all

the information needed to solve the problem but the SMT does not have enough information on the causes of learner non-attendance in their schools. That was mentioned by some of them when they were interviewed. They highlighted that learners were still arriving late, and roaming around the streets even though they have implemented the learner non-attendance policies in their schools.

2.6.2.2 Transformational leadership

Transformational leaders are servants to others and guide them in creating and embracing the organisation's vision that inspires and brings about top performances and creates a belief system of integrity, a cause beyond oneself, diversity of thought, and inclusiveness for all races and genders (Bantjies & Driver, 2013). Subsumed in this style is moral leadership, leading with love, and spiritual leadership. It also makes them take greater ownership for their work and to know their strengths and weaknesses. This makes it possible for the leader to align followers with tasks that improve their performances.



The SMTs must create a conducive environment for the parents and the learners to be empowered with knowledge and understanding of managing learner non-attendance in the three rural schools. They must guide them in the implementation of the policies and plans in decreasing learner non-attendance and also come out with best practices for managing learner non-attendance.

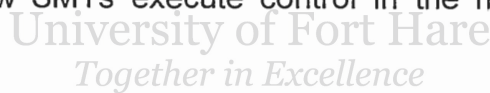
2.6.3 Management styles

This study was about the management of learner attendance, hence the researcher selected management as one of the key concepts of the study. Leadership and management are not the same but they are linked and complement each other (Bush, 2007). Employees look at managers not only to receive an order or task but to assign them with a purpose in the business. A management style is the style or way in which an institution manages its people and their work activities and will vary depending upon factors such as the characteristics of employees, the work activities engaged in and the culture of that institution (Bush, 2007). Thus, a successful

management style has a duty to successfully build teams and be able to motivate so as to achieve the aims and goals of the institution.

2.6.3.1 Controlling style

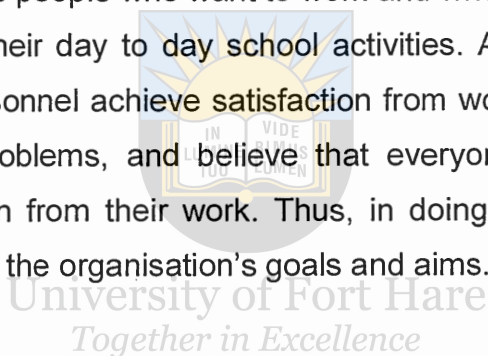
It is the responsibility of the manager to control the activities of a department or an institution. According to Walters (1993), control within school management is the process by which the SMT members ensure that actual activities conform to planned activities and that objectives are met. One of the key current roles of SMT members is that of control. In trying to enhance learner attendance, it is the responsibility of SMTs to monitor and evaluate how the plans designed to enhance learner attendance are working. As the SMT is composed of school principals, vice principals and heads of departments, they must engage in evaluating the effectiveness of the initiatives they have developed in an attempt to enhance learner attendance at school. This refers to the control function of the SMT. This study, therefore, investigated how SMTs execute control in the management of learner attendance.



2.6.3.2 Participative management

Participative management is another common management style. It is the process in which the manager shares important information with other personnel and lets them participate in the decision-making in matters that affect them directly (Weihrich, 1993). The institutional personnel must have the knowledge and ability to effectively participate in this process and the company's culture must support the approach so that participative management can work for the benefit of the institution. However, the major constraint which is likely to be faced by this style is that it mainly favours institutions that are not concerned with a strict hierarchy of power and employ educated and skilled workers. The school system is associated with extreme bureaucracy, thus the implementation of such a style is difficult. This study, therefore sought to investigate how SMTs involve the other teachers in the management of learner attendance.

A clear and useful approach in order to understand the above mentioned management style is the use of Douglas McGregor's Theory X or Theory Y (Bush, 2007). It is based generally on how the management views its workers. Theory X suggests that the management assumes that its personnel do not like work and that they must be compelled and controlled to work. Also the theory suggests that the average person prefers to be directed because they don't want responsibility and they place job security above ambition. Therefore, the SMTs as managers, use a management style that uses extrinsic motivators such as rewards (bonuses and money) and punishments (being written up or fired for not meeting goals) for its institutional personnel (Bush, 2007). On the other hand, theory Y suggests that the SMT sees its employees as people who want to work and who exercise self-direction and self-control in doing their day to day school activities. Also it outlines that the SMT assumes that its personnel achieve satisfaction from work, seek responsibility, are creative at solving problems, and believe that everyone has the intellectual potential to get satisfaction from their work. Thus, in doing the above-mentioned, they will be able to achieve the organisation's goals and aims.



2.6.3.3 Laissez-faire style

Laissez- faire leaders tell employees what to do but are not prescriptive in how they should carry out their tasks. They allow employees to work on their own and to make their own decisions and even set their own deadlines. While these leaders are not prescriptive, they do give support in the form of advice and resources when employees need it. This is a management style in which the SMT believes that there should be no rules and regulations since everyone has an "inborn sense of responsibility" (Bantjies & Driver, 2013).

This situation exists among mature, experienced teachers and is 'assumed' to work for the new, young teachers fresh from university or college. This management style (or maybe mismanagement), is where the SMT sits back and allows its personnel to do as they please, however, it might lead to anarchy and chaos which would hardly be conducive to the provision of quality education in such cases. This is the exact opposite of the autocratic style and is much more preferred because the environment may be more creative and fulfilling for those involved. This style cannot be the best

for the SMTs to manage learner non-attendance. The parents and the learners need guidance so that they can participate in managing learner non-attendance and they also need to be empowered.

2.6.3.4 Contingency style

It is the type of management style in which the SMT deals with each problem as it arises, that is when the problem arises, it seeks to find the solution to it (Wehrich, 1993; Bush, 2007). A useful contingency approach is that of the Path-Goal model, which states that an effective manager clarifies the means or paths by which subordinates can achieve both high performance and job satisfaction. The motivation may be an appropriate reward and a focusing on paths or behaviours which can lead to successful job completion. This suggests that if some of the hurdles and barriers to motivation can be removed, a better performance by subordinates will result. Whatever approach is adopted will depend on individual employee characteristics (for example, ability, self-confidence and needs) and the task characteristics (for example, the objectives and targets required).

2.7 PRACTICES OF SMT'S IN PROMOTING LEARNER ATTENDANCE

2.7.1 School discipline

School discipline has been raised as one of the factors that negatively affect learners' academic achievement. In response to a call to enhance the purpose and structure of discipline systems, schools have increased their emphases on school-wide positive behaviour support (Sugai & Horner, 2002). In the United States of America, when teachers experience situations in which learners are violent toward their peers or adults, are insubordinate and noncompliant, run away from school, or disrupt the learning of others, their basic reaction is to engage in the following actions that decrease or avoid such aversive situations:

- Break-up the contingencies that maintain antisocial behavior networks.
- Increase rates and opportunities for academic success.

- Establish and sustain positive school and classroom climates, give priority to an agenda of primary prevention (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

Proper management to partial absenteeism or class bunking and late coming is critical to the development and creation of a positive school environment, which promotes learner attendance and good behaviour, thus, “enabling teachers to spend their valuable time teaching” (Seganti, 2011, p.2).

According to Hallam and Roaf (1995), there are five key areas which seek to demonstrate a progression through which practice and policy could be developed to manage school attendance. The key areas are promoting a school environment; the daily management of attendance; improving liaison outside school; and developing, communicating and evaluating policy and lastly assessing the pattern of attendance.

In making assurance of this practice, schools are urged to proactively address issues of learner attendance, as schools often find themselves battling with learners' non-attendance evidenced by misbehaving. For instance, mischievous behaviour includes late coming and class bunking, which are disruptive by nature and tantamount to truancy (Horner, Sugai, Horner, 2000).

On the assessment of the pattern of attendance: this area addresses the school management' responsibility as that of identifying learners' patterns of class attendance and the causes of non-attendance. A discussion also involves raising awareness about learners' non-attendance, by collaborative efforts between management and staff, learners, education officials, parents and the wider community. It is also essential to note that in most cases, it is due to peer pressure that learners tend to do things collectively; so, identification of such a group will assist. The focus is on identifying groups and individuals with persistent attendance problems so that appropriate action plans can be developed to promote attendance (Reid, 2007). This will essentially prevent the occurrence of partial absenteeism and late coming (Hallam & Roaf, 1995). There are basically five issues firstly, finding a way to promote the school environment. Secondly monitoring which will be done as a way of managing the daily attendance. Thirdly, work hand in hand liaising with the outside school which will play a pivotal role to collaborate with the efforts by

educators. Fourthly, developing, communicating and evaluating policy which seeks to guide such practices. Lastly, assessing the attendance patterns which can also be done at the first stage as to initiate the proceeding processes (Reid, 2007).

The development of an effective disciplinary system in a school is an important aspect of the SMT's role and it is likely to influence the attendance of learners in schools. SMTs should regard discipline as an important element of school and classroom management as it ensures learner attendance and other positive outcomes. Without proper discipline and authority, chaos may prevail in schools, which subsequently leads to poor learner attendance. It is the responsibility of the SMT to develop strict disciplinary measures that will prohibit learners from not attending school. The South African Schools Act of 1996 compels heads of schools to employ several measures if learners fail to attend school. Such measures include an investigation into the circumstances of the learner's absence from school, the adoption of appropriate measures to remedy the situation and the issuing of written notices to the parent/s of the learner where necessary (SASA, 1996). The Act promotes disciplinary actions to be carried out on children who do not attend school. It is the responsibility of the principal and other SMT members to develop an effective disciplinary code that deals with matters of attendance so as to promote learners' attendance in schools.

2.7.2 Developing an attendance policy

It has been noted that schools that have been more successful in reducing and managing learner non-attendance have attendance policies (Morris & Rutt, 2004). Attendance policies clearly define the role of learners, educators and principals in promoting positive behaviour and regular attendance. A policy on learner attendance promotes punctual and regular attendance at schools as well as provides schools with standard procedures for recording, managing and monitoring learner attendance. The policy promotes effective learning and teaching about positive behaviour and regular attendance. It is the responsibility of the SMT to develop an attendance policy that is communicated to all relevant parties in the school. Together with the educators, the SMT must develop a policy that promotes learner attendance. Such a policy will then be communicated to parents. In developing an

attendance policy, a school will have set norms that non-attendance is prohibited at the school and together with the help of the parent's learner attendance is enhanced. A policy clearly sets out acceptable standards or a code of conduct for behaviour and attendance. When such a policy is created in the school and communicated to teachers and parents, learners' attendance is likely going to increase (Morris & Rutt, 2004).

2.7.3 Improving school resources

Zafar, Kgobe, Napo and Parker (2005) reported that in order to achieve high learner attendance, local resource allocation is critical. Resources in the form of financial, educators, training and facilities are important for enhancing learner attendance as well as school performance and success. The availability of resources such as school transport to ferry learner to and from school are of vital importance in enhancing learner achievement. Learner attendance and performance depend mostly on parental involvement as a resource for learning in the school community and their relations with educators in the school. Parent involvement in schools is actioned by general participation, helping in classrooms or sponsoring and supporting school programmes, and participating in school governance (Railsback, 2007). So, the SMT must take reasonable steps to improve the resources of the school to the extent that learner attendance is fostered. Providing buses, and good competent educators result in learners being motivated to attend school daily as there is a valuable reason and the means for attending school. Also provision of resources such as an integrated nutrition programme in rural schools will promote learner attendance. Since food insecurity is one other reason that prevents learners from attending school, providing such learners with food to eat either at school or at home will drive them to attend school as they will not be hungry.

2.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the theory that supports this study. The literature related to this study was also reviewed. In reviewing the literature different definitions of learner absenteeism which is the opposite of non-attendance were defined. The reasons that result in learners not attending school were also identified. Lastly, the chapter

also discussed the roles of SMTs as well as the practices they in which they engage in order to promote learner attendance.



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CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is concerned with describing the methodology employed in this study. According to Hair et al, (2008), a research methodology refers to the body of methods used in a particular activity or research process. A research methodology constitutes variables such as the target population, size and description of the sample and the research instruments used. In general a research methodology is a blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data in order to obtain the objectives of a research study (Kothari, 2004). Therefore, this chapter attempts to explain the study at hand in terms of the research design, the study area, the study units, population and the sampling method used, and how the data was collected and analysed.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH – QUALITATIVE

Research either follows a qualitative or quantitative research approach (Wellington, 2008). There is an important distinction between quantitative research and qualitative research. In quantitative research, the information obtained from the participants is expressed in numerical form. Quantitative research employs mathematical analysis for the measurement of variables and places a heavy emphasis on the use of structured questionnaires Cant et al (2005). According to Hair, et al. (2008) quantitative research enables the researcher to validate relationships and to test hypotheses.

This study moved within the parameters of the qualitative research approach. In qualitative research, on the other hand, the information obtained from participants is not expressed in numerical form. The emphasis is on the stated experiences of the participants and on the stated meanings they attach to themselves, to other people, and to their environment (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research is concerned with understanding participants' feelings, beliefs, ideals, thoughts and actions (Cooper &

Schindler, 2008). Those carrying out qualitative research sometimes make use of direct quotations from their participants, arguing that such quotations are often very revealing (Eysenck, 2004). The qualitative approach focuses on the investigation of small groups and aims to generate the information that might be useful in certain contexts (Kelly, Blanche and Durrheim, 2006).

The qualitative approach is appropriate in this study because it allows for conclusions or inferences to be made from systematic observations and because of its description and evaluation characteristics. The qualitative approach has been used in this study to describe and reveal the nature of certain situations such as learner attendance at the schools. The qualitative approach is also appropriate because it provides a means through which the researcher can judge the effectiveness of particular SMT policies, practices and innovations at the schools aimed at managing learner attendance. The study was based within a qualitative research framework with an interpretative approach. Such an approach helped the researcher to have an insight into how the SMT's manage learner attendance in schools. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allowed numerous forms of data to be collected and examined from various angles so as to construct a rich and meaningful picture of a complex, multi-faceted situation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Qualitative research was also appropriate as it usually involves fieldwork and in this study the field was the three schools the researcher visited and the researcher employed inductive research strategies which are some of the characteristics of qualitative research.

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM – INTERPRETIVISM

A paradigm is a world view that includes certain philosophical assumptions about the nature of knowledge (Terhoeven, 2009). According to Wellington (2008) a paradigm is a basic set of beliefs that guides action, specifically in terms of disciplined inquiry in a wider sense. A research paradigm governs the research process of any study (Terhoeven, 2009). The study was based upon the interpretive paradigm and was aimed at explaining the practices of SMTs in managing learner attendance. The interpretive paradigm was used in the present study to contextualise it within the qualitative approach.

An interpretive paradigm seeks understanding and places emphasis on the human capacity as it seeks to understand others through sympathetic introspection and reflection based on detailed narrative gathered through direct observation, in-depth, open-ended interviewing and case studies (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). The interpretive paradigm seeks explanations within the realm of individual consciousness and subjectivity within the frame of reference of the participant as opposed to the observer of action (McFarlane, 2000). Through the interpretive paradigm, the researcher seeks to understand social situations by becoming part of the situation or becoming close to people involved with them in order to listen to them, and to share their perceptions and experiences (McFarlane, 2000).

The interpretive paradigm was chosen because of its methodological approaches that provide an opportunity for the voice, concerns and practices of research participants to be heard (Cole, 2006). The researcher was involved with the participants who were the SMT members. Through interviews, SMT members explained how they manage learner attendance in schools. Naturalistic qualitative methods were used in the study where there was adequate dialogue between the researcher and the participants in order to gain understanding of the phenomenon under study. Based on these facts an interpretive paradigm was adopted and used in the study.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN – CASE STUDY

A research design, according to Yin (2009, p.26) is "the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions, and ultimately, to its conclusions". A research design guides a researcher in the process of collecting, analysing, and interpreting observations. A research design is a basic plan that guides data collection and analysis (Patton, 2002). This study followed a case study design because an in-depth investigation of how SMTs manage learner attendance was conducted. A case study is a research study in which the researcher explores a single entity or phenomenon within a specified space of time and uses a variety of data collection procedures to gain detailed or in-depth information about such an entity or phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Mothata, Lemmer, Mda and Pretorius (2000) define a case study as a qualitative, detailed examination of one

setting, one subject, one single depository of documents or one particular event. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) define a case study as an in-depth exploration, that is, unique, according to the dimensions of time/when, setting/where, and participants/who, was involved. The case in this study was the practices of SMTs in managing learner attendance.

3.5 POPULATION

According to McClendon (2004), the population of the study was the total number of possible units or elements that were included in the study. It was the aggregate of all units that have a chance of being included in the sample to be studied. According to Hair et al. (2008) a population is an identifiable set of interests to the researcher and pertinent to the information problem. A population entails the specification of the survey group which is under investigation and the specifications define the elements that belong to the target group and those that are not to be included (Flick, 2009). The current research sought to explore the practices of the SMTs in managing learner attendance among rural schools in King Williams Town educational district. Therefore, the population (N) of the study comprised all the rural secondary schools in the King Williams Town educational district. The total number of rural schools was 75 schools.

3.6 SAMPLING

Due to limitations of costs and time it was not possible to gather data from the entire population; therefore, a sample had to be chosen (Cohen, Marion & Marrison, 2007). Churchill and Brown (2007) define a sample as a subset of elements from the population. In a qualitative case study such as this one, the research process of sampling is important for data collection, interpretation and presentation of findings (Flick, 2009). Maxwell (2005) sees sampling as a strategy in which a particular setting, person, or events are deliberately selected for the information they can provide, that cannot be forgotten. Samples can be described as a smaller set of cases a researcher selects from a larger pool and generalises to the population (Neuman, 2006).

Researchers normally use a sample, which is a small part of the population with the same attributes as those in the entire population so as to be able to make generalisations about the population. The primary idea of having a sample is that by selecting some elements of a population the researcher can draw conclusions about the entire population and define a group of elements which was the target population (Cohen et al., 2007). It is expected that the information to be gathered from the small group will enable accurate judgement about the larger group (Hair, Wolfin, Barger, Ortinau & Bush, 2008).

3.6.1 Sampling procedure

The selection of participants from the population was random while probability and non-probability sampling are the two main sampling procedures used in research. First, probability sampling demands that all members in the population have an equal chance to be chosen for study (Cohen et al., 2007). Thus, various research designs such as simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling and cluster sampling are used in probability sampling to acquire a section of the population for study (Neuman, 2006). Non-probability sampling is the opposite of probability sampling where elements in the population have no equal chance to be selected for the sample Cohen, et al, (2007). The selection of participants from the population to make the sample for this study was purposive. Haphazard or convenience sampling, quota sampling, purposive sampling and snowball sampling are the sampling techniques in non-probability sampling. For the purpose of this research, non-probability methods were used to sample the schools as well the research participants for this study. This entails that the schools and the participants from the schools had no equal chance of being included in the study.

3.6.2 Sampling technique

The two non-probability sampling methods chosen for this study were convenience sampling and purposive sampling. Convenience sampling is the least rigorous technique, involving the selection of the most accessible subjects for study (Marshall, 2006). It is the least costly method to the researcher, in terms of time, effort and money (Marshall, 2006). Purposive sampling is also known as judgment sampling

whereby the researcher actively selects the most productive sample to answer the research questions (Marshall, 2006). Creswell (2002) defines purposive sampling as intentionally selecting individuals and sites to learn about or understand the central phenomenon. Participants were purposefully selected because of the knowledge and experience they possess with regards to the roles and functions of the SMTs in managing learner attendance.

Purposive sampling was chosen in the present study because it was aimed at gaining a better understanding of the problem at hand from the participants' perspectives which were the SMT members. Purposive sampling was chosen because the researcher wanted to explore, understand, and gain insight into SMT practices in managing learner attendance in rural schools; therefore, a sample from which the most can be learned needed to be selected. The study purposively selected SMT members because they were the holders of data, who had the knowledge and experiences needed for the study. Purposive and convenient sampling techniques were used to select the sample used in this study.

3.6.3 Sampling research site

Three rural schools from the King Williams Town district were selected for the study. I decided to select the rural schools in the King Williams Town district because of accessibility. As a resident of the King Williams Town driving around these areas, one is never short of seeing learners, in various school uniforms, roaming around the streets during school hours. Only three schools were selected, as this was a case study, thus only a small sample was needed. The motivation for sampling these schools was based on the fact that with case studies, the selection of small groups gives the researcher a chance to make a detailed examination of one setting (Mothata et al., 2000), or conduct an in-depth analysis of unique single entities or cases (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The purpose of having small groups was to help the researcher gain a better understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Convenient non-probability sampling methods were used to sample the schools for study. The rural schools chosen were convenient for the researcher to access as they are located around the researcher's residential area. The desire to deal with

people from more or less the same socio-economic and cultural background as the researcher led to the selection of the schools located in the residential area. The schools were conveniently chosen as the researcher aimed at enjoying the benefits associated with convenient sampling which are to save time, effort and money (Briggs & Coleman, 2007). As such, the sampling of the schools was for convenience.

3.6.4 Sampling the participants

In sampling the research participants, selecting relevant people who possess the necessary information was the aim of the researcher. Purposive sampling was adopted by the researcher in sampling the participants as the researcher aimed at having a sample of people who would be able to provide him with relevant information. Nieuwenhuis (2007) states that purposive sampling is usually used in qualitative research since participants are selected because of some defining characteristics that make them the holders of the data needed for the study. Therefore, with the desire to have people who possessed the relevant information, purposive sampling was adopted. Relevant participants selected for data collection in this regard were all members of SMTs in the three rural schools that were selected for this study. SMTs consist of the principal and deputy principal and heads of departments (HODs).

Twelve participants were selected for the study: one principal, one vice or deputy principal, one head of department (HOD) and one educator who was an SMT member at each of the three schools. These participants were chosen because they are people who manage the school including overseeing learner attendance. The principal from each school was selected for the study because s/he is the person who oversees the entire management of the school. Besides the principal, the other three participants who were purposively and conveniently selected from school A were the deputy principal, the HOD of the Life and Orientation Department and the IsiXhosa educator. From school B the other three participants selected were the deputy principal, the HOD from the Languages Department and the Mathematics educator. From school C the three participants chosen were the deputy principal and the HOD from the Department of Sciences and the English educator.

3.6.5 School profile

School A

School A is located about 57 kilometres west of King Williams Town. It is a secondary school operating from pre-primary to grade 12. The school has a total of 368 learners. School A has 17 male teachers and 11 female teachers making a total of 28 qualified teachers at the school. The school is located in the rural area where it is connected by a gravel road to the main road.

School B

School B is located about 76 kilometres east of King Williams Town. The school is a high school with 141 female learners and 198 male learners making a total of 339 learners. The total number of teachers at the school is 21. The school is also connected by a gravel road to the main road.

School C

School C is located about 98 kilometres south of King Williams Town. The school has a total of 198 learners. It is a high school and has a total of 17 qualified teachers. The school is in a rural area where about 60% of the learners are from informal dwellings.

3.7 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Cohen et al. (2007) define data collection methods as a range of approaches used in educational research to gather data which is to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and prediction. Qualitative researchers typically rely on four methods for gathering information which are participating in the setting, observing directly, interviewing in depth, and analysing documents and material culture (Patton, 2002). These methods form the core of qualitative inquiry. To ensure triangulation a combination of methods were used to gather data for this study. Document analysis, interviews, school registers and school profiles were used to gather data for this study.

3.7.1 Face-to-face interviews

According to Nieuwenhuis (2010), an interview is a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participants questions to collect data and to learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours of the participants. The aim of conducting interviews in research is always to obtain rich descriptive data that will help the researcher understand the participant's construction of knowledge and social reality (Kelly, 2007). All the participants selected for study were interviewed separately.

In research, either structured interviews or semi-structured interviews are carried out. In this research, semi-structured interviews were used to obtain information from the research participants. The researcher decided to use a semi-structured interview as a primary strategy for data collection as it is a flexible tool that allows the interviewer to use open-ended questions for prompts and probes into the respondent's initial responses, to clarify views, and it allows the respondents to express themselves openly and freely (Kelly, 2007). Semi-structured interviews require the participants to answer a set of predetermined questions (Marre & Westhuizen, 2007).

Such an interview enabled the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' attitudes, beliefs and ideas on learner attendance and the practices they engage in to manage learner attendance. The 12 SMT members selected from the different schools were each scheduled a slot for the interview. All the 12 SMT members were interviewed face-to-face at a venue and time that was convenient for the participants. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather information from the 12 participants on learner absenteeism, the factors contributing to increased non-attendance in schools and the practices adopted by SMT in managing learner absenteeism at the schools.

Face-to-face interviews were an appropriate method to choose in the study because it enabled the researcher to gain all the information required from the primary participants about their practices in managing learner attendance. Semi-structured interviews were also chosen because they are a flexible method of data collection where participants express themselves freely. Furthermore, sufficient data was

obtained by the researcher as semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to probe further or get deeper into questioning the participants. During the interviews, the researcher listened attentively and made participants feel that their views were valued, as their responses helped to understand the study. Notes and recordings were made during the interviews.

3.7.2 Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews were also used in this study. A focus group was a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment (Krueger, 1994). Focus group interviews entail interviewing a group of research participants once rather than interviewing them separately where research data was generated in the process of interaction (Eysenck, 2004). In each school, a focus group interview was conducted which was composed of the four selected SMT members as the respondents for the interview in each school. After bringing the participants together a discussion was initiated where the participants freely expressed their opinions on learner attendance management.

The technique was adopted and used with SMT members because it was quicker, and allowed the members to quickly and easily bring together their opinions while at the same time it was less intimidating than individual interviews Cohen, et al. (2007). A focus group interview was also adopted because it is small enough to give everyone an opportunity to express an opinion. A focus group interview also enabled the researcher to obtain diversified opinions as individuals were given the opportunity to freely express their opinions and constructively criticise each other and comment on each other's opinion. During the focus group interviews a recorder was used to record the discussion.

3.7.3 Documentary analysis

Document analysis is also another method used in qualitative research when the researcher wants to obtain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Wellington, 2008). Document analysis entails reviewing documents that are relevant to a study. The researcher used document analysis as a faster way to access a lot of relevant

information available in different records respectively. In order to determine the number of days a learner was absent or present at school document analysis was adopted as it allowed the researcher to go through relevant documents that helped the researcher gather appropriate data. Document analysis involved going through different class registers for a stipulated calendar period to determine the rate of attendance at the different schools. The percentage of non-attendance was calculated for the same period for each of the three selected schools.

Document analysis enabled the researcher to establish trends and to get a broader overview of learner non-attendance that would not be easy to achieve from the interviews and other methods of data collection. Such contextual information was essential to establish meaning (Irwin, 2001); hence, documentation of class registers was a way of validating the existence of non-attendance and its rates at each of the three schools. Therefore, a review of school documents such as class registers was important to give information on the attendance of learners at the different schools. The strength of documents as data sources lies in the fact that they already exist in the situation where they do not intrude upon or alter the setting in ways that the presence of the investigator might (Terhoeven, 2009). This method was relevant to this study because it enabled the researcher to deal with readily available information as registers provided an insight into the problem of learner non-attendance at the schools.

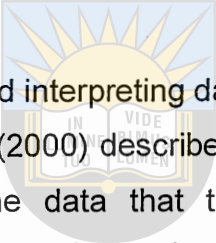
3.7.4 Questionnaire (semi-structured questionnaire)

The questionnaire was one of the main tools for collecting data from the respondents. As defined by Hair et al. (2008), a questionnaire is a document consisting of a set of questions and scales to gather primary data. Leung (2001) defines a questionnaire as a booklet of standardised procedures, pre-coded and containing both closed-ended and open-ended questions; or, it can be regarded as a data collection instrument that sets out questions to be asked in a formal way in order to produce desired information. A self-administered questionnaire was used to gather the data. A self-administered questionnaire involves a direct and a face-to-face meeting between the researcher and the respondent (Cooper & Schindler,

2008). Self-administered questionnaires were chosen because they were less expensive and economical in terms of time and money.

The questionnaires as one of the methods of collecting data were given to all the SMT members at the schools. A self-designed questionnaire with both closed- and open-ended questions was developed by the researcher and presented to the participants. The participants were asked to answer the questions on the questionnaire. The method was found to be relevant in this study as it enabled the researcher to obtain accurate information as participant's answered the questions honestly because they were not intimidated by the presence of the researcher.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS



Data analysis involves organising, and interpreting data so that it makes sense to the readers (Cohen et al., 2007). Stake (2000) describes data analysis as a process of unlocking information hidden in the data that the researcher transforms into meaningful and useful information. Since the study was qualitative and interpretative in nature the analysis process aimed at establishing how participants make meaning of a specific phenomenon such as teacher leadership by analysing their perceptions, attitudes, understanding, and experiences. Therefore, content analysis was most suited as Nieuwenhuis (2007) says it examines data from different angles with the view to identifying keys in the text that will help to understand and interpret the raw data. This process involves looking at the similarities and differences in texts or data.

According to Cohen et al. (2007, p.187), "qualitative data analysis involves organising, accounting for and explaining the data; in short, making sense of data in terms of participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities". Data collected through all data collection methods was thoroughly read. When the data was read it was broken into themes and categories, in order to interpret them and elaborate on them. Similar ideas of each SMT member were put together in one so as to identify the patterns and themes emerging from the responses of each of the SMT members. Similar ideas were categorised or classified under one code. Conclusions were then made from interpretations from the patterns of categories emerging from the data.

3.8.1 Analysing data from the semi-structured questionnaire

In the questionnaire, the participants were asked how they manage learner attendance and asked to give reasons for their answers. They indicated that the attendance registers were marked on a daily basis. Class teachers know that they have a two-fold role in relation to absenteeism. They were responsible for recording, monitoring and reporting absenteeism. According to the participants, the marking of the attendance register differed from one school to another. One of the schools marked the attendance register after each period and another school marked the register in the morning at 08:00 when the school starts, and again before report off at 14:00. At the third school the attendance register was marked when each period starts. A reason mentioned by the participants for marking the attendance register before the beginning of each period was that learners were not attending classes whereas they were present on the school premises.

They were also asked whether the school was assisting them in managing learner attendance and asked to give reasons for their answers. They strongly agreed that when a learner absents herself or himself from school he or she was forced to account for this. Parents have to phone the class teacher or write a letter explaining why the learner was absent, if absent for more than two days a doctor's certificate or any supporting document has to be brought to the school. Class teachers have been trained to know that it was not sufficient to simply record that a learner was absent, absenteeism needs to be recorded fully in the attendance register and follow-ups must be made. Every Friday, the SMTs were collecting the attendance registers from the teachers and handing them to the principal for disciplinary actions against the absentees. Parents were called to account at the school about why a learner was absent. The participants explained that this was still a challenge because most of the learners were staying with their grant parents who could not walk the long distance to school.

The participants also strongly agreed when they were asked about the role the SMT played in managing learner attendance and they were also asked to give reasons for their answers. After the SMT had identified that learner non-attendance was a problem at their schools they developed an attendance management plan. All

stakeholders were informed about the plan in the parents' meeting and they committed themselves to supporting the plan. They indicated that a few months after the adoption of the plan the absenteeism rate dropped.

3.8.2 Analysing data from semi-structured interviews (face-to-face and focus groups)

Face-to-face and focus group interviews were used in this study as methods of obtaining data from the three rural high schools in the King Williams Town District. Lists of question were used to interview the participants face-to-face and most of the answers from the participants were the same. The participants were asked about their roles as SMTs in managing learner attendance. They indicated that their role was to manage learner attendance in their schools. The marking of the attendance register at 08:00 in the morning and at 14:00 was a common answer and some of them were marking the attendance register before each and every period starts. They further mentioned that every Friday they submit the attendance registers to the principals and disciplinary steps were taken against the absentees as mentioned in the school policy. The principals were tasked to submit a report to the district office monthly; steps were taken by the district office against the principals if they failed to do so.

The SMTs were also asked about challenges they were facing when managing learner attendance in their schools and how they were addressing them. Poor participation by parents in the school activities was a common answer from all the participants. It was mentioned that most of the learners were staying with their grandparents. When the SMT summoned the grandparents to come and account for the poor attendance of the learners they did not show up, and they made excuses that they were not well or were too old to travel the long road to school. That was the same as when they were called to attend school meetings where the problems of the school could be discussed. When the participants were asked if they were dealing with the challenges successfully or not, the participants mentioned that when a parent failed to attend when asked to do so they were using their own car to pick him or her up. Also, most of the school meetings were held during Sunday afternoons

and the venues were the community halls inside the village so that no parent could complain about transport.

The participants were also asked how the SMT and educators were working in collaboration to support the learner attendance in their schools. If an educator detected that a certain learner was always absent on certain days or never attended the whole week the educator informed the SMT and disciplinary steps were taken against the learner as mentioned in the learner attendance policy. They mentioned that the Department has introduced School Nutrition Programmers (SNP) in schools and also school transport to assist learners especially in rural areas. They further mentioned that the Department has rated most or all of the rural schools fees-free schools. Some of the participants were not aware of the rating of the schools as fees-free schools.



The participants were lastly asked how the school policy assists them in managing learner attendance. The policy of learner attendance set up standards and procedures for managing learner attendance was the response from the participants. All the participants strongly agreed that the policy was assisting them in managing learner attendance. They have also compiled a learner attendance plan and it was communicated to all stakeholders.

Focus group interviews were also used in this study as a method to collect data. The researcher explained to the focus groups that the purposed of the interview was only for the study.

They were asked if there was a problem of learner non-attendance in their schools and all the focus groups strongly agreed that there was a problem of learner non-attendance in their schools. They defined learner non-attendance in different ways as mentioned by different writers in chapter two of this study. Some of them indicated that a learner was absent from school when he or she was not in the school the whole day other groups said the learner was absent if s/he was not in the classroom when an attendance register was marked. All the focus groups agreed that their SMTs have a formal policy on learner non-attendance and it guides them on how to manage learner attendance. They further confirmed that the policy and the

plan were communicated to all stakeholders. Focus groups clearly confirmed that the policy has standards and procedures that assist SMTs to manage learner non-attendance. The policy tasks the SMT to summon a parent to the school to account for a learners' non-attendance. Additionally, educators were guided by the policy when marking the attendance register and what procedure to be followed to make a learner to account for his or her absenteeism. The policy expected an educator to submit the attendance register to the principal every Friday and the principal had to submit it to the district monthly or, failing to do so, disciplinary steps must be taken against any one failed to submit.

The focus groups were asked why learners continued arriving late for school, bunking classes and why they were frequently seen roaming the streets during school hours. Some of them mentioned the challenges that were already stated in chapter two of this study, such as poverty, poor relationships between the learners and their parents, learners staying with their grandparents and also other learners doing household work. The summoning of a parent to account for the absenteeism of the learners and also the learner to account for not attending was mentioned by the SMTs as disciplinary procedures employed to effectively managing learner attendance. The reasons for non-attendance mentioned in chapter two of this study were highlighted by the focus groups as factors identified within the schools that makes it difficult for the SMT to control learner non-attendance.

The adoption of the learner non-attendance policy and the plan were mentioned by the focus groups as what was done so far by the SMTs to address those challenges identified in the three rural schools. The school discipline, developing of attendance policy and the improvement of school resources were indicated as practices introduced by SMTs in managing learner nonattendance. All the focus groups were hoping that the practices of SMTs would reduce learner non-attendance in the three rural schools.

3.8.3 Analysing data from documentary analysis

The documentary analysis was also used as one of the methods to collected data in this study. Learner non-attendance policy utilised in all the three school was the

national policy for learner non-attendance. Each school has not developed its own policy from the national one that will address their problems. Normally a policy must be reviewed annually so that it can address the challenges as the time changed .The attendance register of the three schools were analysed and were noted that they were up to date. Also copy of the reports by principals to the district office monthly were analysed and found that they are up to date. There were no pending disciplinary cases in the registers of the three schools about learner non-attendance.

3.9 DATA TRUSTWORTHINESS

Schurink, Schurink and Poggenpoel (1998, p.331) list four aspects that they consider necessary to ensure trustworthiness, namely: truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. Truth value is ensured by the strategy of credibility. Applicability refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts and settings or with other groups. Consistency considers the consistency of the data. Neutrality refers to the degree to which the findings are a function solely of the informants and conditions of the research and not of other biases, motivations and perspectives.

There were several recommendations and limitations that have been identified throughout this study which may direct future studies. Several limitations identified in this include the fact that the sample of the present study was rather small. Also the study only used questionnaires, face to face and focus group interviews and documental analyses as data collection instruments .It was possible that in some cases participants wanted some clarity before answering some questions but could not get it. Also a desire for social desirability may have caused some participants to answer some questions untruthfully or want to impress the researcher with their answers. During face-to-face interviews, they mentioned that school fees were also contributing to absenteeism whereas the Department of Education has rated all the rural schools as no-fees schools. In the focus group, some of the participants were not answering responding to questions, they were expecting the other interviewees to answer. Other participants only answered questions that were asked, but they did not substantiate or add further comments.

The research instrument used was a questionnaire; for purposes of triangulation and in order to avoid common method variance, data collection methods other than self-administered questionnaires should be used in future research. Also in the future a large random sample should be used as this would increase generalisability of the findings. The sample should be drawn from number of rural schools than just from three rural schools rather in the King Williams Town education district. This would ensure external validity.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the main focus of educational research is placed on human beings; therefore, it is the researcher's ethical responsibility to protect the rights and welfare of the participants. Parahoo (2006) describes research participants as subjects who need to be respected, and not objects. Ethical considerations with research are concerned in minimising harm to participants which in turn increases benefits (Flick, 2009). In undertaking research, researchers obtain information from participants who are normally not part of the research process (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). It was the obligation of the researcher to ensure that no harm was inflicted on these voluntary participants. Below are the various ethical principles to which this study adhered.

3.10.1 Permission to conduct the study

Before the study was conducted, the researcher had to obtain ethical clearance from the University of Fort Hare Research Ethics Committee. After obtaining the clearance, the researcher asked permission to conduct the research from the Department of Education offices in King Williams Town since the study involved principals, vice principals and HODs who are regarded as educators and employees of the education ministry (See appendix E). A letter requesting permission to conduct the study was written to the principals of the three schools clearly stating the purpose of the study (see appendix G). After obtaining permission from the district Department of Basic Education, a letter was written to the District Education Office to request a permission to undertake a study in the three selected schools (See appendix F). The researcher visited all the schools to make appointments, first as to

when the researcher would be conducting the interviews and partaking in other forms of data collection. At the school level, the school principal took the responsibility for introducing the researcher to educators. The participants selected for study were given consent forms to sign.

3.10.2 Informed consent and voluntary participation

According to Parahoo (2006), informed consent is the process of agreeing to take part in a study based on access to all relevant and easily digestible information about what participation means, in particular, in terms of harm and benefits. Participants were provided with sufficient information about the study and its purposes that enabled them to decide whether to participate in the study or not. The SMT members were given consent forms since they were the participants in this study.

This was done after they had been provided with all the information regarding the research and expressed their willingness to voluntarily participate in the research. The participants were made aware of the voluntary nature of the research. No participant was coerced or forced to take part in this study. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from participating in the research should they think of withdrawing.

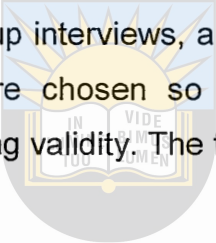
3.10.3 Privacy and confidentiality

The researcher respected the privacy of the participants. Privacy and confidentiality of participants was guaranteed during the interview and filling in of questionnaires by the SMT members. Any information that was obtained and recorded from the research participants was kept strictly confidential. No other person besides the researcher had access to the information supplied by the research participants. Since the research dealt with human beings, the names, identity of the participants, and the research sites were not revealed in the reporting of the findings. Codes and symbols were used to hide the names of SMT members who participated in the study as well the names of the schools. SMT members were addressed as participants from school A, school B and school C. Codes and symbols were used to ensure anonymity of the research participants and site names as no reader is able to

link the responses to a particular participant except the researcher. The personal details of the participants remained anonymous.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter presented the methodology and methods used in the study. An interpretive, qualitative approach was adopted in the study. The study was conducted in the form of a case study of the selected rural schools in the King Williams Town education district where 12 SMT members were selected as the units of analysis. Various data collection methods were employed in the study. The methods or instruments used to collect data included semi-structured individual interviews, school profiles, focus group interviews, and document analysis. A variety of methods for data collection were chosen so as to allow comparisons and triangulations of the data thus ensuring validity. The following chapter focuses on the analysis of the collected data.



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CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents and analyses the findings of the study that was conducted in three Eastern Cape rural high schools. The study investigated the practices of the School Management Teams (SMTs) in managing learner attendance. This chapter is divided into sections according to the data that was collected during the research. These sections are demographic information, the problem of learner non-attendance, causes of learner non-attendance, practices of SMTs in managing learner attendance in schools and conclusion.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

This section presents the findings of the study on the demographic information of the participants. Issues of gender distribution, distribution of participants by age, educational qualifications, tenure, and race distribution were presented and analysed by means of graphs and tables. Four participants were selected from each of the three schools. The data was collected from 12 SMT members. As was indicated in chapter three participants were given code names. Participants 1 to 4 were from school A and they were Princ1, SMT1, SMT2 and SMT3. In school B they were participants 5 to 8 and they were coded as Princ2, SMT4, SMT5 and SMT6. In school C they were participants 9 to 12 and they were Princ3, SMT7, SMT8 and SMT9.

4.2.1 Gender distribution

The table 4.1 below illustrates the gender distribution of the SMT members in each school. Of the four participants in school A, there were three females and one male. In school B there were two females and two males. In school C there were three females and one male participant.

Table 4.1: Distribution of participants by gender

School	Females	Males	Total
School A	3	1	4
School B	2	2	4
School C	3	1	4
Totals	8	4	12

It can be noted from the above table that there was varying representation in the SMT. The table shows that in school A and school C there were three (75%) females in the SMT and one male (25%) SMT member in each school. This was an indication that in these schools SMTs were dominated by females. This means that there was a clear gender imbalance in the management positions in these schools. There were two (50%) males SMT members' as well as two (50%) female SMT members in school B. In this school there was an even representation in terms of gender in the SMT. It might also be an indication that when promotional posts were filled gender issues were considered.

4.2.2 Distribution of participants by age

Table 4.2 below illustrates the age distribution of the SMT members in each school for this study. In school A, only one participant (25%) was aged below 30 years. Another participant (25%) was aged between 31 to 40 years. Two participants (50%) were aged between 41 to 50 years. This shows that the majority of the SMT members in school A were aged between 41 to 50 years as there were no participants above 50 years. School B has 2 (50%) participants aged between 31 to 40 years. It also has 2 (50%) participants aged between 41 to 50 years. This shows that in this school all the SMT members were aged between 31 to 50 years. In school C there was one (25%) SMT member between 31 and 40 years and another one (25%) 51 and above. The remaining two (50%) were 41 to 50 years.

Table 4.2: Distribution of participants by age

Age Range	School A	School B	School C	Total
30 years and below	1	0	0	1
31 - 40 years	1	2	1	4
41 – 50 years	2	2	2	6
51 years and above	0	0	1	1
Totals	4	4	4	12

4.2.3 Educational qualification distribution

The table below shows the educational qualifications distributions of the participants used in this study.

Table 4.3 Distribution of participants by educational qualifications

Qualifications	School A	School B	School C	Total
STD, PTD, HED, FDE	0	0	0	0
B.A	3	2	3	8
BED Honour's	1	2	1	4
BED Master's	0	0	0	0
Doctoral	0	0	0	0
Totals	4	4	4	12

School A has 3 (75%) SMT members who have a B.A degree and one (25%) who has a BED Honours degree. This shows that the majority of the SMT members in school A have a BED Honours degree. School B has 2 (50%) SMT members who have a BA degree and another 2 (50%) with BED Honours degrees. In school C, one (25%) SMT member has a BED Honours degree while three (75%) have a BA degree. This shows that the majority of the SMT members in School C had a BA

degree. The table shows that the majority of the SMT members in this study have a BA degree and only a few have BED Honours degrees.

4.2.4 Tenure distribution

The table below shows the number of years that the participants have served as SMT members in their respective schools.

Table 4.4: Distribution of participants by tenure

Tenure	School A	School B	School C	Total
0 – 4 years	1	3	1	5
5 – 9 years	3	1	2	6
10 – 14 years	0	0	1	1
15 – 19 years	0	0	0	0
20 years and above	0	0	0	0
Totals	4	4	4	12

In school A, one (25%) SMT member has been an SMT member in the school for a period between zero to four years. Three (75%) SMT members have been members of the school SMT for a period between five to nine years. This shows that the majority of the SMT members in school A have been members of the SMT for five to nine years. In school B, 3 (75%) participants have been SMT members for a period between zero to four years. Only one (25%) of the participants from school B was a member of the SMT for a period between five to nine years. This shows that the majority of the participants in school B have been members of the SMT for a period between zero to four years. In school C one (25%) respondent has been a member of the SMT for a period between zero to four years. Two (50%) have been a member of the school SMT for a period between five to nine years. One (25%) respondent has been a member of the SMT for a period between 10 to 14 years.

4.2.5 Race distribution

The table below illustrates the race distribution of the SMT members used in this study.

Table 4.5: Distribution of participants by race

Race	School A	School B	School C	Total
Black	4	4	4	12
White	0	0	0	0
Coloured	0	0	0	0
Indian	0	0	0	0
Totals	4	4	4	12

This table depicts the race distribution of the participants. As shown in the table in School A, four (100%) SMT members were black. Also in School B, four (100%) SMT members were black. In School C, all the four (100%) SMT members were black. This shows that in all the schools the SMT was represented by blacks.

4.3 PROBLEM OF LEARNER NON-ATTENDANCE IN THE SELECTED SCHOOLS

The findings from the schools that were under investigation showed that these schools have problems of learner non-attendance. All the schools shared the same definition of learner non-attendance as the failure to be available in class during school-related activities. When Princ1 was asked about the definition of learner non-attendance from her point of view she replied as follows:

from my personal point of view the learner non-attendance is when a learner is absent in the class the whole day.

In chapter two of this study, the South African Department of Education (DoE, 2000) indicated the same as the point of view of Princ1 that a learner was considered absent when he or she was not at school the entire day. This means that by the

learner not attending as expected he/she was deemed to be absent for that particular day. Another respondent from school B outlined that:

learner non-attendance is when the learner fails to be in a place or event where they are supposed to be at a particular point in time, that is the classroom of course.

This comment proved that the participant knew what was expected of their learners and failure to do so was deemed as learner non-attendance. Also this showed that the failure by the learner to be present in the various school activities at a particular moment and time, like a class roll call, was seen as learner non-attendance by the management. SMT8 a participant from school C stated that:

learner non-attendance is simply the absence of the learner in class when the register is being called out.

This meant that no matter when or what time the learner decided to come to class after the register had been checked, they would have missed the class for that day and were taken to be absent from school for that particular day. In that respect learner non-attendance was viewed as just the absence from class or failure of a learner to be present in class when the proceedings of schooling were taking place.

The register for School A highlighted that most learners attend part of the classes and some came to class late after the register had been marked. When asked about problems of learner non-attendance in School A, the SMT2 member in school A indicated that the school was experiencing learner non-attendance problems. Some of these problems related to the health status of their parents which caused them not to attend classes or leave the school before time. The learners were supposed to collect their parents' high blood pressure treatment from the clinic during school hours.

SMT7 of school C confirmed what was said above by SMT2 of school A when asked about learners non-attendance problems.

SMT3 in school A reported that:

most of the learners in this school attend part of the school as they always come to school late when the school registers have been marked.

A learner was deemed to be absent when such a learner was not in the class or was not present in the class when the period register was marked (Nauer et al., 2008) that was mentioned in chapter two of this study. Based on the literature reviewed and the definitions employed in other studies, the present study adopts the simple definition of learner absenteeism. This outlines a problem of learner non-attendance as the learners would have been marked absent for that particular day, thus technically speaking they do not attend school the whole day but rather part of it. The same sentiments were shared by SMT2 and SMT4 members of school A, who indicated that:

Learners miss other school related activities as most students come late to school and others do not come to school at all.

SMT4, a member in school A, indicated that the school was:

experiencing learner non-attendance as most learners are seen roaming in the township during school times.

This can be attributed to poor relations or inability of the learner to participate within a larger organisation or group, thus making these learners exclude themselves from the rest of the class and roam around the streets. The SMT has an administration function of developing and implementing policies that were aimed at promoting learner attendance and failure to do so would result in the school system collapsing as was mentioned in Henri Fayol's administrative theory (1937).

When asked about problems of learner non-attendance in school B, the SMT members reported that the school was experiencing learner non-attendance. Princ2 in school B highlighted that most learners in this school

completely absent themselves from school for the entire day.

SMT5 who was a member in this school and an educator as well said that

he has never taught a full class as learners are always absent.

As such this calls for curriculum reforms of some subjects so as to re-engage these students. In that respect there was a need for constantly monitoring the implementation process and also made the learner aware of the implications of not attending the school. SMT6 and 7 who were members in school B also showed concern about learners' non-attendance in this school. SMT8 indicated that:

learners leave their homes to school but they do not attend classes whilst they are within the premises of the school.

Although learners would be within the school premises, they were missing school-related activities in their classes and were deemed to be absent from their classes. Partial absenteeism refers to absence for a part of the school day and attending just half of the subjects (Lyon & Cotler, 2007), as stated in chapter two of this study. The quotation of SMT8 indicates that SMT members of school B were not performing their task of managing learner attendance if learners were in the school premises but not attending classes in their presence as SMTs. In chapter two of this study the researcher mentioned that this study sought to explore how SMTs managed learner attendance. This means that the researcher wanted to establish what the SMTs do when learners were absent from the school during school hours.

Princ3 in school C indicated that there were times in which the problem of learner non-attendance was an issue at the school. The participant indicated that:

the school experiences severe absenteeism during certain times of the year.

This promoted learner non-attendance as some of these learners would help out at their respective homes through provision of labour before they go to school. This caused most of these learners to arrive late for their classes or never attend at all; thus they were marked absent when the register was called. Child labour was one of the factors mentioned in chapter two of this study that can lead to learners' non-attendance (Teasly, 2004). With the increased poverty in rural areas some learners were forced not to attend school in order to find temporary employment that can help the family have something to eat. It was reported that the most common reason for learners not attending school in South Africa, especially in rural areas was that their families needed them to work (HRSC, 2005).

SMT9 a member in school C indicated that:

the school is facing problems of learner non-attendance since most of the classes are empty during lessons.

This means that when learners were expected to be doing their schooling activities in their respective classes at the full capacity of the class, they would have been absent thus causing most classes to be abandoned as a small number of learners would have been present at that particular moment and time. This also shows that non-attendance was not a one sided thing, rather it involves learners, schools as well as parents whereby learners contribute to this problem by not availing themselves on

time when they were required to do so by the policy for school learner attendance, which can be attributed to learner attitude. Schools contribute to this by having poor structures and management that could otherwise address this issue. Teacher attitude also will influence the teacher to learner relationship as most learners explain non-attendance at a personal level. Furthermore, parents might be the cause of learner non-attendance as it was linked to the family background as well as the level of education of the parents.

The registers at school C indicated problems of learner non-attendance as in most classes the school might be the reason for having fewer than ten learners in a class. In all the schools investigated it was noted that all were experiencing learner non-attendance. However, school C was experiencing severe learner non-attendance as most learners completely absented themselves from school. In school A and B some learners partially absented themselves from school as they might miss some school related activities when they were late or they choose which classes to attend. Some other learners might be within the school premises but they volunteer not to go to classes. Therefore, this makes the SMT members come to the conclusion that there were problems of learner non-attendance in the schools as learners miss important school related activities because they were not in class when they were supposed to be in class.

4.4 CAUSES OF LEARNER NON-ATTENDANCE

Table 4.6: Causes of learner non- attendance

Causes of learner non-attendance	Rank		
	Low	Moderate	High
Poverty/hunger	3	4	5
Alcohol/drug abuse	8	2	2
Lack of commitment by learners	5	3	4
Teacher attitude	2	5	5
Teenage pregnancy	6	4	2
Laziness	5	4	3
Peer pressure	3	4	5
Household work	3	4	5
Lack of parental involvement	2	4	6
Sickness	8	3	1
Afraid of punishment	9	1	2
Distance	2	3	7
Abuse (sexual/bullying)	6	4	2

The participants who were the SMT members from the different schools were asked about the potential causes of learner non-attendance in their schools. Various reasons were noted and they are presented above. According the above table, five participants mentioned poverty as high and four mentioned it as moderate and only three mentioned it as low. It means that poverty was one of the high causes of learners non- attendance. The following were also noted as high causes of learners' non-attendance according to the above table: distance to school, lack of parental involvement, household work, and peer pressure and teachers attitude. The sickness of the learners was the lowest cause of the learners' non-attendance according to the above table. It means that only their parents were having problems of sickness and the learners were affected because they must assist their parents. Teenage pregnancy in other areas of the Eastern Cape was rated high in the causes of learners' non-attendance but in the three rural high schools in this study it was rated very low.

According to the table the following causes of learners' non-attendance were rated low, afraid of punishment, abuse (sexual and bullying), laziness, and teenage pregnancy, lack of commitment by learners and alcohol abuse or drug abuse.

The major causes of learner non-attendance in school A were the socio-economic factors. Princ1 who was member in school A ranked poverty as the major factor contributing to the learners not attending school. He reported that:

learners miss school related activities due to the fact that they do not have financial resources to pay school fees in time.

It could be noted from the above quotation that SMT in school A was denying children their right to education as learners who were unable to pay school were not allowed to attend school. This causes learner non-attendance in that learners were chased out of the schooling premises for lack of school fees payment, as indicated in the school management policy. The rating of schools by the Department of Education has changed as was indicated by Princ1 above because all rural schools are rated as fees-free schools. The chapter two of the Constitution of South Africa gives a child a right to education and that was why the Department of Education wants to make sure that each child has access to education.

SMT2 in school A reported that:

some learners fail to attend school because they do not have the uniforms and shoes to come to school.

It could be noted from SMT2 point of view that school A was not allowing learners to attend school without school uniform. Due to poverty these learners can't afford to buy uniforms and schools shoes thus resulting in them failing to attend school. The SMT of school A was supposed to advise parents of their learners about institutions that can assist them financially so that they can address the above problem. It was indicated in chapter two of this study that weak parent-child relationship contributes significantly to decreased parent involvement in a learner's education. This study has already mentioned that in rural areas where learners live with their grandmothers there was a weak relationship that existed between the two and this might significantly contribute to learners' non-attendance in schools.

The SMT members also highlighted environmental factors as factors contributing to learner non-attendance. SMT3 in school A noted that

the distance that the learners have to walk to school significantly contributes to learner's non-attendance.

SMT3 of school A noted that learners:

are tasked to walk long distances to come to schools thus resulting in them missing some school related activities.

SMT4 a participant in school A also added to what SMT3 of the some school raised above that the bad roads and damaged bridges were also contributing to learner non-attendance during the winter season. In chapter two it was mentioned that environmental factors contribute significantly to learners' non-attendance in the rural schools. The floods, heavy thunderstorms and snow can result in some learners not attending school (Hogan, 2008). Also, heavy cold weather can result in most rural learners not attending school as they were from poverty stricken families where they could not afford jerseys to warm them up at school.

SMT7 noted that:

when there are severe rains learners absent themselves from school the entire day and during sometimes they are partial absenteeism as learners will have to wait for the waters to cool down and allow the learners to cross the poor bridges.

From SMT7's point of view rains were a serious cause of learner non-attendance. This might be an indication that SMT7 was concerned about learners who do not come to school because of rain and this might be the challenge on the side of the SMT to manage learner attendance in school C. This means that walking long distances under rainy conditions was one obstacle that affects learner attendance at school C. Lack of parental involvement was also found as contributing to learner non-attendance in this school. According to table 4.6, six participants rated the lack of parental involvement as high, four participants rated it as moderate and two rated it as low. It was clear that the lack of parental involvement was affecting the selected schools. Princ2 indicated that:

the reason why learners sometimes come to school late when school registers are marked is the fact that parents are not involved in learner's school activities.

It was reported that the main reason for lack of parental involvement was that most parents' level of education was low such that some don't care about how their children were dressed and whether they attended class or not. Princ2 of school B was trying to explain further some of the reasons for lack of parental involvement. It means that if their level of education was low they cannot assist in the management of the learners' non-attendance even if they were willing to do so or involved themselves. This was an indication that Princ2 viewed the implementation of the policy on learners' attendance on the side of parents as something that needs a particular level of education.

SMT5 of school B noted that:

learners miss school because they stay with their grandmothers who do not pay detail and attention to learners schooling

From SMT5's point of view staying with grandparents was affecting learners' regular attendance of school. It was reported that the lack of parental involvement in their children's learning resulted in the learners abandoning going to school and thereby missing important school related activities. It was in line with what was mentioned in chapter two that some of the learners in rural areas were living with their grandmothers and the weak relationship between them has been mentioned. Togo (2009) noted that usually people who were not concerned with school or who never succeeded in school were more likely not to get involved in learners' education to the extent that such learners might get complacent about attending school.

SMT7 also noted the lack of parental involvement as well as the community involvement as factors contributing significantly to learner's non-attendance. She highlighted that:

learner attendance should be the combined effort of the school, the parents and the community. In this community parents and the people surrounding it believe learner attendance is sorely the responsibility of the headmaster and his teachers.

It can be noted from the above excerpt that SMT7 viewed collaborative efforts among stakeholders as a way that assist in combating learner absenteeism. It could be an indication that SMT7 viewed management of learner attendance as something that could be achieved by working with parents and other stakeholders. This was

one of the reasons leading to the causes of learner non-attendance, where by poor homes and schools created a blame game with the school being viewed as arrogant towards parents and learners. The participant highlighted the importance of parental involvement and the community in fighting the problem of learner non-attendance in the school.

In school B just like school A, the socio-economic factors were ranked as the major causes of learner non-attendance. Poverty was found to be contributing to learner's non-attendance in this school. SMT2, 3 and 4 in this school highlighted:

that learners lack financial assistance as they are from poor backgrounds. It was the task of the SMT to advise parents about the institutions that assist learners financially.

Most of the rural schools were rated fees free schools because the Department of Education was complying with the chapter two of the Constitution that the children have right to have access to education.

Princ1 a member of the SMT of school A indicated that:

learners do not have books and other resources that enable them to be in classes thus why they absent themselves in classes.

The Department of Education has a responsibility to purchase all the resources of the school as early as the middle of the year for next year.

Princ1 of school A also noted that the high levels of food insecurity among the learners might be one of the major reasons causing learners to miss school. The participant said:

food insecure children are always absent from schools compared to food secure learners.

This was an indication that poverty has a negative impact on how learners attend schools. By food insecurity it means a household has stable access to adequate food without being constrained by lack of or low income as well as other resources at times during the year. The Department of Education has introduced food nutrition in most of the schools to fight food insecurity. SMT5 shared the same sentiments when she highlighted that:

hungry children start school late, drop out of school sooner and are always absent and they learn less when they attend.

Poverty which contributes to food insecurity has been highlighted as a factor causing absenteeism in the school. The challenges of fraud and corruption in the food nutrition project are there but the Department of Education and other institutions involved are fighting it by all means. The above quotation would be not relevant in coming years of education.

SMT6 and SMT7 also noted environmental factors as contributing to learner non-attendance in school B. SMT8 indicated that:

the poor transportation for some learners in rural areas is resulting in them not attending school.

SMT9 reported that:

the unpredictable weather changes in this area were noted as one potential factor resulting in learners missing school as they are scared of the rain and cold weathers.

Due to the long distances and unpredictable weather students found themselves unable to attend school. The Department of Transport has introduced school transport for all learners who live 50 kilometres or more away from their schools. They also attend to the infrastructure of bad roads and bad bridges leading to schools in rural areas.

In school B family factors were found to be contributing to learner's non-attendance. Princ2 noted that most families were single headed families where learners stay with their mothers or grannies. Most learners come from households where some family members were suffering from HIV/AIDS. He indicated that:

learners absent themselves from school as they will be performing household chores at their respective homes.

To earn a living in the township where this school is located, residents have to rely on agricultural produce or social grants. Without social grants people have to work for their food. These were the sentiments of SMT7 and 8 in school B who reported that learners absent themselves from school because they have to do agricultural activities where they have to plough and do the work in the gardens.

All the SMT members in school B agreed that social factors also result in learner non-attendance. In this school learners do leave their homes to come to school and they were often in the school premises but they do not attend classes. SMT6, 7 and 8 reported that this was as a result of peer pressure among the students or learners in the school. SMT5 noted:

...among the grade 12 class learners absent themselves from school as they influence each other to engage in drug related activities while they are supposed to be in classes.

The learners influence and put pressure on each other not to attend school and decide instead to roam in the school and the township.

In school C poverty was also reported to be a major factor contributing to learner non-attendance in this school. All the participants in this school reported that most learners were from hunger stricken families. Princ3, a member of the SMT in school C indicated that:

...hunger causes the learners not to attend school on a daily basis.

SMT9 reported that the lack of financial resources and the over dependence on government grants resulted in such learners missing school as they do not have the necessary resources for them to attend school. SMT8 noted that poverty combined with fear of punishment results in learners not attending school. She indicated that:

...learners do not have exercise books as a result of poor financial resources thus resulting in them not doing homework thus the fear to be beaten at school as a punishment result in them not attending school.

During the focus group interview session it was highlighted that most of the students who were always absent were asked why they absent themselves from school. The results of such an inquiry found that poverty and food security were the major causes of learner non-attendance. It was highlighted that such learners worry about running out of food, some ran out of food in their households while some experienced a reduction in the food they have leading to some not having enough food to eat. This results in learner non-attendance as they would not want to attend school with an empty stomach were they have to walk for a distance.

Family problems also cause learner non-attendance in this school. SMT7 pointed out that in her class:

...a learner once said he absent himself from class because he is the elder in the family and it is his responsibility to provide food and everything for the family.

SMT9 shared the same sentiment as he also noted that some of the learners in his class either come late because they will have to do family responsibilities before they come to school or they leave late or they don't come at all to school to enable them to perform these family responsibilities.

Distance as an environmental factor was found to contribute also to learners' non-attendance. The long distance learners have to walk to school in school C contributed to learners' non-attendance. Learners reside in faraway places from the school thus the distance they have to walk to the school makes them fail to attend on some days. SMT7 indicated that he teaches a class that has four people from the same family who stay far away and they all miss school on the same days and they say the distance is the factor resulting in them missing school.

In school C one other factor that was also found to significantly contribute to learner non-attendance was the abuse happening at the school. Abuse as a school factor was ranked as the biggest factor contributing to learner attendance. SMT7, 8 and 9 reported that the school has elderly learners who were either repeating or who enrolled at the school late. It is reported that these older learners abuse the small boys to the extent that the small children refuse to go to school where they fear being abused. Princ3 indicated that:

...a female learner suffered severe emotional trauma after she was raped by certain students at the school.

It is believed that such kinds of abuses at the school were contributing to learner non-attendance.

SMT9 shared the same sentiments when he said

...onsite and external bullying have been contributing significantly to learner non-attendance in the school.

The participant highlighted that learners were bullied within the school premises as well as outside the school and this can result in them fearing to come to school especially when no action was taken towards the people who bully the learners. The participant noted that considerable cases of bullying have been reported in the school.

The school factor was also reported to be another factor contributing to learner non-attendance. The school was deemed to be old with poor classrooms with old outdated facilities. They were old desks and tables for learners. SMT8 and 9 noted that:

...there are broken windows in most of the classes thus contributes to the learners missing school during the winter season and during rainy season.

SMT9 indicated that:

...learners absent themselves from school in winter because of poor buildings which result in learners being cold.

Poor facilities at the school results in the learners missing school. The lack of adequate resources that stimulate learning at the school result in learners' non-attendance. In this school the lack of parental involvement was also noted as a factor contributing to learner non-attendance. Princ3 who is a member of the SMT in school C indicated that:

...the lack of parental motivation in learners schooling results in decreased motivation for the learners thus resulting in them not attending school.

When a parent was not fully involved in learners' school project, such a learner would also lose heart as he/she would want to be pushed to go to school. Therefore, if they were not pushed and forced to go to school such learners would also not attend school as they know they were not threatened from home.

The same sentiments were shared by SMT6 in school B. SMT8 highlighted that:

...the lack of child rearing skills among parents and their children careers is one factor causing learner non-attendance at this school.

SMT9 perceived the parents of the learners as not valuing education. He noted that:

...some of the learners have inadequate parenting and guidance and this might be one factor contributing to them not attending school.

The Princ3 noted that parents must look after their children's careers and this starts by them being involved in their children's education. They must motivate them to go to school and be involved even in the school projects so as to give learners a reflection of the importance of education. However, this was not the case with parents of learners in school C as they were not involved in the school projects or their own children's education.

One other factor highlighted by the participants as contributing to learner non-attendance were the individual factors. During the focus group interview a conclusion can be drawn that learner's do not attend school because of low self-esteem, low social skills and lack of confidence. SMT7 pointed out that:

...the fact that these learner's view themselves as coming from the rural areas leads to them thinking they are inferior and they have low self-esteem and confidence which might be one factor contributing to learner non-attendance in the school.

Such learners feel they will never succeed in their lives thus they do not value education seriously. Parents' low involvement may contribute towards this as it was their responsibility to try to raise their learners' self-esteem and confidence so that they will succeed in everything they do.

From the schools investigated we can draw a similar pattern or similarity as to the causes of learner non-attendance. From all the schools the SMT members highlighted poverty to be a major cause of non-attendance in the schools. Because the schools were located in the rural areas such learners might be coming from poor backgrounds thus resulting in them being poor and failing to meet the basic needs at home that can result in some not having books, uniforms and other school related accessories thus stopping them from attending schools here and there.

In addition to poverty, it was noted that in all the schools environmental factors specifically the distance travelled by the learners to the schools contributed to them not attending school. All the schools were located far away from home and learners had to walk a considerable distance to get to school. This therefore contributes to learner non-attendance in all the schools.

4.5 PRACTICES OF SMTS IN MANAGING LEARNER ATTENDANCE IN SCHOOLS

Although all participants indicated that their schools have plans to manage learner attendance, there were no indications that these plans were procedurally formulated policies to manage learner attendance. However it emerged from the data that these plans were adopted by the SMTs from the national policy on learner attendance. The participants from school A indicated that they have an attendance policy at the school. However, there was no indication that these policies were formulated by the SMTs and SGBs. Princ1 from school A indicated that:

...the school has an attendance policy with the objective of promoting punctual and regular attendance of learners at the school.

In chapter two of this study it was noted that a national policy on learner attendance promotes punctual and regular attendance at school as well provides schools with standard procedures for recording, managing and monitoring learner attendance.

SMT3 in school A confirmed that:

...in an attempt to reduce learner non-attendance the school has a policy on learner attendance that is communicated to the relevant stakeholders responsible in managing the school.

It can be noted from the above quotation that SMT in school A formulated attendance policy on its own and imposes it to other relevant stakeholders without them participating in its formulation. He indicated that, they adopted this policy to promote punctual and regular attendance at school A.

To reduce non-attendance in school B the SMT adopted a formal policy on learner attendance. The school designed this policy to promote learner attendance. The SMT members highlighted that this policy was adopted from principles from the policy of learner attendance from the Ministry of Education policy on learner attendance. SMT5 who was a member of the SMT in school B indicated that:

....we developed a policy on learner attendance that provides the school with standard procedures for recording, managing and monitoring learner attendance.

Similarly, SMT5 from school B indicated that their policy was drafted by the SMT alone and this was not in accordance with standard procedure of school policy formulation where SGBs have to take a leading role. SMT5 reported that after compiling a policy it must be communicated to all stakeholders for inputs before being signed off as a policy. Thereafter an implementation plan must be crafted for the implementation and monitoring of the policy. Just like the other schools in School C a policy was also in place that seeks to promote learner attendance at the school. SMT9 in school C indicated that:

...learner non-attendance is only approved by a senior teacher, vice principal or the principal of the school.

SMT9 in school C indicated:

...in an attempt to reduce learner non-attendance at the school the policy tasks the principal to follow up on learner absence through telephonic communication, letters and house visits if necessary.

It could be noted from the above quotation the management of learner attendance was centralised in the principal's office. SMT9 in this school indicated that every educator has the responsibility of compiling weekly summaries of attendance which are submitted to the principal's office. This was an indication that principal was wielding more authority on issues of learner attendance and that some other staff members regarded learner attendance as something that should be dealt with by the school principal.

Although it was reported that all schools had illegitimately formulated learner attendance policies these policies were not any how assisting the SMTs in managing learner attendance. This could be due to the fact that these policies were not taking into account socio-economic contexts of the selected schools. These imposed policies require different roles are tasked to different school stakeholders to promote learner attendance. However, the tasks were limited to school officials and no parents or any stakeholders were expected to play any role in assisting the management of learner attendance. The principals as the heads of the schools and also as the SMT members were given most of the responsibility to ensure the policy was implemented and adhered to in the schools.

Another practice that the SMT members in school A advocate as a way to promote learner non-attendance was the use of daily registers. SMT4 in this school indicated that:

...the school promotes punctual and regular attendance by marking the register at the school three times a day.

It can be noted from the SMT4 point of view that school B emphasised the marking of class registers in managing learner attendance. This was an indication that SMT in this school was focusing on control rather than management of learner attendance. If this was part of management it means that it focused on one aspect of management where there were no indications of thorough planning of how learner attendance must be managed. SMT2 indicated that, due to the fact that learners were arriving late at school and missing morning school related activities the school adopted a system of marking the register at 08:00 such that it encourages learners to attend and be at school early. SMT3 and 4 indicated that the register was marked three times a day so as to ensure that learners were in class from the start of class to the end of the day as the last register was marked when learners were going home. This prevents learners from running away from school when they feel like going home. Although in this school emphasis was on marking of school register there were no indication that the information obtained from this exercise was helping the SMT in better managing learner attendance. It was also reported in school C that as promoted by the school policy, the educators must mark registers on a daily basis and effectively manage these registers in an attempt to reduce learner non-attendance. SMT5 highlighted that:

...the register is marked twice in a day.

It can be noted from the above quotation that like in school B focus was on marking of attendance registers. It was reported that learners' non-attendance was recorded at 08:00 in the morning and at 12:00 midday. The SMT policy in school C sought to promote learner attendance in this school by also promoting the use of daily registers. SMT9 an SMT member in school C indicated that every educator was tasked with the responsibility to record, monitor and safeguard the keeping of these attendance registers.

Although SMT members in school C reported that registers were marked twice a day they indicated different times of marking attendance register. While SMT5 noted that

registers are marked at 8:00 and 12:00 SMT8 reported that registers are marked at 08:30 and 14:00. SMT8 indicated that

...The SMT members promote the recording of daily registers twice a day. The first register was recorded at 8:30 am and the other at 14:00.

Though the marking of attendance registers was noted by participants as approached differently in each school a pattern was seen at these schools that they all try promoting learner attendance through the marking of attendance registers. Every educator in these schools was tasked by the policy on learner attendance to record daily learners' non-attendance and it was the responsibility of the principal to check on a weekly basis if the registers were being marked in the school. The other similarity was that all these schools promote the recording of the register on more than one occasion. School A promotes the recording of the register three times a day while school B and C promote the recording of the register twice a day.

As it was noted that poverty was one of the factors contributing to learner non-attendance in school A the SMT members have embarked on promoting a number of strategies that can promote learner attendance. Princ1 indicated:

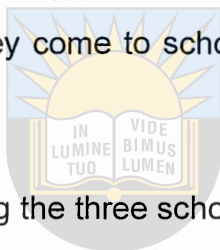
...the school has initiated integrated nutrition programmes which learners are now served chicken on some days.

It can be noted from the above quotation that Princ1 viewed the SNP that had been introduced by the Department of Basic Education as something that could assist SMTs in managing learner attendance. Though Princ1 indicated that SNP assist their school in combating learner absenteeism there were no indication of how they in school A actually use SNP in managing learner attendance than merely enticing learners with food to come to school. Princ1 reported that learner non-attendance is seen to be high in this school because learners are poor and they can't afford food at home and this is the reason that they are unable to come to school

Participants in School B also reported that their school had also adopted the use of SNP and other bursary related schemes for people who are poor so as to promote learners attendance. Princ2 in school B reported that The SMT promotes food to be provided to the learners so that learners do not suffer from hunger. Princ2 further commented food parcels are given to learners to take home so that they can cook

while at home and this can stimulate them to attend school daily. There were no other strategies that were aiming at addressing the socio-economic causes of learner absenteeism other than using SNP. The fact that SNP was used as way to combat learner absenteeism was an indication that SMTs had no other professional strategies where learners, parents and other relevant stakeholders were involved in the management of learner attendance.

Similarly In school C poverty has been regarded as the major factor among other things contributing to learner non-attendance. Therefore with this in mind the SMT sought to promote regular attendance of learners through offering food at the school. SMT8 indicated that for learners who cannot afford meals at home they will see the school as the feeding place thus they come to school to eat and at the same time attend school.



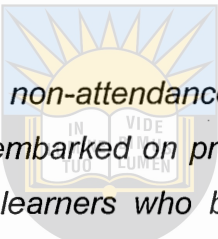
A general pattern can be seen among the three schools in their attempts to deal with learner non-attendance arising from poverty. Most of the schools are offering food parcels or food stamps to the poverty stricken learners so that they can have something to eat and that will motivate them to come to school. Also learners who were not poor were also given lunch and breakfast and this has been seen as a major factor that contributes to most learners coming to school.

All the participants in school C reported that the SMT has engaged various stakeholders to get involved in trying to solve the problem of distance as an environmental factor leading to learner's non-attendance. The school wishes to have transport afforded to learners as they stay far away from the school. Such an initiative would promote learners to come to school as they were aware they have the transport rather than walking the long distance to school. Also this school has embarked on a renovation process where it sought to refurbish the classrooms and ensure they were fully furnished and have windows so that the environment is conducive for the learners to study. The same goes with the SMT members in school B. The SMT members have engaged the community in renovating the roads and specifically the damaged bridges so that children can cross especially during rainy seasons. Improving the roads has been seen as a way of attracting transport services to increase within the township that will enable learners to be transported to

and from school. Poor road networks systems have been seen as the other factor resulting in learner non-attendance therefore renovating the roads and bridges has been seen by SMT5 in school B as a practice that can prevent learner non-attendance. Although it was reported that school A and school B had engaged the community on issues of scholar transport there were no revelations on how communities would assist in the management of learner attendance through scholar transport.

Another factor that has been noted as contributing to learner non-attendance in school C was bullying within the premises and even outside of the school premises. It was reported that the SMT had adopted serious and effective remedies to reduce bullying.

SMT7 commented that:



...With an attempt to reduce non-attendance as a result of bullying, the SMT of the school has embarked on practices that help reduce bullying of learners. Firstly learners who bully other students are suspended from school. If the bullying persists, they face exclusion or expulsion from the school. Such practices give learners who fear to be bullied assurance that they were protected by the school if such circumstances happen in the school or even outside the school.

It can be noted from the above excerpt that SMT members in school C imposed stringent measures to reduce bullying in the school however; there were no indication that these measures were a product of collaborative engagement between learners, teachers, parents and community at large. It can also be noted from the above quotation that even these unilateral measures were punitive and reactive rather proactive.

Punitive measures were also reported in school A and school B. All the SMT members of school A reported that they have a disciplinary code put in place that deals with all the different categories of learner non-attendance.

SMT8 commented that:

...The SMT promotes the use of disciplinary action to deal with learners who do not attend school. The same also applies in school

B as the SMT adopted a disciplinary code as a tool to punish learners who do not attend school regularly or punctually.

One strategies that has been found to be somehow involving parents and playing a significant role in reducing learner non-attendance especially in school C was holding a parenting day known as 'consulting day'. Such a strategy has been noted as increasing parental involvement in their children's school matters. On most Sundays general meetings were held between the parents and teachers of the learners where discussions were made on learners' progress. During these meetings it was reported that issues of learner non-attendance were discussed with the parents so that they know if their children were coming to school or not. Such meetings with parents promote parental involvement to the extent that learner attendance was enhanced when a parent attends such meetings and tries to motivate learners to achieve their goals. However, it emerged from the data that teachers used these platforms to communicate learners' problems of learner absenteeism.

Apart from the school waiting to hold meetings on Sundays to discuss issues of the learner with the parents, but the SMT has also adopted a remedy to reduce learner non-attendance by summoning the parent of the learner if the learner misses school without any valuable reason. The head of the school was tasked to summon or call the parent or anyone who was responsible for taking care of the child to come to school. This allows parents to know exactly if their children were attending school and allows them to take appropriate action if their children were not attending.

Low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence have been highlighted by the SMT as factors contributing to learners' non-attendance in the school. In an attempt to reduce learner non-attendance resulting from this, the SMT has embarked on learners' counselling exercises. Learners who were found to be facing challenges and difficulties were called for counselling where they discuss such challenges with the life orientation teacher who was the responsible counselling teacher. It was highlighted during the focus group interview session that during this counselling session so many issues were discussed. The teacher was tasked with the responsibility of motivating the students and guiding them in their careers. Such counselling practices were aimed at identifying the learner's problems and providing

solutions that can help the learner improve his or her self-confidence as well as self-esteem.

SMT8 in school C noted that:

one-on-one session is done not only by the life orientation teacher but also by other teachers who see learners facing difficulties.

The SMT does not only task one member on counselling the learners who were facing problems in the school. All teachers in the school were responsible for the welfare of the learners. So when a learner does not attend school the teacher was also responsible for counselling such a student and trying to understand what might be the reasons for that learner's non-attendance. These sessions act as career guidance sessions in which learners were made aware of the importance of school and were encouraged to attend.

In the focus group interview of school B it was highlighted that learners attend school for various reasons such as meeting friends, sporting activities and societies. So in an attempt to improve attendance in this school the SMT promotes in-school initiatives that facilitate learning to take place. SMT6 noted that the school implemented such in-school initiatives to broaden learners' skills. Such programmes include drama clubs whereby learners will attend school so that they can go to the drama club and in that way they can find a career in arts while they were attending school at the same time. Such in-school initiatives were developed in such a way that they facilitate learning to take place.

As it was pointed in the definitions of non-attendance, it was not necessarily being absent from school the whole day but also being late and also leaving school early before others were dismissed which was deemed to be absenteeism. Therefore, in this regard the SMT for school A has embarked on practices of training teachers in the school to manage learner attendance. The SMT believes that though there were various factors contributing to learners' non-attendance, teachers were also to blame. SMT4 pointed out that:

...learner absenteeism is high in the school because of poor management as some learners slip out of school without being noticed.

It could be noted from the above quotation that SMT4 view the problem of learner absenteeism as something that is caused by lack of management in the school. With this in mind the SMT members proposed training for all teachers in the school so that they were better trained to deal with the problem of learner non-attendance. It was mentioned in this chapter that if they don't come up with a plan, policies or measures, the problem of poor learner attendance will escalate.

4.6 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section discusses findings of the study under the following headings: perceived problems and causes of learner non-attendance, effects of school policies on learner attendance and the practice of managing learner attendance in schools.

4.6.1 Perceived problems and causes of learner non-attendance

The data revealed that learner attendance was a major problem, as the majority of participants indicated that learners do not attend school regularly. Different participants mentioned different problems regarding learner attendance.

The failure of the learners to attend classes while in the school premises was also highlighted by some of the participants as a problem that must be managed. This was an indication that learner attendance was not properly managed by the SMTs. Also the lack of parental involvement in learner education was viewed as a problem by the SMTs. This means therefore that schools, when it comes to issues of managing learner attendance did not work in accordance with Systems Theory. Systems Theory requires that all the aspects of the organisation are taken into consideration. A school is a system with learners, teachers, parents, as represented by SGBs and community at large and including socio-economic factors. Any person working in line with systems theory should take into consideration all the aspects of the school.

The participants also mentioned that parents were not responding to calls to come to school to account for the failure of their children to attend school. This means that SMTs were not working with parents as parents were only called to account. There

were few if any sessions that were held between parents and SMTs to devise strategies of dealing with learner non-attendance. According to Fayol's administrative theory a manager needed to be able to formulate plans, organise plant and equipment and deal with people. There was no evidence that SMTs were dealing with people in managing learner attendance. Instead in some cases the task of managing learner attendance was given to the principal who used his/her discretion by for instance phoning the parents to come to school to account for their children's School attendance as one of the most important factors in enhancing learner outcomes needs a collaboration of stakeholders. Figure 4.1 below depicts a systems approach in dealing with learner attendance.

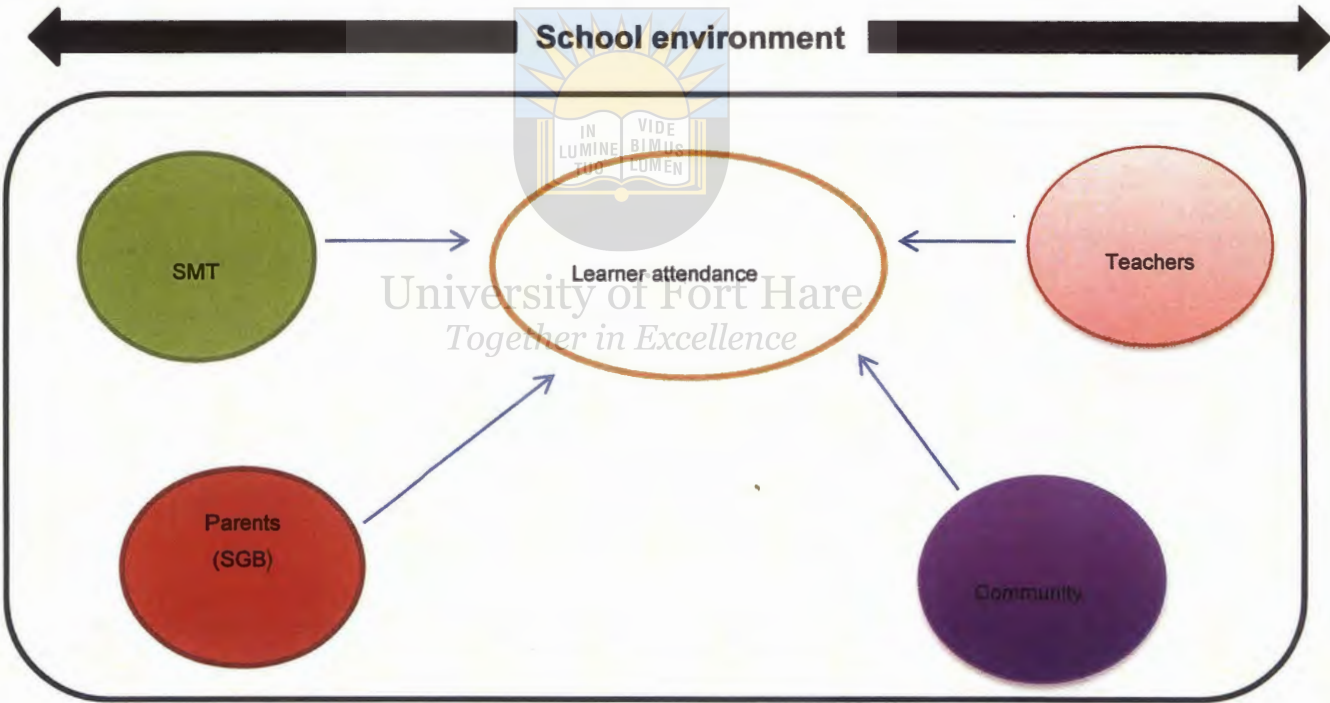


Figure 4.1 Systems approach to manage learner attendance

In order for SMTs to effectively manage learner attendance, they should work in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders. Figure 4.1 above shows how SMT and other stakeholders in a school environment could work collaboratively in achieving learner attendance.

The SMTs have witnessed that some of the things mentioned in table 4.6 of the study were problems in their schools but there were no efforts in place to deal with these problems. They have also agreed that the long distances to school was a

problem because that causes the learners to be marked absent as the register was supposed to be marked at 08:00 in the morning. The regular marking of registers was an indication that SMTs were mainly concerned with control rather than strategies of dealing with the problem of learner absenteeism.

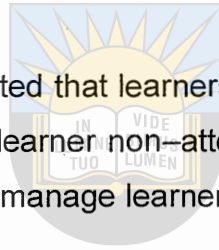
Poverty was again viewed as a serious cause of learner non-attendance with the SMTs mentioning that learners were staying with grand-parents who were depending on pension grants for living. Households were highlighted by the SMTs stating that some of the learners do not have parents. They were heads of the families so they start doing household chores before attending school. This was in line with what was raised in chapter two by the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005). Poverty was mentioned as one factor that inhibits learners from attending school in South Africa. Some of the participants concurred that access to school was compromised by costs of school fees, uniform, transport and costs of clinic visits. They further mentioned that bad roads and damaged bridges were also identified as problems especially in the winter season. The cold winter wind, heavy rains and thunderstorms cause the learner non-attendance to increase. It was therefore crucial for SMTs to work with communities on issues of learner attendance as it became apparent that learner attendance was not just a school matter but a societal matter. This means that any collaboration between the school and the society would improve learner attendance in the selected schools.

The lack of parental involvement was also rated high (see table 4.6 above) by the participants mentioning the same reason as above that the learners were staying with grand-parents. The fact that parents were not involved in their children's education might be as a result of weak relationships that exist between them and their children. According to UNESCO (2009), in the rural areas where learners live with their grandparents, there was a weak relationship that exists between the two and this might significantly impact on learners' non-attendance in school. UNESCO (2009) reported that when a strong relationship exists between the parents and children, and where parents have a greater interest in their children's education, children were more likely to attend school Chisholm (2004). It was also noted that grand parents cannot walk the long distance to attend school activities. The participants from the three schools strongly agreed that long distances, bad roads

and bad conditions of bridges were contributing to learner non-attendance. This was a confirmation of what Hogan (2008) indicated as reasons for learner non-attendance. Floods, heavy thunderstorms and snow can result in some learners not attending school (Hogan, 2008). The Nelson Mandela Foundation research (2005) reported that the walk to school was a bridge between home and formal education and confirmed that it was a threat especially to girl learners.

Households were also indicated by most participants as one of the causes of learner non-attendance. As learners were staying with grandparents, they were forced to do household chores before proceeding to school. It was mentioned that some of the learners have no parents. Their parents had died from the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

The fact that most participants indicated that learners who do have adequate school books and uniform was a cause of learner non-attendance might be an indication that SMTs did not have a strategy to manage learner non-attendance in the selected schools.



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Although the data revealed that drug and substance abuse were causes of learner non-attendance, there was no indication of how SMTs deal with this problem and this was even made worse by the fact that parents were not taking part in school governance.

4.6.2 Effects of school policies on learner attendance

The participants strongly agreed that there was a learner attendance policy in the three rural schools under investigation and they showed that it was the general national policy for learner attendance. They confirmed that the policy promotes punctual and regular attendance at school as well as providing schools with standard procedures for recording, managing and monitoring learner attendance. However, most of the participants agreed that they have not developed their own learner attendance policy that would talk to their own problems or challenges so they used the national one. Only a plan not a policy was developed by the SMTs according to the response from the participants.

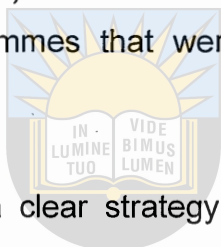
Some of the participants were not even aware that they were supposed to develop their own policy and review it annually so that it cannot be out dated. They accepted that the learners were still arriving late and roaming around the streets even though the policy was implemented at their schools. It was the responsibility of the SMTs to develop an attendance policy and a plan that talks specifically to the challenges of their schools. The view of Morris and Rut (2004) was that if such a policy was created in the school and communicated to the educators and parent learners' attendance was likely going to increase.

The participants also confirm that the lack of parental involvement was still a problem in their school whereas the policy was in place. This means that the policy has not resolved the challenges they have in the three rural high schools. When parents were summoned to come and account for the non-attendance of the learners they failed to comply because of the long distance to school that was mentioned in chapter two of this study. The fact that parents were not turning up when they were called to account for their children's absence might be an indication that they did not regard any procedure that was not the product of their engagement. It means that the policy and the plan do not cover the problem of the long distances to these rural schools. According to the responses from the participants, it was clear that there were gaps in the existing national policy to cover the challenges of the three rural schools under investigation in this study.

4.6.3 The practice of managing learner attendance in schools

It emerged from the data that SMTs do not have good practices that sought to combat learner non-attendance. This was confirmed by the fact that there were many problems of learner non-attendance. However, the majority of the participants were of the view that SMTs assist in managing learner attendance but there was no formal procedure developed at school level that was followed to manage learner attendance. The introduction of the learner attendance register was mentioned by the participants as one of the best practices done by the SMTs. Most of the participants confirmed that SMTs have identified that there was learner non-attendance problem in their schools and they have developed a plan to reduce learner non-attendance. However, there was no indication of parental involvement in

the developed plan. SMTs noted that parents were not attending school meetings during the week days and this resulted in the three schools changing meeting days to Sundays after church. This practice was noted as best as it improved attendance of parents. However, there was no indication of how parents influence learner attendance in these meetings. It can be assumed that SMTs just presented their plan to the parents without having considered their inputs. There was no indication that teachers were involved in the planning of any strategy by SMTs to manage learner attendance. This practice of SMTs not to involve teachers and parents in managing learner attendance was not in line with Fayol's theory of administration. Fayol's (1937) emphasis is placed on the administrative function of management. It was noted in chapter two that Fayol (1937) took a simile from physiology. There was no evidence of coordination of programmes that were aimed at managing learner attendance in the selected schools.

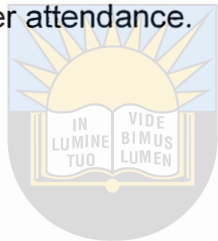


The fact that SMTs did not have a clear strategy that sought to include all the stakeholders in the management of learner attendance was an indication that they were not running schools in line with systems theory. Systems theory puts forth the premise that organisations, like living organisms, were made up of numerous component subsystems that must work together in harmony for the large system to succeed (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972). According to this theory the SMT members should not try to work alone in fighting learner non-attendance but must involve other members of the school in order to produce initiatives that can help the whole system (the school) achieve its goals. Kast and Rosenzweig (1972) indicated that systems theory also enables us to understand the component and dynamics of client systems, school community in this case, in order to interpret problems and develop balanced intervention strategy.

It was reported that the SMT members do communicate the policies and the plan to all relevant stakeholders that they think can assist in the management of learner non-attendance. However, the involvement of these stakeholders in the policy development stage was not highlighted in the data.

4.7 CONCLUSION

The chapter focused on analysis of collected data which was personally analysed by the researcher. The data was collected from the three rural high schools in the King Williams Town education district. From the data collected the researcher identified that all the school SMTs adopt the same definition of learner non-attendance as the illegitimate absence from school. The participants described learner non-attendance as the absence from school due to reasons other than formal school closure days and closure due to national or religious holidays. Various factors that lead to learner non-attendance at the schools as well the strategies that were being implemented by the schools SMTs were discussed in the chapter and it emerged that SMTs do not have clear strategy in managing learner attendance.



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CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

While the previous chapter presented the results of the data analyses, this chapter gives the summary, conclusions and recommendations. The conclusions are drawn from the entire research project. Recommendations for education administrators and for future researchers are provided in an attempt to improve learners' non-attendance in schools.

5.2 SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

The following is the summary of findings that emerged from the data:

5.2.1 The influence of socio economic factors on learner attendance

Data obtained from the research participants indicated that socio- economic factors influence learner attendance in schools. There were reasons that led to learner not to attend school at all. Though there were various reasons cited by participants with regards to learner absenteeism schools learner absenteeism was a problem in all schools. From the findings it emerged that the problem of learner non-attendance is a result of various factors within the environment of the learner. It was highlighted that the major causes of learner non-attendance are poverty, peer pressure, bullying, alcohol and drug abuse lack of parental involvement, as well the distance learners have to travel to school. Also the lack of resources such as school uniforms and books was also found to be a cause of learner non-attendance in the schools.

5.2.2 Lack of school policies on learner attendance

The results of the study indicated that the schools have adopted the national learner attendance policies as a way to solve the problem of learner non-attendance in the schools. However, schools had not developed their own learner attendance policies instead SMTs developed learner attendance plans from the national learner attendance policy which were imposed on parents. The national policy is aimed at promoting punctual and regular attendance at the schools. However, this was still a problem in these schools as some learners do not come to school and other learners come to school but do not attend classes as they will be roaming in the school premises. The policy seems not to be effective in managing learner non-attendance and this is a call for SMT members to adopt other practices to manage learner non-attendance in the schools.



5.2.3 Lack of strategy to deal with learner attendance

The data showed that SMTs have no clear strategy for managing learner attendance in schools as in some cases learners would slip out of school without being noticed. This was clearly due to a lack of management on the side of the SMTs as Fayol (1937) suggested that a manager should understand all the aspects of the organisation. According to Fayol (1937) an organisation is like a man's nervous system, which is not visible to a superficial observer. None of our senses can follow its action, and yet, although the muscles possess energy of their own, they cease to contract if the nervous system stops working. This means that SMTs were not like a nervous system in managing the affairs of the selected schools.

The issue of dealing with problems related to the causes of learner absenteeism was regarded as the responsibility of the life orientation teacher. SMT members were not viewed as proactive in dealing with issues of learner attendance and the principal was seen as the person who should deal with learners who transgressed learner attendance policies. SMTs seemed to be relying on School Nutrition Programme (SNP) as a way of combating absenteeism in schools. The focus was on the marking of class registers as a practice of managing learner non-attendance. Summoning

parents to come and account for learner non-attendance was other practice implemented by schools to manage learner non-attendance in the schools.

5.2.4 Lack of parental involvement on learner attendance

In the study it was mentioned that most of the learners were staying with their grandparents on whose pension fund they depend for living. The data collected from the participants indicates poor attendance of school meetings by parents and the SMTs decided to change the meetings to be held on certain Sunday afternoon's. According to the data there was no evidence that the school meeting was well attended on Sunday and the meeting has assisted in learner non-attendance. In the interviews the participants fully agreed that learner non-attendance was still a problem and learners were still roaming around the streets during school hours. If learners see that their parents were not concerned with activities at school and were not involved and do not engage in building relationships with the learners, and educators, such learners may stay away from school knowing that their parents won't be concerned (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005).

The SMTs confirmed that parents were not turning up when called by the principal to the school to account for their children. According to the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 section (5) any parent who, without just cause and after a written notice from the Head of Department, fails to comply with subsection(1) is guilty of an offence and liable to conviction or a fine or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding six months. The SMTs in the study failed to implement this section as one of the measures in forcing the parents to comply when called by the principal to account at school for the absenteeism of their children. According to the data, there was a poor attendance of school activities by parents in the three rural high schools selected for the study. The data of the study does not mention any training conducted by SMTs to empower the parents about the managing of learner non-attendance. The SMTs have not applied the system theory and the Fayol's theory in managing of learner non-attendance in the three rural schools selected for the study. The SMTs have failed to develop a strategy to encourage the parents to attend and participate in all the school activities. It puts forth the premise that organisations, like living organisms, were made up of numerous component subsystems that must work

together in harmony for the larger system to succeed (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972). The SMTs do not work together in harmony with all stakeholders as parts of the machinery to manage learner attendance as mentioned in the systems theory.

5.2.5 Focus on control rather than management

The results of the study showed that the SMTs were controlling the marking of the attendance register and its submission to the principal. The principal's office was the center of the management of learner non-attendance. According to the SMTs the principal was responsible for calling the parents to school to account for their children's absenteeism. There was no evidence from the SMTs that they held meetings as SMTs and went through the information in the attendance registers before the principal called the parent to account. The data do not show any pending disciplinary cases against learner non-attendance in the three rural schools selected for the study.

It means that the SMTs were focusing in the marking of the attendance register not in the managing of learner non-attendance. Fayol's theory indicates that it was the responsibility of the management to develop a strategy to deal with problems in an institution. The SMT was responsible for the management of the school (Walters, 1993). There was no strategy according to the study developed by the SMTs to deal with a parent that does not turn up when called by the principal to account for his/her children absenteeism. In the study there was no evidence that the SMTs have involved learners in managing learner attendance. According to the results of the study it was clear that the SMTs were focusing in the marking of the attendance register as a control of absenteeism not developing any strategy for managing learner attendance. The South African Schools Act (Section 3) provides for action to be taken by the Head of Department, if a learner does not attend school without a valid explanation (DBE, 2014). It means that the SMTs have failed to perform their task according to Fayol's theory that they must develop policy to manage learner attendance successfully.

5.2.6 Management of learner attendance centralized in the principal's office

The results of the study showed that the SMTs were controlling the marking of the attendance register and its submission to the principals' office without using the information they obtain to improve the situation. It further indicates that the principals were calling the parents to the office to account for their children's absenteeism. The majority of the principals were submitting a report to the District office for learner non-attendance quarterly. According to the above it was clear that the management of learner attendance was centralised in the principal's office in all the three high schools. This was an indication that the approach was top-down as the principals had all the powers to deal with learner attendance and were seen as the only persons who should link with the parents of the learners.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

From the findings of this study, the researcher can conclude that there are problems of learner non-attendance in the three rural schools in the King Williams Town education district. This is evident as most participants highlighted that learners are sometimes absent from school and others will be around school premises but they do not attend classes. Due to various factors surrounding their backgrounds causes learner non-attendance in rural areas in this educational district.

The researcher also came to conclude that the practices implemented by the schools to manage learner non-attendance in the selected rural schools have been ineffective as the learner non-attendance is still a problem in the schools. Various practices are implemented but they seem not to yield satisfactory results that will help reduce learner non-attendance significantly. The researcher can also conclude that there was over reliance by SMTs on national learner attendance policy without devising their strategies that fit their context to manage learner attendance.

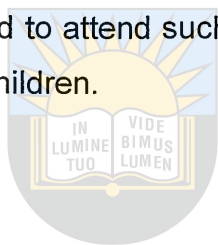
5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.4.1 For policy implementation:

The following recommendations are suggested for policy implementation:

- On the basis of these findings the researcher recommends that clear SMT policies on managing learner non-attendance should be developed and communicated to all stakeholders within the schools rather than relying heavily on the national policy. The policy should clearly specify the roles of each stakeholder in managing learner non-attendance at the schools.
- All the stakeholders must be given time to input in the development of the policy of learner attendance so that they can own the policy.
- In ensuring policy implementation the Department of Education should develop a manual for the SMTs in ensuring the implementation of learner attendance policies so that the line of operation of the SMTs is clear.
- The Department of Education should collaborate with other learning institutions to provide training to SMT members not only on how to manage learner non-attendance but also on ways to manage a school. Such training might equip SMT members with valuable managerial skills that can help them manage whatever problems the school might face, such as the problem of learner non-attendance.
- The Department of Education should play a part in the election of SMT members by providing requirements needed for one to be an SMT member such that competent members are selected to manage the school rather than selecting people who won't be able to deliver the work required from them.
- On the factors that cause learner non-attendance various recommendations are provided. First, the Department of Education should work with non-governmental organisations and various stakeholders to build sustainable roads and bridges so that the learners can walk safely to school during rainy seasons. Not only should they provide transport to learners but they should also provide affordable transport facilities to learners who reside in areas far away from school.

- Poverty has been highlighted as a major cause of non-attendance in the three rural schools. The schools together with the Department of Education should co-operate with the Department of Social Development and provide support to children from seriously disadvantaged families be it financial or food so that they can attend school.
- Most of the rural schools have old buildings; therefore, there is need for the Department of Education to renovate old buildings and try and equip the schools with state of the art technology such that learners can be motivated to come to school.
- Lack of parental involvement has been noted as one of the causes of learner non-attendance; therefore, the SMT should strive to hold weekly meetings where learners' parents are asked to attend such meeting so that they can see how school is beneficial to their children.



5.4.2 For future research

The following recommendations are suggested for further research:

- This study focused on secondary schools only therefore it is recommended that future studies focus on primary schools.
- It is recommended that a comparative study that would cover rural and urban schools be conducted.
- It is also recommended that future research focuses on the role of parents on learner attendance.

5.5 REFLECTION

Reflecting on the findings of the study, this research answered the research questions and also succeeded in terms of meeting the objectives of the study. The theories used to support this study are relevant as they all allude to the differential managerial functioning and skills which might be required of SMT members when managing learner non-attendance. So the theories employed in the study are relevant to this study. The results of this study showed that there is a problem of learner non-attendance in the three rural schools and the SMTs are failing to

manage it. It is also clear that the national policy in managing learner attendance is not effectively applied by the SMTs in managing learner attendance in these selected schools.

5.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter provided the conclusions and recommendations of the study. The study found that there are problems of learner non-attendance in the three rural schools of the King Williams Town education district. Various practices are implemented by SMTs to manage learner non-attendance in these schools. However, SMTs have no clear strategy that seeks to manage learner attendance effectively.



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Appendix A:RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Botha Thozamile Alfred. I am a student in the Department of Education, at the University of Fort Hare. I am conducting a research on the practices of the School Management Teams (SMT's) in managing learner attendance. The research is done as part of the Master's degree requirements in Education. The research is done strictly for academic purposes only. The information solicited will be kept confidential and anonymity is assured. You are cordially requested to complete the questions that follow.



SECTION A (DEMOGRAPHIC AND OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION)

1. Gender (Please tick)

Male	Female

2. Age (Please tick)

Under 30	31-40 years	41-50 years	Over 50 years

3. Highest educational Qualification

STD, HED, FDE	PTD,	B.A	BED Honours	BED Masters	Doctoral Degree

4. How long have you been part of the SMT/ Educator?

0-4yrs	5-9yrs	10-14yrs	15- 19yrs	20 and above
--------	--------	----------	--------------	--------------

5. Race (Tick as appropriate)

AFRICAN	WHITE	COLOURED	INDIAN

SECTION B: REASONS FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

Instructions

7 Rank the following causes of non-attendance.

1 = Low 2 = Moderate 3 = High



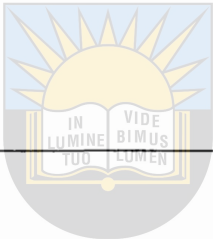
CATEGORY	1	2	3
1. Poverty/ Hunger			
2. Alcohol/ Drug Abuse			
3. Lack of commitment by learners			
4. Teacher attitude			
5. Teenage pregnancy			
6. Laziness			
7. Peer Pressure			
8. Household work			
9. Lack of parental involvement			
10. Sickness			
11. Afraid of punishment			
12. Afraid of tests			

13. Distance			
14. Abuse (Sexual or Bullying)			

SECTION C: MANAGEMENT OF LEARNER ATTENDANCE

8 (a) How does you school manage learner attendance? (Tick as appropriate)

CATEGORY	CODE	
GOOD	1	
FAIR	2	
POOR	3	
ANY OTHER(SPECIFY)	4	



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8 (b) Give reasons for your above answer.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

9 (a). My school assists me in managing learner attendance(Please tick)

Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	disagree	Not sure

9(b) Give reasons for your above answer

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

10 (a) Does SMT play a role in managing learner attendance? (Tick as appropriate)

Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	disagree	Not sure

10 (b) Give reasons for your above answer

.....

.....

.....

.....

END

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

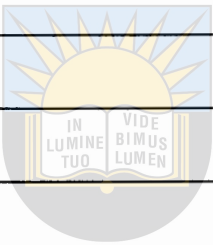
Appendix B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Introduction

My name is Thozamile Alfred Botha and I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I am a student from the University of Fort Hare who is currently conducting a study on the exploration of the practices of the school management teams (SMT's) in managing learner attendance.

2. Interview question

2.1 What do you think is your role in the management of learner attendance in your school?



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2.2 What is it that you do in managing learner attendance in your school? (Probe-Why?)

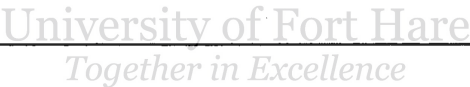
2.3 How do you collect information about learner non-attendance? (Probe)

2.4 How often do you mark your attendance registers (Probe- Why?)_____

2.5 How do SMT and educators work in collaboration to support the management of learner attendance in your school? (Probe- Why?)_____



2.6 What does the SMT actually do to deal with learner non-attendance?_____

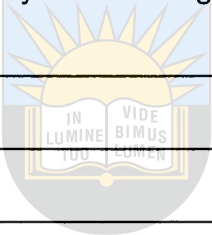


2.7 What challenges do you encounter in managing learner attendance in your school?_____

2.8 How do you deal with the challenges you face when managing learner attendance?_____

2.9 How does the Department of education assist you in managing learner attendance?_____

2.10 How does your school policy assist you in managing learner attendance?____



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END

Appendix C: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SMT MEMBERS

1. Introduction

My name is Thozamile Alfred Botha and I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this discussion. I am a student from the University of Fort Hare who is currently conducting a study on the exploration of the practices of the school management teams (SMT's) in managing learner attendance.



2. Focus group Interview guide

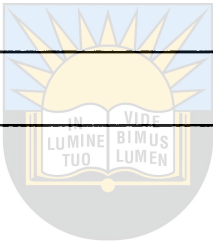
2.1 Is there a problem of learner non-attendance in this school? _____

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2.2 When do you regard a learner as being absent (absent for part of the day or the whole day)? _____

2.3 Does the SMT have a formal/informal policy on learner absenteeism that guides the schools on how to manage learner non-attendance? _____

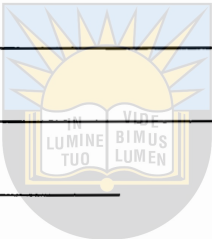
2.4 If yes, what does the policy expect of the school with respect to the management of learner non-attendance? _____



2.5 Why do learners continue to arrive late for school, bunk classes, and why are they frequently seen roaming the streets during school hours, irrespective of the presence of the policy? (Probe-Why?)

2.6 What are the disciplinary procedures employed by the SMTs to effectively manage learner non-attendance (Probe-Why?)

2.7 What are the factors identified within the school that makes it difficult for the SMT to control learners' non-attendance? _____



2.8 What has the SMT done so far to address these challenges? (Probe-Why?)
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2.9 What practices have you introduced in managing learner non-attendance?

2.10 Do you consider the practice to be an effective measure for managing learner non-attendance? (Probe-Why?)

Thank you very much for your time

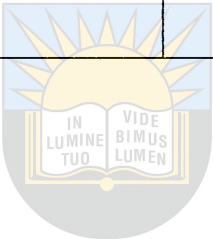


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Appendix D: Document Analysis Guide

DOCUMENT	DATA LOOKING FOR	FINDINGS
CLASS REGISTER	Management of class registers	
PERIOD REGISTER	Management of period registers	
SCHOOL POLICY ON ATTENDANCE	Prescripts of school policy	
NATIONAL POLICY ON ATTENDANCE	Prescripts of national policy	

LOG BOOK	Recording of learner attendance issues	
SMT MINUTE BOOK	Resolutions on learner attendance issues	



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Appendix E: Letter to the Department of Education

29 Swallow Drive
West Bank
King Williams Town
5600

The Department of Education
King Williams Town
5600

Dear Sir/ Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I kindly request permission to conduct research in selected schools under your jurisdiction. The research is part of my study towards MED degree with the University of Fort Hare (Alice Campus) under the supervision of Dr M.P. Mavuso.

The topic of my mini- dissertation is: **Practice of the School Management Teams (SMT's) in managing learner attendance. A case study of three rural schools in King WilliamsTown District of Education.**

The research will be conducted by means of a questionnaire and interviews which will be administered to SMT members. Information obtained from the participants will be used for research purposes only.

Thanking you in anticipation of your kind assistance in this matter.

T.A Botha

Appendix F: Letter to the District

29 Swallow Drive

West Bank

King Williams Town

5600

The Education District Officer

King Williams Town

5600

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I kindly request permission to conduct research in selected schools under your jurisdiction. The research is part of my study towards MED degree with the University of Fort Hare (Alice Campus) under the supervision of Dr M.P. Mavuso.

The topic of my mini- dissertation is: **Practice of the School Management Teams (SMT's) in managing learner attendance. A case study of three rural schools in King WilliamsTown District of Education.**

The research will be conducted by means of a questionnaire and interviews which will be administered to SMT members. Information obtained from the participants will be used for research purposes only.

Thanking you in anticipation of your kind assistance in this matter.

T.A Botha

.....

Appendix G: Letter to the Principals

29 Swallow Drive

West Bank

King Williams Town
5600

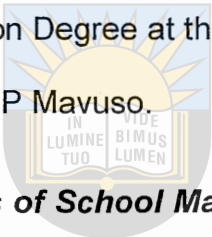
THE PRINCIPAL/ SMT

.....

Dear Sir/ Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I kindly request permission to conduct research in your school. The research is part of my study towards Master of Education Degree at the University of Fort Hare (Alice Campus) under the supervision of Dr MP Mavuso.



The topic of my research is: ***Practices of School Management Teams (SMT's) in managing learner attendance: A case of three high schools in King Williams Town Education District.*** The research will be conducted by means of a questionnaire and interviews which will be administered to the SMT. The information obtained from participants is used for research purposes only.

Thank You

Yours faithfully

.....

T.A BOTHA

Appendix H: Ethics Clearance Certificate



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ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE
REC-270710-028-RA Level 01

Certificate Reference Number: MAV011SBOT01

Project title: **Practices of school management teams (SMTs)
In managing learner attendance: A case of
three high schools in King Williams' town
Education District**

Nature of Project: Masters

Principal Researcher: Thozamile Alfred Botha

Supervisor: Dr MP Mavuso

Co-supervisor:

On behalf of the University of Fort Hare's Research Ethics Committee (UREC) I hereby give ethical approval in respect of the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project and research instrument(s). Should any other instruments be used, these require separate authorization. The Researcher may therefore commence with the research as from the date of this certificate, using the reference number indicated above.

Please note that the UREC must be informed immediately of

- Any material change in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the document
- Any material breaches of ethical undertakings or events that impact upon the ethical conduct of the research

The Principal Researcher must report to the UREC in the prescribed format, where applicable, annually, and at the end of the project, in respect of ethical compliance.

Special conditions: Research that includes children as per the official regulations of the act must take the following into account:

Note: The UREC is aware of the provisions of s71 of the National Health Act 61 of 2003 and that matters pertaining to obtaining the Minister's consent are under discussion and remain unresolved. Nonetheless, as was decided at a meeting between the National Health Research Ethics Committee and stakeholders on 6 June 2013, university ethics committees may continue to grant ethical clearance for research involving children without the Minister's consent, provided that the prescripts of the previous rules have been met. This certificate is granted in terms of this agreement.

The UREC retains the right to

- Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance Certificate if
 - Any unethical principal or practices are revealed or suspected
 - Relevant information has been withheld or misrepresented
 - Regulatory changes of whatsoever nature so require
 - The conditions contained in the Certificate have not been adhered to
- Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project.
- In addition to the need to comply with the highest level of ethical conduct principle investigators must report back annually as an evaluation and monitoring mechanism on the progress being made by the research. Such a report must be sent to the Dean of Research's office

The Ethics Committee wished you well in your research.

Yours sincerely


Professor Gideon de Wet
Dean of Research

28 May 2014

Appendix I: Authority Letter from the Department of Education



Province of the
EASTERN CAPE
EDUCATION

STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICY RESEARCH AND SECRETARIAT SERVICES
Steve Vukile Tshwete Complex • Zone 6 • Zwelitsha • Eastern Cape
Private Bag X0032 • Bisho • 5605 • REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: +27 (0)40 608 4773/4035/4537 • Fax: +27 (0)40 608 4574 • Website: www.ecdoe.gov.za
Enquiries: B Pamla Email: babalwa.pamla@edu.ecprov.gov.za Date 15 July 2014

Mr. Thozamile Botha
P.O. Box 177
Bisho
5605

Dear Mr. Botha

PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE A MASTERS THESIS: PRACTICES OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAMS (SMTs) IN MANAGING LEARNER ATTENDANCE – A CASE OF THREE HIGH SCHOOLS IN KING WILLIAM'S TOWN

1. Thank you for your application to conduct research.
2. Your application to conduct the above mentioned research in three rural High Schools under the jurisdiction of King William's Town District of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) is hereby approved on condition that:
 - a. there will be no financial implications for the Department;
 - b. institutions and respondents must not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation;
 - c. you present a copy of the written approval letter of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) to the Chief Directors and Directors before any research is undertaken at any institutions within that particular district;
 - d. you will make all the arrangements concerning your research;
 - e. the research may not be conducted during official contact time, as educators' programmes should not be interrupted;

building blocks for growth

Page 1 of 2



Ikamva elipaqantileyo!

- f. should you wish to extend the period of research after approval has been granted, an application to do this must be directed to Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation;
 - g. the research may not be conducted during the fourth school term, except in cases where a special well motivated request is received;
 - h. your research will be limited to those schools or institutions for which approval has been granted, should changes be effected written permission must be obtained from the Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation;
 - i. you present the Department with a copy of your final paper/report/dissertation/thesis free of charge in hard copy and electronic format. This must be accompanied by a separate synopsis (maximum 2 – 3 typed pages) of the most important findings and recommendations if it does not already contain a synopsis.
 - j. you present the findings to the Research Committee and/or Senior Management of the Department when and/or where necessary.
 - k. you are requested to provide the above to the Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation upon completion of your research.
 - l. you comply with all the requirements as completed in the Terms and Conditions to conduct Research in the ECDoE document duly completed by you.
 - m. you comply with your ethical undertaking (commitment form).
 - n. you submit on a six monthly basis, from the date of permission of the research, concise reports to the Chief Director: Strategic Management Monitoring and Evaluation.
3. The Department reserves a right to withdraw the permission should there not be compliance to the approval letter and contract signed in the Terms and Conditions to conduct Research in the ECDoE.
 4. The Department will publish the completed Research on its website.
 5. The Department wishes you well in your undertaking. You can contact the Chief Director, Mr. GF Mac Master on the numbers indicated in the letterhead or email greg.macmaster@edu.ecprov.gov.za should you need any assistance.



GF MAC MASTER

CHIEF DIRECTOR: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT MONITORING AND EVALUATION
FOR SUPERINTENDENT-GENERAL: EDUCATION

University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

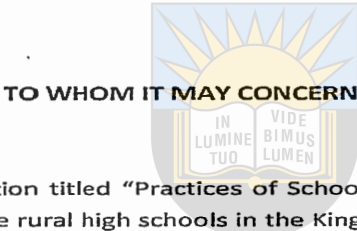


Ikama eliqagambileyo!

Appendix J: Professional editors' certificate

Pamela Makati
50 Banbury Park
Hunters Road
Northwold
2188
0718952687/0734145879
pm_makati@yahoo.com

12 March 2015



hereby declare that the dissertation titled “Practices of School Management Teams in managing learner attendance: A case of three rural high schools in the King Williams Town Education District.” by Mr T.A. Botha, has been intensively edited and thoroughly proofread.

Sincerely,

Pamela Makati (BA Hons English, MA English, PhD)
Language Editor
Member of Professional Editors' Group & English Academy of Southern Africa)