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SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH AND LEARNER FAILURE

Raesetja Augustina Raphela

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management (in the field of Public and Development Sector Monitoring and Evaluation).

August, 2023

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the factors which resulted in learners dropping out of a skills development programme for out-of-school youth provided by the Mpumalanga Regional Training Trust (MRTT). This investigation plays a critical role in identifying the factors that result in out-of-school youth enrolling for the skills development programmes. This will assist the training providers to ensure the learners complete the programme and be able to participate in the economic activities of the country. Furthermore, the investigation was extended by exploring the strategies that can be implemented by the training institution to ensure that learners complete the skills development programme for out-of-school youth. MRTT was purposively selected for the study as it is one of the training institutions implementing a skills development programme for out-of-school youth. A sample of 30 learners that dropped out of the skills development programme for out-of-school youth was chosen using a random sampling method. A qualitative research approach, through semi-structured interviews, was adopted to acquire an in-depth exploration of the underlying factors that are contributing to continuous learner dropout. Data were analysed thematically by categorising the collected data into themes that emerged from the interviews. The results revealed that the learners dropped out due to a combination of factors which include financial difficulties, job opportunities, stipend challenges, lack of communication by the training institution and socio-economic factors. In addition to these factors the results revealed that the majority of the learners enrolled for the skills development programme because of stipend. The results further highlighted strategies that can be implemented by the training institutions to address the dropout challenges which include increasing the stipend value, payment of stipend on time, providing transport services, creating a communication platform, and improving communication with the learners.

KEYWORDS: Skills development; dropout; youth; out-of-school youth

DECLARATION

I declare that this report is my own, unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Management (in the field of Public and Development Sector Monitoring and Evaluation) in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.



Raesetja Augustina Raphela
August 2023

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CETA	Construction Education and Training Authority
DOL	Department of Labour
MTSF	Medium-Term Strategic Framework
MRTT	Mpumalanga Regional Training Trust
NDP	National Development Plan
NQF	National Qualification Framework
NYP	National Youth Policy
SAQA	South African Qualification Authority
SDA	Skills Development Act, 1998 (Act No. 97 of 1998)
SDLA	Skills Development Levies Act
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authorities
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN	United Nations

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The burden of youth unemployment continues to weigh heavily in South Africa, with a 37% unemployment rate for the youth between the ages of 15 and 24 and 46.3% of the youth aged between 24 and 34 (Statistics South Africa, 2022). Nationally the country is experiencing an unemployment rate of 34.5% (Statistics South Africa, 2022). The youth unemployment rate continues to increase because of the inequalities and uneven economic benefits in South African society, which are a form of marginalisation inherited from past generations (Mudiriza et al., 2023). Two decades post-apartheid, the challenges are still in existence (Mudiriza et al., 2023). This issue has led directly to youth unemployment in Black and poor communities; a current problem that continues to increase in South Africa (Chelechele, 2009). Some of the root causes of this challenge are that most youths have little to no skills, and the number continues to escalate, partly due to out-of-school learners dropping out of skills development programmes (Brynard, 2011; Chelechele, 2009; Ndedi, 2009; Nugent, 2006).

An out-of-school learner or youth is defined as an individual between the age of 18 and 24 who failed to complete high school and consequently does not possess any qualification or skill valued by the labour market (Vayachuta et al., 2016; De Witte, Cabus, Thyssen, Groot, & van den Brink, 2013). In this case study, students who have dropped out of high school are classified as "school-leavers," and the students who enrolled for the skills development programme are classified as "learners" and the "out-of-school youth."

In South Africa, the government has developed economic empowerment policies to improve the economic standard of vulnerable and poor communities, especially the youth (Brynard, 2011). These include the National Youth Policy (NYP) (2015), Skills Development Levies Act (SDLA), and Skills Development Strategy, which emphasises the need to provide out-of-school youth with interventions to address

the lack of necessary skills for participation in economic activities. The NYP (2015) further highlights the high dropout rate and inadequate skills development as issues that need to be dealt with to increase young people's chances of securing employment.

To address the challenges in the NYP (2015), the National Development Plan (NDP) (2030) highlights skills development as one of the main elements that the government can use to eradicate poverty and reduce inequality (National Planning Commision, 2012). Additionally, Powell and Lolwana (2012) argue that one factor that will lead to a change in unemployment numbers and improve economic growth is skills development programmes. King and Palmer (2010, p. 6) further highlight that the government utilises these programmes towards the transition "from school to work of school leavers and foster equality of opportunity and social cohesion".

The 2013 White Paper on Post-School Education and Training indicates that by 2030, South Africa must have a post-school system that can provide a variety of programmes for the youth, targeting the poor, as it is the group that is most affected by the challenges related to school completion (DHET, 2013). To ensure that the out-of-school youth have access to skills development programmes, training institutions use different platforms, such as community centres, youth centres and local municipalities, to recruit them.

Skills development programmes are a government intervention that intends to improve the well-being of people through the training of school-leavers (Mudiriza et al., 2023). Skills development programmes are designed to provide learners with theoretical (30%) and practical (70%) training (Aigbavboa & Thwala, 2014). The main reason for integrating institutional and workplace training is to ensure that learners acquire a required or valued skill in the workplace (MRTT, 2014). Furthermore, these programmes are crucial knowledge required to execute any

task efficiently and effectively, especially for individuals who do not possess any skills valued by the labour market (Chelechele, 2009).

The main goal of skills development programmes for out-of-school youth, which is the centre of interest of this study, is to mitigate the country's socio-economic challenges and, in so doing, the government seeks to eradicate the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality (UNICEF, 2012). These out-of-school youth programmes are generally open to individuals who did not complete high school, do not possess any additional skills, and are excluded by universities and training colleges (NYP, 2015).

In South Africa, out-of-school youth programmes are implemented by national, provincial and local government, funded to enhance skills and ensure that out-of-school youth challenges are reduced (Thwala, 2011). As one of the significant interventions to address the youth skills shortage, the demand for the out-of-school skills development programme is increasing due to the high number of school-leavers (Thwala, 2011).

To highlight an increase in the dropout rate in South Africa, the Minister of Basic Education, in a written response to the National Assembly, indicated that the percentage of students who started school and made it to matric on time or in the minimum prescribed time is between 37% and 40% (Minister of Basic Education, 2018). However, this rate is affected by grade repetition. The Minister of Basic Education further indicated that the dropout rate appears to be higher at the secondary schooling level (Minister of Basic Education, 2018). Table 1.1 shows the students' survival rates, the percentage of learners who reached a given grade regardless of repetition, and dropout rates associated with each grade, which was collected through a survey conducted between 2016 and 2018 for those born between 1992 and 1994.

Table 1.1: Grade survival and dropout rates in South Africa, 2016-2018

2016-2018 Pooled datasets (for those born between 1992-1994)			
	Survival rate	Survival per 1 000 youths	Percentage dropping out after attaining this grade
Total cohort	100%		
No schooling		1 000	0,68%
Grade 1	99,32%	993	0,10%
Grade 2	99,22%	992	0,23%
Grade 3	98,99%	990	0,31%
Grade 4	98,68%	987	0,34%
Grade 5	98,34%	983	0,58%
Grade 6	97,77%	978	1,31%
Grade 7	96,49%	965	2,69%
Grade 8	93,89%	939	4,37%
Grade 9	89,79%	898	10,51%
Grade 10	80,35%	804	14,84%
Grade 11	68,43%	684	24,08%
Grade 12	51,95%	520	

Source: Minister of Basic Education (2018)

Table 1.1 indicates that the highest dropout rate is evident in Grade 11, with 24,08%, which is almost a quarter of the students. The dropout challenge continues within the skills development programmes, with an estimated dropout rate of 25% (DHET, 2012).

The youth constitute a large segment of approximately 29% of the global population (Ansell, 2016). This has an undesirable effect on socio-economic policies due to limited participation in economic activities as many young people do not have the skills that are required or valued in the workplace if they drop out of school (Adelman & Szekely, 2016; Nugent, 2006). The reasons why youth are leaving school include work opportunities that arise while in the programme, financial pressures, and guardians or parents who do not recognise or see the

importance of education (Chelechele, 2009; Ndedi, 2009; Nugent, 2006). This is evidence that the training centres should urgently develop an intervention to address the factors that influence learners to drop out of the skills development programme, which appears to be increasing annually.

The Department of higher education and training highlighted that, the dropout rate for vocational skills is estimated to be between 13% and 25% annually (DHET, 2012). In addition to an increasing dropout rate, it was further highlighted that during 2007, 2,8 million youth between the ages of 18 and 24 were not employed and not in training or education (DHET, 2012). This is likely to increase the youth unemployment rate, taking into consideration the economic slowdown that is currently being experienced in South Africa.

The World Bank (2007) has emphasised that the youth is a crucial group for countries to start building human resources, which can be through skills development to better their standard of living. The report further highlights that the skills development of younger generations between the ages of 15 and 25 is linked to long-term growth of the country. However, the number of dropouts continues to increase for the younger generation (World Bank, 2007). In addition, the United Nations (2010) has emphasised that despite the improvement realised on young people with primary education, the number of individuals with no skills continues to increase, which has remained a challenge for developed and developing countries.

The literature highlights that the increase in the number of individuals with no skills is due to some learners dropping out of various programmes (Thwala, 2011; Christenson & Thurlow, 2004). The United Nations (2010) further indicates that in addressing the lack of training opportunities, the government and non-governmental organisations worldwide are working together to help youth gain access to skills development programmes. Training programmes are provided to ensure that the youth have skills that will allow them to participate in the economic

activities of developed and developing countries (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004; Thwala, 2011).

1.2. Problem statement

Although the government has undertaken interventions to increase the skilled workforce in the country, a large proportion of learners enrolled in these programmes tend to drop out (Thwala, 2011). Nugent (2006) indicates that the most disadvantaged individuals in Africa are the youth, with only 55% of the youth in managing to complete primary school. Furthermore, UNESCO's Institute for Statistics (2010) has highlighted that 42% of Black African school children in South Africa drop out of school early; hence, the government has intervened to address the out-of-school youth problem (Brynard, 2011). Despite the initiatives undertaken by the South African government to address skills deficits, specifically for the youth, learners continue to drop out of the skills programmes, which is a challenge that most implementers are struggling to mitigate (Cerda-Navarro et al., 2017).

Based on the observation and monitoring of skills programmes implemented by the Mpumalanga Regional Training Trust (MRTT), an increasing number of learners are dropping out every year (MRTT, 2014, 2019). The MTSF (2014-2019) highlights that most learners quit skills development programmes before completion (National Planning Commission, 2014). The reduction in dropouts from the skills development programmes is one of the challenges facing most training institutions (Dore & Lüscher, 2011).

Preventing learners from dropping out of the programmes and encouraging completion is a critical challenge for implementers (Powell & Lolwana, 2012; King & Palmer, 2010). Christenson and Thurlow (2004) highlight that the type of learners at the most significant risk of dropping out from skills development programmes can be identified. However, these learners' main reasons for dropping out are unknown, even though the government continues to allocate

funds for this intervention annually (Hartnack, 2017; De Witte et al., 2013; Christenson & Thurlow, 2004).

1.3. Purpose statement

Research by authors such as Cerda-Navarro et al. (2017), and Hartnack (2017) acknowledge that the drop-out of learners from skills development programmes is a critical challenge, but that the determinants of dropping out have not been identified. Furthermore, plentiful research has been conducted investigating factors that result in the high number of dropouts, as confirmed by De Witte et al. (2013), Tanggaard (2013) and Dore and Lüscher (2011); however, almost all of it is related to high school-leavers and online schooling dropouts (Dore & Lüscher, 2011; Tanggaard, 2013). Therefore, there is a need to identify the factors that have resulted in the high dropout rate, specifically in the skills development programmes as the results may differ because of the area where they live and the training centre.

In addition, studies that have focused on skills development programmes or vocational programmes have mainly highlighted the challenges experienced by the implementers of the programmes (Cerda-Navarro et al., 2017; De Witte et al., 2013; Hartnack, 2017). This study was undertaken to understand the experiences of the learners or their viewpoint and to contribute to the literature by investigating the factors that have resulted in learners dropping out of the out-of-school Construction Education and Training Authority (CETA) skills programme offered by the MRTT in Lynnville, Emalahleni, Mpumalanga.

This research was conducted with learners who have dropped out from the out-of-school youth skills programmes offered by the MRTT, a public entity in Mpumalanga. This entity is mandated to empower youth through training and providing them with a chance to participate in the economic activities in the province.

This study was conducted when the country was experiencing a mismatch and shortage of skills and persistent youth unemployment (Chelechele, 2009). Given this situation, the study sought to establish the underlying factors of learner dropout. The purpose of the study was to explore the factors that have resulted in learners dropping out of the skills development programme for out-of-school youth.

1.4. Research question

To investigate the factors that resulted in learners dropping out of the out-of-school skills development programme, the researcher posed the following research questions:

Primary question: What are the underlying factors behind learners dropping out of the CETA skills development programme in Building and Civil Construction?

Secondary question: What strategies can be implemented to address the dropout issue?

1.5. Structure of the report

This report entails six chapters. In Chapter 2, a literature review is provided of previous studies on the causes of learner dropout from skills development programmes. The essential themes in the literature on out-of-school youth dropouts from skills development programmes are given. Furthermore, the relevant literature for the study, the general trends within dropout studies, and the literature that informed the conceptual framework for the analysis are summarised.

In Chapter 3, the design applied for this research and the research approach used to conduct this study are outlined. Explanations are provided for selecting the research approach. The research tools and their application are presented, including the sampling procedure and the data collection method utilised. Finally, details on the process followed when analysing the data, the limitations of the research, and the ethical considerations are outlined.

In Chapter 4, the research data on the factors contributing to participants dropping out of the skills development programme are presented. The meaning behind the information collected from the participants about the research questions and the research concepts are provided. In addition, the participants' experiences of the programme are outlined. This is followed by Chapter 5, in which the analysis the researcher executed on the collected data is presented. Finally, in Chapter 6, a general conclusion of the case study is given, including a summary of the findings and recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The previous chapter provided an introduction and background to the study. The key concepts and theoretical framework for understanding and investigating the factors that result in learners dropping out of skills development programmes are reflected on in this chapter. Furthermore, to appreciate the knowledge gap, in other words, what has been conducted to date and what is yet to be undertaken, a review of empirical studies that attempted to investigate the challenges that resulted in out-of-school youth dropping out of skills development interventions is presented. The literature review was conducted in the global and local context on the factors leading to learners dropping out of skills development programmes for out-of-school youth, specifically on the factors that contributed to the dropouts.

Dropping out of the skills development programme is often attached to a negative judgement which includes dropout from the high school level. In this study, the researcher will be exploring the factor that resulted in learners dropping out of the skills development programme, this study has a strong link with the literature related to school dropout because the learners targeted for the skills development for out-of-school youth are learners that dropped out of school. Therefore, to get a wide range understanding of the skills development and learners enrolling for the programme the literature related to school dropout will also be reviewed for this study.

2.2. Policy and legislative background

The South African government has accepted that the skills shortage is a challenge and, as such, action has been taken to address the challenge (National Planning Commision, 2012). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996) stipulates socio-economic development as one of the objectives of local government (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). It further specifies that local government, in its planning process, should

prioritise the activities that will be undertaken for socio-economic development for disadvantaged communities, targeting youth as they are the future (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, 1996). Additionally, it specifies that local government should participate in development programmes implemented provincially and nationally. This highlights the need for municipalities to have interventions that can assist young people in participating in the country's economic activities. Local government participation in the interventions is essential in ensuring that the transformation from apartheid to democracy results in the government achieving inclusive education for all South Africans (Donohue & Bornman, 2014).

In addition to what the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, stipulates and to guide skills development in the country, a policy framework, namely the Skills Development Act (SDA), 1998 (Act No. 97 of 1998), was promulgated. The SDA provides guidelines for how institutions such as the National Skills Authority and Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETA) are formed to improve skills development in the country's workforce. The primary purpose of the SDA is the development and improvement of skills for South African citizens to ensure that they participate in the country's economic activities and ensure that the needs of the citizens are improved economically and socially.

The high demand for capable labour in the country resulted in government identifying scarce skills and developing interventions to resolve the insufficient skills problem that the country is experiencing (Akbar et al., 2016). In undertaking the directive, SETAs were established through the DHET to ensure that the objectives of the skills development strategy are implemented. In ensuring that the SETAs produce accurate and appropriate skills development programmes, they must function within the frameworks provided by South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) and the National Qualification Framework (NQF) (DHET, 2013).

Skills development is envisioned to build the abilities and competencies, knowledge, and learning process required to efficiently and effectively execute tasks at one's workplace (Chelechele, 2009; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Simmons (2006, p. 105) further explains that skills development programmes "work specifically for those who did not enter formal schooling or who drop out of the formal school system." Ansell (2016) further describes development as an idea designed to assist socio-economic processes in addressing the desired goals of society.

Furthermore, Ndedi (2009) points out that at the beginning of democracy in South Africa, there were high hopes that democracy would bring an improved standard of living for all; however, numerous challenges that negatively impacted economic growth came with it. One of the significant challenges caused by apartheid and colonial era policies was youth unemployment, poverty, and inequalities (Mudiriza et al., 2023; Ndedi, 2009). Two decades post-apartheid, the challenges are still in existence, and research has shown that one of the root causes for these challenges is unskilled youth due to socio-economic exclusion (Mudiriza et al., 2023). Unskilled youth has been highlighted as one of the challenges caused by the skills development programmes high dropout rate because the programmes are developed to support access to the labour market. Therefore, skills development programmes have been initiated to assist with capacitating the out-of-school youth through training that will allow them to be involved in economic activities.

Skills development has been highlighted as a critical area that the country is struggling with, and with these challenges in place, the likelihood of improving the living standards of the underprivileged residents is very slim (Chelechele, 2009). The number of unskilled youth increases annually, partly due to youth dropping out of school and skills development programmes. Furthermore, Aigbavboa and Thwala (2014) indicate that another challenge is that individuals with skills or education continue to emigrate to other countries owing to better offers and

incentives. According to the 2016 community survey conducted by Statistics South Africa, the number of individuals who relocated between 2006 and 2016 was 97 460 (Statistics South Africa, 2016). On average, 23 000 skilled individuals leave South Africa annually due to poor economic growth (Buckham, 2019). This issue reduces the number of skilled individuals in the country. The problems highlighted above indicate how crucial skills development is and the importance of executing it appropriately to ensure the completion of programmes. The South African government developed an intervention to bring equality to mitigate these challenges, focusing on critical areas such as education, skills development, and unemployment (Brynard, 2011).

Several skills development programmes have been implemented in the country over the years, with empirical evidence indicating that some of the programmes have been successful, while others have failed. Tshilongamulenzhe et al., (2013) argue that work-related learning and skills programmes are imperative to address skill shortages as it provides the youth with training that includes theory and practical work. The arguments highlighted by Maunders (2006) take it further by emphasising that appropriate policies and procedures are also crucial as it will adequately assist training institutions in helping learners complete the programme.

Generally, it has been highlighted that not all programmes fail; however, failing skills development programmes negatively affect government as public policy goals and objectives will not be achieved (Kuye & Nhlapo, 2011). Furthermore, the expenditure incurred could have been utilised in areas with insufficient funds to carry out policies (Kuye & Nhlapo, 2011).

Given the gaps indicated and the number of interventions, such as the capacity-building skills programme implemented by the South African government to address skill shortages, specifically for out-of-school youth, many participants of skills development programmes still dropout from training (MRTT, 2014, 2019;

National Planning Commission, 2014). It was, therefore, appropriate to investigate the factors that resulted in learners dropping out of the skills development programme.

2.3. Empirical literature review

Globally, empirical evidence suggests that numerous interacting factors affect learners during their time in training, which might lead to them ultimately dropping out of training (Adelman & Szekely, 2016). There is concurrence in the international and local literature that the absconsion challenge is not only a challenge for government in terms of the underdevelopment of an individual's capability and cost, but also a challenge for the youth labour market (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004; Hartnack, 2017; Kraak et al., 2013). This challenge further results in a lack of access or participation in the economy, which affects an individual emotionally, socially and economically (De Witte et al., 2013). Furthermore, researchers such as Aarkrog et al. (2018), Lamb (2011), and Wells, Bechard and Hambly (1989) have attempted to identify the factors that are most usually associated with learner dropout, namely institutional, individual, community, and family factors. The review has, therefore, been divided into institutional, individual, family, and community factors in this section.

2.3.1. Institutional factors

While it is understood that dropping out of a training programme is an individual decision, it is usually based on an individual's behaviour and attitude, which is shaped by the training providers or the communities in which they live, including family (Aarkrog et al., 2018; Rumberger, 2001). Several researchers widely acknowledge that training institutions play a significant role in learners' achievements, including the completion or non-completion of programmes (Aarkrog et al., 2018; De Witte et al., 2013; Rumberger, 2001; Rumberger & Lim, 2008). Besides spending time at home, learners spend most of their time at the training institution at which they are enrolled. Therefore, it must be a good and healthy environment for them.

Several studies advocate that insufficient resources and understaffing influence learners to drop out of skills development programmes as the training facilities are not adequately equipped (Böhn & Deutscher, 2022; Kambouri & Francis, 1994; Van der Bijl & Lawrence, 2019). It was also highlighted that the teacher to learner ratio is one of the identified predictors contributing to the learners' decision to drop out (Naylor, 1987; Thalhammer et al., 2022). Classes with higher number of learners can result in learners disengaging and losing interest in the training (Naylor, 1987; Thalhammer et al., 2022). For this reason, training institutions need to have the capacity and resources to accommodate number of learners who enrol for their programme every year.

In addition to insufficient resources and capacity, Kambouri and Francis (1994) argue that an inadequate learning environment could have a negative effect on learners, for example, in cases where a training facilitator has overlooked a learner's difficulties, which may lead to that learner's intended results not being realised. It could result in the learner disengaging from the programme. The training centres are similar to a learner's second home and, therefore, more attention should be given to identifying any issues that might affect the learners' progress or performance in training and the trainers should be equipped to identify any learning difficulties which may be there.

Additionally, it has been highlighted that entities or training institutions responsible for the execution of skills development programmes and the learners undergoing such training programmes have raised a critical issue about ineffective and inefficient programmes being implemented in South Africa, which involves the quality of training, as what they have been taught in class (in other words, the theoretical component) does not link to the practical training, which might result in some learners dropping out of the programmes (Aigbavboa & Thwala, 2014; Kanjere, 2014; Kraak et al., 2013; Maroo et al., 2015; Van der Bijl & Lawrence, 2019).

Additional factors that emanated from the training institutions include the facilitators' qualifications and style of teaching, the facilitators' experience and interaction with the learners (Böhn & Deutscher, 2022; Kambouri & Francis, 1994; Patzina & Wydra-Somaggio, 2020; Van der Bijl & Lawrence, 2019), and the facilitators' attitude and behaviour toward the learners (Aarkrog et al., 2018; De Witte et al., 2013). These have been highlighted to be significantly associated with the high dropout rate because if the training facilitator's teaching style does not accommodate the learners, it will have a negative impact on learners completing the programme. For example, considering that the learners that enrol in these programmes have dropped out of high school for different reasons, the instructor should consider the style of teaching that will accommodate them. In addition, if the instructor does not have experience in how to interact with the learners and fail to maintain a good relationship with the learners, it will result in them disengaging from the training (Aarkrog et al., 2018; De Witte et al., 2013). This issue indicates the importance of providing practitioners with training that will assist them in improving their style of teaching. It has further been highlighted that in the classes where the training facilitators did not qualify to conduct the training, the learner dropout rate was increased compared to the classes where the facilitators had academic qualifications related to the relevant programme being implemented (Kambouri & Francis, 1994). Furthermore, Tas et al. (2013) also cites that a teacher's treatment and attitude towards their learners increase the learners' chances of leaving the training.

Furthermore, teacher support has been highlighted by Cerda-Navarro et al. (2017), who conducted a literature review on the reduction of dropout in skills development programmes and argued that the risk of dropping out could, in some way, be reduced if teachers provide emotional support to their learners. Teachers should also give extra attention, especially where indicators show that a learner is at risk of dropping out of the skills programme. This indicates that the lack of learner support increases the probability of learners dropping out of skills development programmes (Cerda-Navarro et al., 2017). However, as teachers

are human beings and have different personalities, learner support can be provided if the teachers are interested in the learners' performance and progress. Hence, the need to consistently provide training to teachers to improve their teaching style.

Additional to learner support, Simmons (2006) indicates that one of the challenges that affect the successful completion of skills programmes is the digital divide. His argument emphasises that access to the Internet by youth undergoing training would provide them with the authority, responsibility, abilities, and access to resources that will transform their lives and socio-economic status. For this reason, the training institutions need to provide Internet access throughout the training to ensure that they complete the programme.

Tshilongamulenzhe et al. (2013) assert that mentors responsible for guiding trainees are insufficient, that monitoring at workplace training is inadequate, and that policies and procedures for monitoring the trainees during their practical work are not linked to the theoretical part taught in class. Hence, it has been emphasised that a lack of mentorship could result in trainees dropping out from skills development training (Tshilongamulenzhe et al., 2013).

In a study conducted by Tshilongamulenzhe et al. (2013), the training providers responsible for implementing skills development programmes expressed that the system is a problem due to limited information, a lack of support, inappropriate content, and insufficient funds (Kraak et al., 2013; Tshilongamulenzhe et al., 2013; Pillay et al., 2012). The training providers emphasise that ineffective implementation leads to them failing to deliver programmes as designed, which further results in some learners dropping out from training (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004). This means that training institutions should have a clear plan to implement skills development programmes. This will ensure that learners do not get affected by the implementation issues that might push them to dropout.

Another factor that increases the absconsion rate is the inconsistencies between the programme and implementation, which is caused by a lack of experienced managers, coordination, and unrealistic policies (Kuye & Nhlapo, 2011). Furthermore, Kanjere (2014) alludes that the payment of stipends appears to be one of the risk factors that fail programmes as stipends attract individuals with no interest in the programmes. However, other authors assert that taking into consideration the areas targeted for skills development, stipends will assist trainees to cover their travelling to the training venue and additional costs (Engmann et al., 2017).

Over and above the dropout predictors emphasised by the different authors above, there is consensus that the programmes offered by government are not what the beneficiaries want (Kanjere, 2014; Kraak et al., 2013; Tshilongamulenzhe et al., 2013). Their interest in the programmes might have arisen owing to the stipends as it has been indicated that stipends attract the wrong beneficiaries (Engmann et al., 2017). The highlighted issues might increase the probability of learners dropping out as the programmes are not suitable for them or exit the programme once they secure other means of generating money (Kambouri & Francis, 1994).

Based on the training institution issues highlighted by different authors regarding learners dropping out of skills development programmes, it is understood that the challenges might influence the learners leaving these programmes if mitigating plans or corrective measures are not undertaken to ensure that the challenges are alleviated.

2.3.2. Individual factors

Dropping out of the skills development programme has been highlighted as a challenge that as some factors are linked directly to learners, which are assumed to increase the dropout rate. One of the potential predictors that are associated with learners dropping out of skills development programmes is academic

performance, and it has further been explained that poor academic performance results in learners disengaging from training and becoming demotivated to complete the programme because of their performance (De Witte et al., 2013; Kambouri & Francis, 1994; Marks & Fleming, 1999; Yi et al., 2015). Unfortunately, if a learner is not performing well academically, it will affect their self-esteem and confidence which might have negative impact towards completion of the programme. It might encourage them to dropout from the programme. This highlights the importance of the training centres having a remedial system in place where these learners can be assisted. In addition to the poor academic performance, learner's age was also associated with dropout because these learners tend to compare their achievements with their peers who are in the same age group, have qualification and are also working (Allensworth, 2004; Plank et al., 2005). This also discourages the learners to complete the programme.

In addition, in a study conducted by Aarkrog et al. (2018) regarding the potential dropout reasons from vocational education and training, it was revealed that the learners' decision to leave training is usually influenced by early secondary school experiences, for instance poor academic performance, which affect their self-esteem and could result in negative behaviour towards their teachers and peers. In most cases, such behaviour affects the relationship between the learner and the training facilitator, and propels the learner to drop out of the skills development programme (Aarkrog et al., 2018; Böhn & Deutscher, 2022; Van der Bijl & Lawrence, 2019). This might occur as the learners who dropped out from the skills development have already dropped out of secondary school, increasing the likelihood of them dropping out of subsequent educational programmes.

Furthermore, other factors that could potentially contribute to learners dropping out of skills development programmes differ by gender especially for females who has family commitment and roles that some females have to play and this is one of the aspects that might influence learners to drop out (De Witte et al., 2013; Kambouri & Francis, 1994). In addition, marriage has been identified as one of

the factors revealed to result in a higher possibility of learners dropping out of training (De Witte et al., 2013). The gendered responsibilities in some way or another, results in the female learner disengaging from the programme.

Cerda-Navarro et al. (2017) highlight that some learners move between programmes because of lack of adequate information regarding the programme, thereby increasing the number of learner dropouts. This is a challenge as government, or the training institutions do not have a system to identify such learners. Therefore, is it difficult for the training institutions to manage such a challenge. The movement of learners between programmes has also been highlighted by Kraak et al. (2013), in whose study it was stated that learners enrol for skills development programmes for stipends and not to acquire the skills. As soon as another programme is introduced with skills training that they are interested in, learners drop out and enrol for the other programme as initially, the programme was joined mainly for stipends (Kraak et al., 2013). Leaners tend to enrol for any available programme and later realise that they do not want to do it. However, Engmann et al. (2017) assert that considering the areas targeted for skills development, the stipend would assist trainees in covering their traveling and other costs.

Kambouri and Francis (1994) and Rumberger and Lim (2008) purport that the learners who tend to be absent are at risk of dropping out of training. In most cases, it is assumed that such learners have other underlying issues that occupy their minds and might lead them to disengaging from the programme (Kambouri & Francis, 1994). It has further been highlighted that the learners' health is also one of the factors that affect learning progress, as well as their commitment, which increases the dropout rate (De Witte et al., 2013; Kambouri & Francis, 1994).

Moreover, substance abuse has been emphasised as one factor that increases the possibility of dropping out of the programme before completion De Witte et al., 2013). Some authors agree that learners taking drugs have a high probability

of leaving training due to the instability caused by drugs (Dore & Lüscher, 2011; Hartnack, 2017). This might also lead to a learner's change of behaviour and attitude towards training (Dore & Lüscher, 2011; Hartnack, 2017). Furthermore, learners' attitudes and behaviour are influential factors that can cause learners to lose interest in skills development programmes and drop out of training (Hartnack, 2017; Dore & Lüscher, 2011).

In studies conducted by Furlong (2007) and Kambouri and Francis (1994), it was observed that the majority of learners drop out of skills development programmes to enter the job market. It has also been highlighted that this creates another challenge as the jobs they opt for tend to be short term (De Witte et al., 2013). This is because sustainable job opportunities have been declining and this challenge has a severe impact on youth unemployment (Furlong, 2007).

In contemporary society, it is difficult for young people with no skills to secure employment; hence, there is a need to identify the factors that result in learner absconsion (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004). Over and above the fact that learners drop out for short-term job offers, it has further been emphasised that a high dropout rate continues to be a problem as permanent jobs that pay a good salary are scarce for individuals who do not possess any skills (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004). As a result, some interventions have been implemented in the United States to ensure that young individuals are not left behind; however, these interventions are complicated by youth who continue to drop out of skills development programmes; hence, the dropout rate increases (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004).

Research has highlighted that if a wide variety of youth development programmes are implemented, they can result in positive behavioural outcomes and prevent any problematic behaviour, such as bad attitudes towards the training, absenteeism and dropouts (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). The only way to mitigate

the challenge is to identify the factors that hinder these programmes and those that can benefit the programmes.

2.3.3. Family-related factors

Some factors are family-related, and it is assumed that they are related to learners dropping out of training. As an example, learners from low-income households or poor backgrounds and learners residing in single-parent families are more likely to leave skills development programmes (De Witte et al., 2013; Marks & Fleming, 1999). Other indicators that have been highlighted are parents' education level and social capital related to the relationship with the parent and other family members (Dore & Lüscher, 2011).

One critical factor that has been highlighted to potentially contribute to learners' dropout decisions from skills development programmes is their socio-economic status, and it is mainly measured through the parents' education, occupation status and income (Aarkrog et al., 2018; De Witte et al., 2013; Marks & Fleming, 1999). These factors are assumed to be predictive of learner dropout as it is assumed that the level of the parents' education and aspirations play a vital role in their children's education (De Witte et al., 2013; Ishitani & Snider, 2006; Marks & Fleming, 1999). It has also been emphasised that learners tend to drop out of training when they come from families who do not see value in education, because they do not receive any support or encouragement from home (Yi et al., 2015). Parental education and support play a crucial role in shaping learners' career aspirations and decisions, including completing their training or dropping out of training programmes (Ishitani & Snider, 2006). It is argued that in most cases, if a guardian did not go to school, it is assumed that they do not see the value of education (De Witte et al., 2013; Ishitani & Snider, 2006; Marks & Fleming, 1999).

In addition to the above predictors regarding parental education and aspiration, Yi et al. (2015) further allude that learners who come from or reside in families

where the parents work in different cities tend to drop out of training as their guardian(s) or parent(s) are not there to guide them. Such learners decide when to attend training as their guardian(s) or parent(s) are not there to ensure that they attend.

Parental income and occupation have been highlighted as predictors that influence learners' dropout as it helps provide learners with the resources to support their education (Marks & Fleming, 1999; Van der Bijl & Lawrence, 2019). Therefore, if parents do not earn enough income to support the learners with resources, such as stationery and transport fare, learners will drop out of the programmes due to financial challenges (Marks & Fleming, 1999; Rumberger, 2001). Additionally, a study conducted by Ishitani and Snider (2006) regarding college retention revealed that financial constraints might influence learners' decision to drop out.

Despite what has been discussed above regarding parental income, some authors have different results. Yi et al. (2015) conducted a study to explore the causes of dropout in skills development in China and it was argued that financial constraint does not play any role in leading learners to drop out, but rather the parents' education status and the learners' performance results in learner dropout. It was further highlighted that learners who perform well are less likely to drop out than learners with lower performance (Yi et al., 2015).

In a study conducted by Pong and Ju (2000), it is highlighted that the termination of two-parent families does not influence learner dropout, but plays a significant role in the loss of income. The results have been highlighted to have an indirect influence on learner dropout due to the reduced family income due to the termination of the two-parent family, specifically for learners residing in disadvantaged areas (Pong & Ju, 2000). This factor appears to link to this study as the skills development programme is offered to participants who indicated that they live in single-parent families.

Lamb (2011) argues that most learners who leave training or drop out of training before completion tend to be socially disadvantaged (parental unemployment or low income) and, most of the time, they become less motivated about learning and disengage from training. A finding by authors such as De Witte et al. (2013), Dore and Lüscher (2011), and Plank et al. (2005) concurs with the latter statement and further indicates that these learners more often than not go through personal problems and behavioural issues that put them at risk, resulting in a decision to drop out.

It has also been highlighted that family structure plays a critical part in learners' decision to leave a skills development programme. For example, learners from a single-parent home tend to drop out of training as they do not get attention from their parents and some drop out as they feel they need to secure a job to assist the family financially (De Witte et al., 2013; Bridgeland et al., 2006).

Furthermore, Plank et al. (2005) highlight that learners under the care of stepparents tend to drop out of training programmes due to the treatment they experience at home, which makes them lose focus on schoolwork and drop out. Such an environment negatively affects the learners' self-esteem and performance, which leads to absconsion.

2.3.4. Community factors

Dropping out of skills development programmes has been identified as a severe social problem that has been increasing over the years and it is an issue that has been extended far beyond the training institution boundaries, which highlights the need to assess other variables, non-educational, that link with academic performance (Rumberger & Lim, 2008; Rosenthal, 1998). In addition to the individual, institutional and family factors, the community has been identified as one of the predictors contributing to learners dropping out of skills development programmes (Cerda-Navarro et al., 2017).

The community has been identified as an environment where a learner spends most of their time and if neighbourhood characteristics are not good, such as a violent neighbourhood, it has a negative impact on the learner's aspiration towards their career or education (Cerda-Navarro et al., 2017; Van der Bijl & Lawrence, 2019). It encourages the learner to drop out of training. In addition to neighbourhood characteristics, peer pressure might increase the probabilities of a learner undergoing training programmes in the community dropping out because of the aspiration to secure employment to be on the same level as their peers (Böhn & Deutscher, 2022; Mdluli, 2017).

Furthermore, the condition of communities, such as a lack of facilities and parks (Rosenthal, 1998), is likely to increase the probability of learners dropping out of skills development programmes. Because the poor conditions of such areas has been shown to influence adolescent development, their peers might also affect them negatively (Rosenthal, 1998).

Over and above a lack of facilities, it has further been highlighted that poor communities, areas with high poverty rates, are likely to encourage families to move from one place to another due to their living conditions (Rosenthal, 1998). As an example, seeking better opportunities affects a learner's stability, and school engagement will decline, resulting in dropout because of the movement (Rosenthal, 1998). It has further been highlighted that poor neighbourhoods have high levels of crime and violence, because when people are hungry, some resort to other ways of making money, which is one of the predictors that might result in learners dropping out of training (Rosenthal, 1998). This might increase the dropout rate due to peer influence.

Poor and disadvantaged communities play a significant role in a learner's educational aspiration, and the struggles may lead to the learner leaving training (Hartnack, 2017). This is because learners from poor communities are likely to have friends who are at home and not attending training, which might increase

the chances of them dropping out of training programmes. The learners more likely to leave training because of the influence from their friends, such as encouraging them to skip classes to spend time with them (Tas et al., 2013). A study conducted by Tas et al. (2013) indicated that some participants' choice of friends from the community they reside in is what led to them leaving the training. It was highlighted that they skipped classes because of them, which became a norm and later resulted in the decision to drop out (Tas et al., 2013).

A study conducted by Charmaraman and Hall (2011) and Rosenthal (1998) regarding the factors associated with dropping out elements that are not related to education facilities indicated that the communities with single-parent households and adults that did not complete school are likely to have a large number of learners not completing training compared to areas with adults having acquired some form of qualification. The areas with adults that have obtained some form of qualification are very influential in encouraging learners to develop some skills compared to the areas with the adults with no education (Charmaraman & Hall, 2011; Rosenthal, 1998).

2.4. Theoretical framework

The theoretical literature that provides details about the process of learner dropout is outlined in this section. Several theoretical frameworks model dropout and in this research report, the theoretical frameworks that will be reviewed were established by Tinto (1975) and Rumberger and Lim (2008) as they focus on dropout factors.

2.4.1. Student integration model

One of the models addressed in this case study is the "student integration" model established by Tinto (1975). Tinto (1975) established this model, intending to assist academic institutions with the administration and understanding of how learners or students make difficult decisions regarding withdrawal from their

studies. The student integration model is explanatory and explains student withdrawal processes or perseverance processes (Tinto, 1975).

The integration model includes three features. The first is about the fact that students enter academic institutions with different levels of educational arrangements and attributes. The second feature is that students develop different levels of integration into the educational and social systems of the institutions, which take into consideration their performance, interaction with the faculty staff, and attitudes towards their academic progress (Tinto, 1975). The last feature is that students develop different ways of integrating into an institution's social system, which considers how they interact with their peers and participate in extracurricular activities (Tinto, 1975). These features have been highlighted as significant integration that students need to reduce the probability of learners withdrawing from their studies (Tinto, 1975).

The integration model is mainly based on a suitable integration between individual learners and the institution and environment, and it further illustrates the dropout process with regard to social and educational integration within the training institution (Tinto, 1975). This model demonstrates the belief that the integration level relates to the potential that might lead to the learner or student dropping out (Tinto, 1993).

Tinto (1975) emphasises that the when students or learners are integrated into an institution appropriately, the less likely they will drop out, which mainly highlights the fact that one of the significant factors that contribute to learner dropout is how students are integrated into the academic institution, socially and academically. Tinto (1993) further depicts that learners need to be committed to their career and institution, and have clear educational goals to complete their studies or training. Otherwise, the likelihood of dropping out is very high. The student integration model is depicted in figure 2.1.

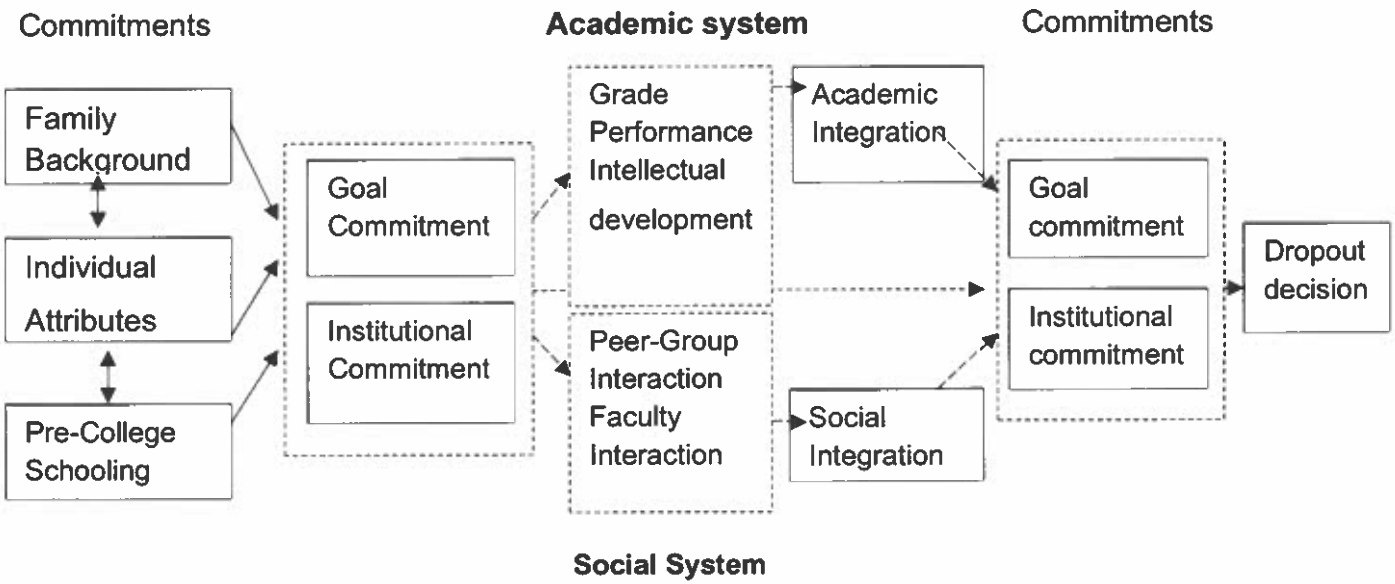

Figure 2.1: Student Integration Model (Tinto, 1975, pp. 89-125)

Tinto (1975) highlights that students enter institutions with the commitment to complete their studies and further explains that students enter institutions with "baggage" such as emotional and family issues. Such issues play a role in encouraging learners to enrol in an institution, and their commitment to completing their studies (Tinto, 1975). According to Tinto (1975), learners' dropout behaviour is a consequence of the integration of the academic and social system, which means that the combination of the learners' commitment to their studies and their integration into the institution's systems encourage them to complete their studies. According to the integration model by Tinto (1975), a student's social integration intensifies their school commitment, eventually reducing the probability of student dropout.

It can be argued that the student integration model covers numerous variables that need to be considered when investigating the factors that contribute to learner dropout. This model defines the process from when a learner enters an institution, is within the institution system, until the end. However, the model does not acknowledge external factors projected to contribute to learner dropouts, such as community, cultural, and environmental factors.

2.4.2. Student performance model

The second model that is reviewed for this case study is the "conceptual model of student performance" (Rumberger & Lim, 2008, p. 11). This model has been established to provide a holistic description of why learners drop out and the factors influencing learner dropout, persistence, and achievement. It was conducted by analysing theoretical literature related to student graduation and dropout (Rumberger & Lim, 2008).

The model considers learner dropout as an aspect that links with academic performance, which is influenced by individual and institutional factors (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). It has further been stipulated that individual elements

are related to learners, and that institutional factors are related to their families, school and the community (Rumberger & Lim, 2008).

Rumberger and Lim (2008) posit that individual factors can be divided into four parts that are believed to be underlying features that influence learners to drop out, including educational performance, attitudes, behaviour, and learner background (refer to Figure 2.1). Furthermore, institutional factors, schools, families, and communities have also been emphasised as the underlying features influencing dropouts. Therefore, it is argued that this model covers all aspects possibly contributing to learner dropout, and it is applied as a base for this study.

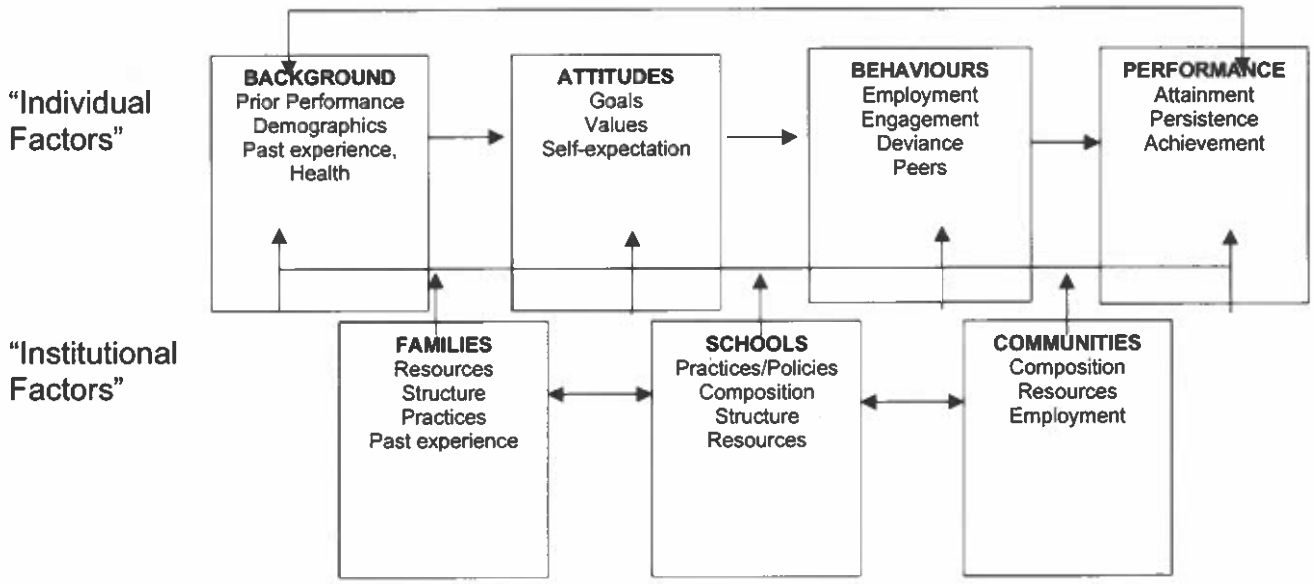

Figure 2.2 Conceptual Model of High School Performance (Rumberger & Lim, 2008, p. 86)

The model suggests that the dropout process is influenced by various factors related to an individual's background, behaviour, attitude, and performance, and that the other factors are institutional (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). Educational performance has been identified as one area that influences dropout, which links to three factors, namely achievement, persistence, and attainment (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). These factors highlight an individual's educational performance and progress as predictive factors that increase the dropout rate. An individual's mobility indicates how persistent a learner is, for example, changing programmes or moving to a suitable programme is an indication that a learner is not constant (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). The framework suggests that training completion depends on a learner's performance and persistence, which means that learners with poor academic performance are less likely to complete (Rumberger & Lim, 2008).

The next aspect is an individual's behaviour, which is associated with how an individual engages their peers, and it appears to link to educational performance (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). Behaviour has been identified as one predictor that can determine whether a learner can complete their training, and individual behaviour is determined by how a learner is engaged in their work and how often they are absent. The framework highlights that a high level of engagement will reduce the possibility of learner dropout. It has further been highlighted that involvement or engagement with deviant behaviour, including misbehaving, alcohol or drugs, and teen childbearing increases the probability of learners dropping out of training (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). Peers have been identified to play a critical role in influencing learners' behaviour and attitudes, which might lead to dropout; for instance, having a friend who dropped out increases the likelihood of learner dropout. Lastly, employment while still studying has been highlighted as the predictor that affects a learner's educational behaviour, which might increase the dropout rate (Rumberger & Lim, 2008).

Another factor highlighted by Rumberger and Lim (2008) is an attitude associated with an individual's goals, expectations, and values, and it has been indicated that to complete education, one must have a plan and believe in their capability to achieve it. Therefore, it is assumed that an individual's expectations and goals about education determine whether he or she will complete the training.

Additional to the individual factors are the institutional factors, including the family, school and community-related issues that influence learner dropout. As one of the contributors to an individual's decision to drop out, family is influenced by several features that include family structure (Rumberger & Lim, 2008).

Family structure refers to the number of individuals in a household where the learner lives, and it has been highlighted as a dropout factor as it affects an individual's development through resources and practices (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). For instance, families with a lower income and single-parent families might have a negative impact on as children's education. These families are likely to depend on public assistance (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). The family structure also affects the family resources and practices, and the relationships parents have with their children, which can have a negative impact on the learners (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). It is assumed that if the parents are not involved or monitoring the learners' work, the probability of the learners disengaging from the programme is high (Rumberger & Lim, 2008).

Furthermore, the family's status in terms of the parents' occupation and educational level, including the academic level of the siblings, can contribute to learner dropout (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). If the parents are not educated, it might not encourage the learners to complete their education and if a sibling drops out of school, it might encourage the learner to do the same (Rumberger & Lim, 2008).

Additional to family factors, training institutions have been highlighted as factors influencing learners' achievement or failure, including dropout. Learners' characteristics in training facilities and how they relate or socialise with their peers also influence their achievement (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). The geographical location and capacity of the training institution have been emphasised as contributing factors to dropout rates. If the institution is not adequately capacitated, learners might disengage from their training (Rumberger & Lim, 2008).

Resources have been highlighted as a factor determining whether the training institutions execute the programmes effectively, and the resources include having qualified teachers and class capacity (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). Therefore, the number of learners per teacher ratio has been associated with a high dropout rate, which means the higher the number of learners in one class, the higher the probability of learner dropout (Rumberger & Lim, 2008).

School policies or practices have been highlighted to encourage learners' engagement and persistence in their education. These policies are typically used to manage factors that might result in learners dropping out, including misbehaving, poor performance and poor attendance (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). This has also been highlighted to link the relationship between the learner and the teacher. A positive relationship between learners and teachers has been highlighted as a factor that can reduce dropout risk, especially for learners who showing some indicators of dropping out, for example, absenteeism. In contrast, negative relationships contributed to high dropout rates (Rumberger & Lim, 2008).

The last institutional factor discussed is the community, highlighted as contributing to a high learner dropout rate. Neighbourhoods with a high rate of poverty and violence have been highlighted as factors contributing to the high number of learners leaving training (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). Disadvantaged communities might influence learners engaging in activities, for example, criminal

activities that might bring income, resulting in learners dropping out of training compared to those living in well-established communities (Rumberger & Lim, 2008).

2.5. Conceptual framework

Based on the theoretical review, it has been stipulated that the model, student performance, can be used to understand the processes that lead to learners leaving training. Therefore, the conceptual framework by Rumberger and Lim (2008) has been applied to conduct this case study.

The adopted conceptual framework appears comprehensive and identifies various concepts that address school dropout and serve as a foundation for this study. See the adopted conceptual framework for this study in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Study Conceptual Framework adapted from Rumberger and Lim, (2008, p. 86)

Individual factors	Self-expectations Goals Peers Performance Persistence
Institutional factors (training institution)	Resources Structure Practices
Family-related factors	Structure Resources Characteristics
Community factors	Resources Employment Location

Conceptually, determining the underlying factors that influence learners to leave training incorporates several variables, namely personal, training institution, family, and community features.

2.6. Conclusion

The key objective of this chapter was to provide an all-inclusive overview of the literature, theories, and concepts relevant to this study, in other words, the factors that resulted in learners dropping out of the skills development programme for out-of-school youth.

The literature review performed in this chapter highlighted that previous studies have been undertaken regarding skills development programmes, with the majority conducting studies on high school dropouts. There is an indication that a few focused on out-of-school skills development programme dropouts. Out-of-school and vocational skills development studies and the framework that governs the specific skills development programme were reviewed in this chapter. The concept behind skills development programmes was also reviewed and discussed in this chapter, taking into consideration the challenges experienced by the training institutions and the factors that result in learners dropping out of skills development programmes.

The literature review assisted in identifying the areas or variables that the researcher used to explore the factors that contributed to learners dropping out of the skills development programme and identifying preventative measures that could encourage learners to complete the programme. In the next chapter the researcher outlines case study strategy, design, procedure, and methods.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH STRATEGY, DESIGN, PROCEDURE, AND METHODS

3.1. Introduction

The preceding chapter reviewed literature relevant to this study. The study investigated the factors contributing to learners dropping out of the skills development programme for out-of-school youth offered by the MRTT. Furthermore, the study focused on exploring strategies that the training institutions can implement to address the challenges that result in learner dropout.

The research methods adopted in this study are presented in this chapter and information is provided on the participants, including the sampling criteria. The research design adopted in this study is also discussed in this chapter and the descriptions for the selected research design articulated. Furthermore, the tools utilised to collect data, and the data analysis process, are outlined in this chapter. To ensure the accuracy and credibility of the research, the ethics, reliability, and validity procedures that the researcher applied, and the restrictions experienced by the researcher during the study with the selected participants are included in this chapter.

A qualitative research approach was adopted in this study to investigate the factors contributing to learner dropout. The questions raised were investigated using primary data collected from the learners who had dropped out from the skills development programme for out-of-school youth. The collected data were used to determine what factors resulted in learners dropping out of the skills development programme and to explore the reasons for learners enrolling for the skills development programme. Furthermore, the researcher used the collected data to assess training institutions' strategies to address dropout challenges.

3.2. Research approach

This research is exploratory as it seeks to explore and determine the factors that resulted in learners dropping out from an out-of-school youth skills development

programme. Therefore, the researcher selected a qualitative approach as the research question demanded more detailed and in-depth results (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, the study applied an inductive approach to probe the relationship between the theories acquired through the literature review and the findings or data (Bryman, 2012; Wagner et al., 2012).

As this research is exploratory and the researcher aimed to gain in-depth knowledge about the factors that resulted in learners dropping out from the programme, a qualitative case study was a suitable research design to apply in this research. Furthermore, a qualitative case study was relevant for this research as the researcher was able to solicit explicit information, reveal more information, and have a more profound understanding of the reasons that have resulted in learners dropping out of the skills development programme (Creswell, 2013; Bryman, 2012).

3.3. Research tools and their application

In this study, the researcher gathered primary data, which is information that has been collected by seeing or observing events (Wagner et al., 2012), and utilised an interview schedule to collect such information (Kumar, 2011). The questionnaire was divided into the themes/components of the conceptual framework, including individual, institutional, family, and environmental factors. The interview schedule is attached as Appendix 1. Through the interview schedule, the participants were able to enlighten the researcher about the main reason for enrolling in the programme, their experiences while undergoing training, and their decision to leave the skills development programme. The interviews produced in-depth and comprehensive information that addressed the purpose of this study, investigating the factors that result in learners dropping out from the out-of-school CETA skills programme offered by the MRTT.

The researcher intended to utilise Microsoft Teams meetings and WhatsApp video calls to conduct the interviews with the research participants. These tools

were selected due to the Covid-19 Regulations that were in place at the time of the study. However, when the participants were contacted to set up a meeting to conduct the interview, the researcher identified that the participants were not familiar with Microsoft Teams. When the researcher initiated a WhatsApp video call meeting, the participants indicated they did not have data. Some participants specified that they did not have a WhatsApp application as they did not have access to a smartphone. Others suggested that they can only conduct the WhatsApp video interview if the researcher can provide them with data. Therefore, due to the challenges indicated by the participants, the interviews were conducted via telephone.

As this research is exploratory and because the researcher's interest was to capture the experiences of the participants accurately, a semi-structured interview schedule was used for this study with open-ended questions (Neuman, 2014). The researcher used the semi-structured interview schedule as it allowed the researcher to inquire and probe for more clarity on the feedback provided by the participants. Additionally, this instrument enabled the respondents to give details about their experiences and opinions.

The researcher conducted 15 semi-structured interviews, with each interview taking approximately 20 to 30 minutes. The researcher used the call recorder to record the interviews conducted with the participants. The researcher also requested the participants' permission to record the interviews. The researcher saved the collected information to two external drives in different locations.

3.4. Sampling

The study was conducted with participants who had dropped out of the CETA skills development programme implemented by the MRTT as the entity is responsible for the CETA skills development programme for out-of-school youth. The entity is in Emalahleni, Mpumalanga, and has training centres around the province. The entity is responsible for delivering relevant and quality skills development interventions under the leadership and supervision of the Mpumalanga Department of Education.

CETA skills development programmes in Building and Civil Construction consist of various trades, including bricklaying, carpentry, painting, plastering, plumbing, and community house building. The programme entails theoretical and practical training.

Annually, the entity plans an intake of 1 100 learners (MRTT, 2019). The learners recruited for this CETA skills programme have dropped out of high school. Considering the areas where the targeted beneficiaries live, the entity utilises different platforms to recruit learners, including, but not limited to the local municipality, community centres, and social media. The areas targeted for this training were the rural areas of Mpumalanga as it is where the majority of out-of-school youth are based.

The researcher opted to select a two-stage sampling procedure. First, purposive sampling was applied to identify the learners who had dropped out of the skills development programme (Wotela, 2017; Wagner et al., 2012; Visser, 2005). Secondly, random sampling was applied to the sample of learners who had dropped out of the skills development programme. Wagner et al. (2012) have emphasised that purposive sampling is the most useful among the other methods as the criteria for selecting the sample ensure that only participants relevant for the study are selected.

A database of learners who dropped out of the CETA skills development programme between 2017 and 2019 was obtained from the training institution, namely the MRTT. The researcher selected the period mainly to determine the factors that have resulted in learners dropping out from different groups of learners. Thirty learners were randomly selected from the database of learners who had dropped out of the skills development programme. The researcher arranged interviews with the participants and of the 30 selected learners, only 15 interviews were conducted as some of their phones went straight to voicemail and others did not answer their phones. The researcher planned appointments to interview the selected participants; however, some of them did not honour the arrangement. Other participants rescheduled the meeting; however, they were not available for the interviews.

To ensure that the respondents were not reluctant to share their issues or opinions and did not fear that their privacy would be invaded throughout the interview, the researcher informed the participants that their privacy would be maintained for reporting purposes. The pseudonyms are used in this report, with respondents assigned as a number between 1 and 15.

3.5. Processing of analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves transcribing the information gathered through an audio recorder, identifying conceptual framework themes and fragmenting the information gathered into themes (Wotela, 2017). The researcher utilised thematic data analysis to determine common themes collected (Wagner et al., 2012, p. 244).

The interviews conducted with the participants were transcribed and analysed to identify themes. In this study, the researcher captured the information from the interview recordings and inspected the data captured for to identify similarities, differences, and consistencies. The researcher interpreted the information

transcribed and common themes or repeated ideas were identified. In this study the common themes that emerged from the interviews are the factors contributing to learners dropping out the skills development programme.
Furthermore, the themes identified from the transcribed information were grouped into categories and themes. The analysis of the responses informed the critical findings of the study, which are outlined in Chapter 5.

3.6. Limitations

The study followed a qualitative approach. The problem with using the qualitative method is that the data collected may be considered subjective and interpreted differently by readers. Even though limitations are present, the qualitative research approach produces constructive results, mainly because of the in-depth responses from participants.

Concerning the telephonic interviews, the researcher planned appointments to interview the selected participants, of which some did not honour the arrangement. Participants did not answer their phones, with some phones going straight to voicemail. Owing to the highlighted limitations, the researcher conducted 15 interviews out of the 30 planned interviews.

Furthermore, because of the small number of participants that conducted the interview and the fact that the study is regarding one programme, the CETA skills programme for out-of-school youth, in one province, Mpumalanga, therefore, the outcome of the study cannot represent similar groups of learners and skills development programmes.

3.7. Ethical considerations during the research process

Before commencing with the study, the researcher acquired permission to conduct this study from the Wits University Ethics Committee (See Appendix 5). The researcher also obtained written consent from the Chief Executive Officer of the MRTT regarding the study (See Appendix 4). Additionally, the researcher

requested that the training institution provide a database of learners who had dropped out of the programme between 2017 and 2019. The sample was selected from the database.

Given that the research study was conducted with out-of-school youth, a group that might potentially be vulnerable, the researcher needed to consider and be mindful of any feelings or challenges experienced during the study. Such in-depth research could cause some participants to become distressed as the interview might reveal distressing issues that resulted in learners dropping out from the skills development programme. Some problems might be sensitive and personal; hence, the researcher planned to terminate the interview if any participants showed distress. The researcher provided the participants with the contact details of a counsellor, who would provide free counselling to ensure that they get emotional support and assistance. The counselling is provided telephonically, and the service is confidential. None of the respondents indicated or showed signs of distress during the study and, therefore, all 15 respondents completed the interview.

Before the commencement of the study, the researcher ensured that the participants consented to participating in the research study and that the respondents had a broad understanding of the process, purpose, use and consequences of the research results to ensure that they were not misled (Bryman, 2012; Wagner et al., 2012). Before the researcher scheduled the appointment to conduct the research, the researcher provided the participants with the details and the primary purpose of the study. All 15 participants agreed to participate in the study.

The researcher explicitly provided all the research details to the respondents, including the researcher's introduction and informed the participants that the researcher would maintain anonymity during reporting through the use of

pseudonyms. It has been highlighted by Maroo et al. (2015) that this will encourage the participants to provide constructive information for the study.

Wagner et al. (2012) indicate that a research study should consider ethics throughout the research process. The research participants should be protected from being harmed due to the information shared during the study. To ensure compliance with the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act the learner's database obtained from the MRTT was saved on an access-controlled external drive to protect the participant's details.

When reporting the research results for this study, the researcher maintained secrecy through pseudonyms to ensure the safety of the respondents, and the report represented what the respondents had said. The researcher read the interview consent form to the respondents and consent was given by the participants before the interviews commenced. The ethical responsibilities form part of the interview consent form, which is attached as Appendix 2.

3.8. Validity, reliability, and dependability

Qualitative studies are concerned with the trustworthiness of the research results or findings. Therefore, the significance of reliability is acknowledged in this study, which addresses the dependability, credibility and confirmability of the research results and findings (Wagner et al., 2012). To address these, the researcher provided the participants with detailed research processes and procedures guiding the study.

To enhance trustworthiness and ensure that the research questions addressed what the study intends to investigate, the researcher conducted a pilot interview with two individuals similar to the participants. The pilot was undertaken to test whether the instrument was appropriate for the study (Wotela, 2017; Gwija et al., 2014). The researcher assessed the responses provided during the pilot interviews for consistency and accuracy. Based on the pilot interviews conducted

and the assessment of the responses, the interview schedule appeared to be accurate and appropriate for the study. Furthermore, to ensure that the participants' responses were interpreted correctly and accurately, the researcher quoted verbatim what the participants had said during the interview.

3.9. Conclusion

An outline of the research process applied when conducting the study was provided in this chapter, which included sample selection, data collection tools, data analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations. The research results based on the collected data are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the research methodology employed in this study. The information gathered in the interviews conducted with the study participants is presented in this chapter. The chosen participants dropped out of the CETA out-of-school youth skills development programme offered by the MRTT.

In this chapter, the information gathered addresses the research questions (primary and secondary). The research question seeks to determine the underlying factors behind learners dropping out of the CETA skills development programme in Building and Civil Construction and identifies strategies that training institutions can implement to address the dropout issue. The results are grouped according to the conceptual framework components, which the researcher identified during the literature review.

4.2. Descriptive statistics of the sample

Based on the sample selection outlined in Chapter 3, 30 participants were selected to be interviewed; however, the researcher interviewed 15 participants. A total of 15 respondents participated in this study, which entails 47% females and 53% males. Figure 4.1 shows the gender breakdown of the respondents who participated in this study.

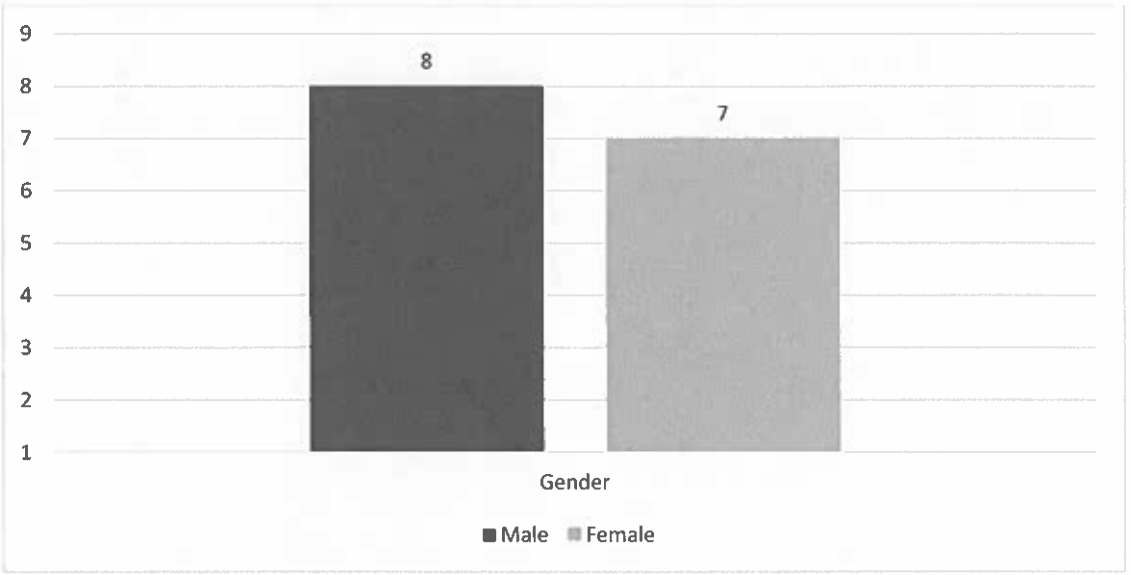

Figure 4.1: Gender of respondents (number of respondents)

Figure 4.2 shows the percentage of the respondents who fall into each age category. According to Figure 4.2, 33% of the respondents were between 18 and 21 years old, 20% were between 22 and 25 years old, 20% were between 26 and 29 years old, and 27% were 30 years old and older.

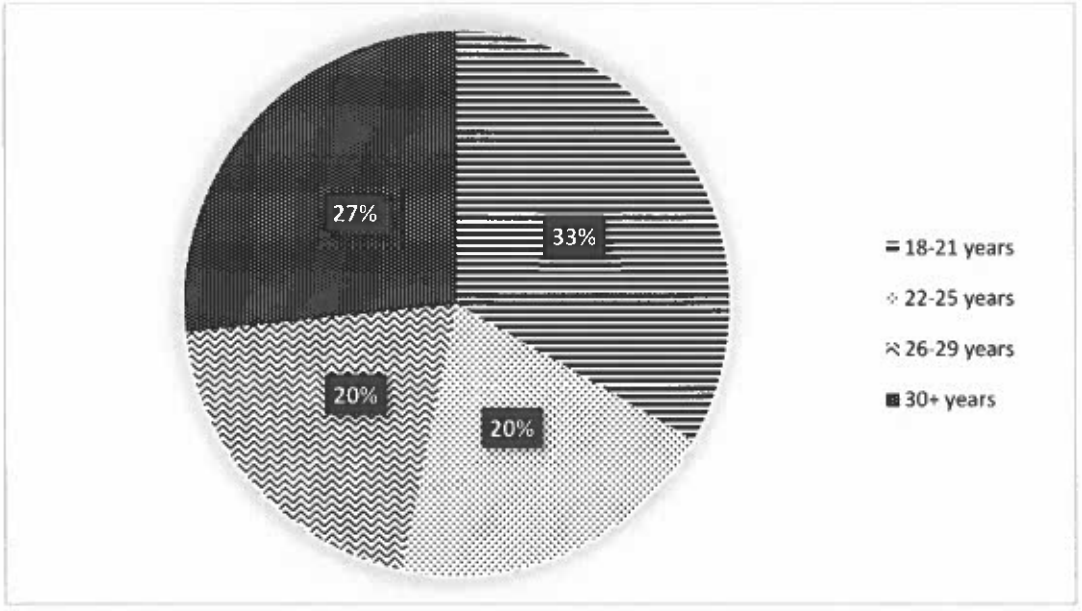

Figure 4.2: Age group of respondents (percentage of respondents)

The largest percentage of the respondents who participated in this study were between 18 to 21 years, which represents 33%. Most of the respondents who were interviewed were unemployed. Figure 4.3 provides the respondents' employment status and what they were doing at the time of the study.

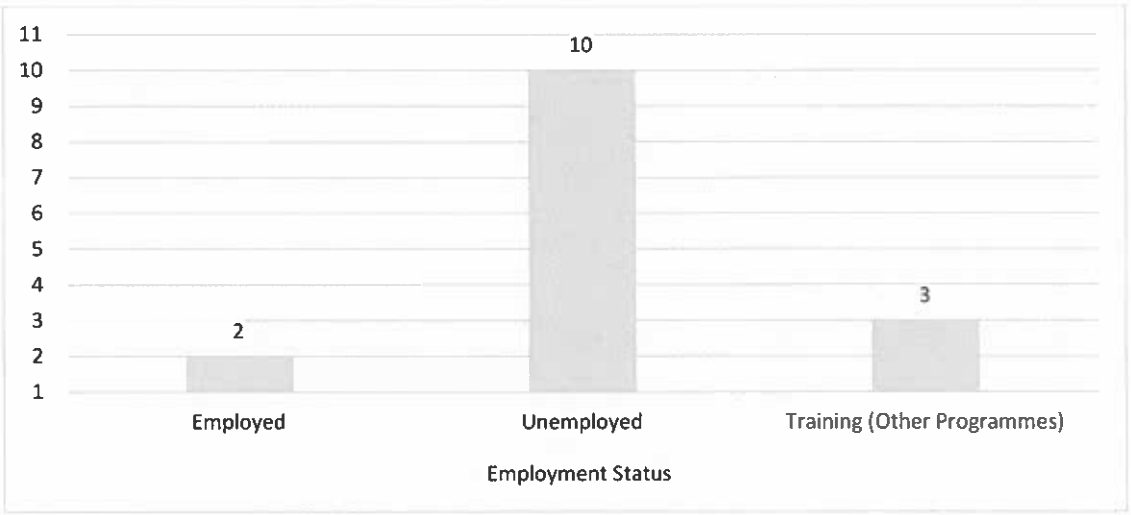

Figure 4.3: Employment status (number of respondents)

Figure 4.3 shows that 87% of the 15 respondents were unemployed; however, three respondents were attending training programmes offered by other training institutions at the time of the study. Therefore, excluding the three respondents currently in training, 67% of the economically active respondents interviewed were unemployed. A total of 20% were attending training programmes being offered and only 13% were working at the time of the interview.

4.3. Individual factors

As discussed in Chapter 3, the participants in this study were chosen using purposive sampling. The participants were selected as they had dropped out of the skills development training for out-of-school youth.

Motivation for joining the skills development programme.

The first group of questions interrogated the individual factors that resulted in the participants dropping out of the skills development programme. The individual elements are fundamentally the reasons that relate to a decision to drop out. The key objective of this component was to identify whether the learners had entered the programme as it was their career aspiration or whether they had entered the programme for other reasons. In addition, to reveal the actual reasons why they decided to drop out.

Some respondents revealed that enrolling in the programme was not based on their interest; however, they enrolled in the programme mainly because they had been referred by a family member or friend, the local municipality, and/or a community centre. A significant number of respondents enrolled because they were not working. Respondent 6 indicated that "*I was not working, and there was an opportunity to generate income while studying, through a stipend, so I decided to give it a try.*"

When asked what influenced the respondents to decide to enrol for the programme, the following were the participants' responses:

Respondent 1: "*I decided to enroll for the training because, during that time, I was at home doing nothing, and I was busy looking for a job. Therefore, because the training practitioner told me that I would be paid a stipend for each day I attend training, I decided to join.*"

Respondent 12: "*When I enrolled for the training programme, it was not something I wanted to do, but it was the only programme that was available where I could also be able to generate income monthly.*"

Respondent 2: "*I joined the programme because I wanted to acquire a skill or qualification that I can use to apply for a job".*

Respondent 3: "*The practitioners told me that the programme is free, and I get a stipend for attending the programme*".

Respondent 7: "I have decided to join the programme because I wanted something that will keep me busy."

According to the responses provided by the respondents, only two revealed that they had joined the programme because they wanted to acquire a skill, which highlights the fact that most of the beneficiaries did not enrol for this programme to capacitate themselves. They joined mainly because of an opportunity to generate income. This finding is supported by Kanjere (2014), who alludes that a stipend is one factor that increases the dropout rate as it attracts individuals who do not have any interest in the programme. However, they enroll because they see it as an opportunity to generate income. Therefore, an underlying factor that the researcher revealed from the interviews is income generation, which is to be expected, given that 87% of the respondents were unemployed.

Individual reasons for dropping out of the skills development programme.
Key factors that emerged from the interviews regarding why learners decided to leave the programme were the financial challenges and high transport cost to and from the training centre. A large number of the respondents raised this factor. Furthermore, the transportation problem was linked to non-payment and late stipend payments, which many respondents highlighted. Respondent 2 indicated that "*I have decided to leave the programme because transport was too expensive, and the training centre was way too far for me to walk.*"

Other respondents indicated that financial challenges were the main reason for dropping out as they did not have money for transport. Respondent 8 went further to say, "*For me, it was worse because, at the beginning of training, I borrowed transport money from a loan shark with the hope that I will pay it off once I get a stipend, and to my surprise, the money I got was way too little. I could not pay back the money, and as a result, I lost interest in the programme because the money paid was not as promised.*"

Some respondents indicated that they had dropped out of the skills development programme as they had decided to enrol another programme within their area of interest. Respondent 1 indicated that "*while in the programme, I received a permanent job opportunity in the agricultural industry, and I jumped at the opportunity. I mean, who wouldn't take a permanent job over a skills development programme?*"

Respondent 10 stated, "*I dropped out of the programme because I fell pregnant while in training and because of the financial challenges I could not afford transport to and from school. Because I was pregnant, it was difficult for me to walk; therefore, I decided to drop out.*" Figure 4.4 summarises the individual factors that emerged from the interviews.

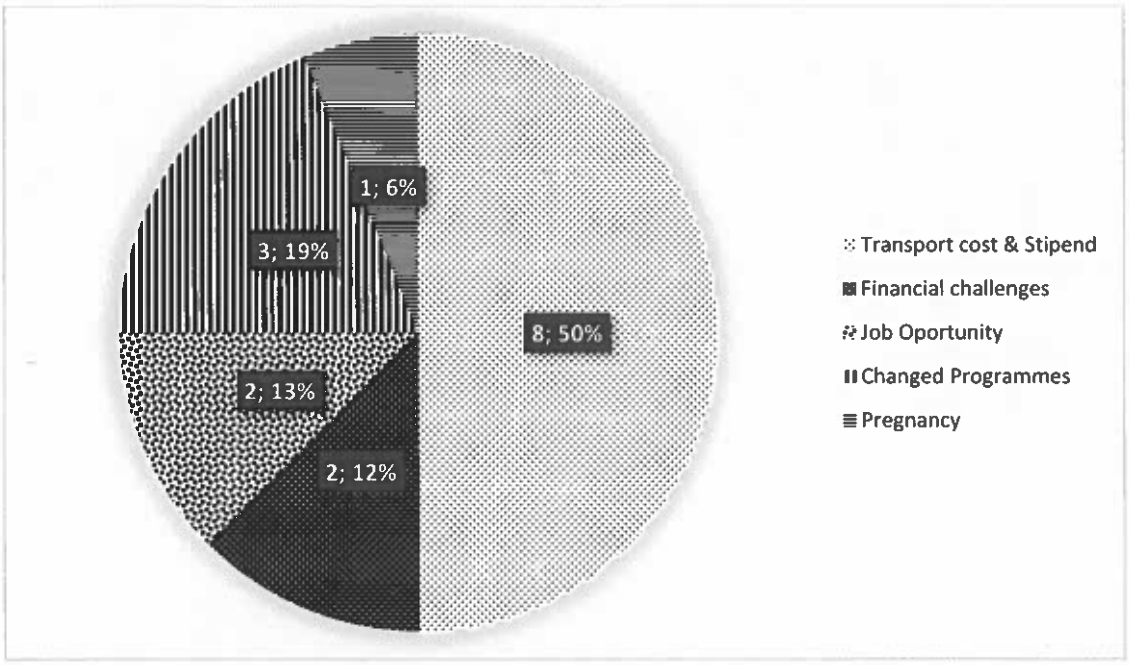

Figure 4.4: Individual factors that contributed to learners dropping out of the skills development programme (percentage and number of respondents)

Improvement strategies

In trying to ascertain the strategies that the training institution can implement to address the learners' issues, the respondents were asked what would have prevented them from dropping out. The majority of the responses were similar and related to the payment of the stipend. Some respondents indicated they would have continued the training if the stipend had been paid and paid on time, and others suggested that an increase in the amount of the stipend would have changed their decision. Respondent 2 indicated, "*I would have completed the skills development programme if the training institution changed the timing of the stipend payment and started paying the stipend in advance because the money will help with the travelling expenses*." Furthermore, the respondents highlighted that changing the training venue by moving it closer to the targeted beneficiaries and providing transport to the learners would have prevented most learners from dropping out of training. Respondents 3, 12 and 13 indicated that nothing would have convinced them to complete the skills development programme.

Based on the responses provided, there was a link between the reasons for dropping out and the actions that the respondents recommended the training centre implement to ensure that the skills development participants complete their training. The respondents who indicated that they left the skills development programme because of the stipend challenges, recommended the areas that needed improvement or change. In contrast, the participants who left the programme due to other opportunities, namely jobs and other training programmes, indicated that nothing would have changed their decision about leaving the training.

Figure 4.5 shows a summary of the factors the respondents claimed would have prevented them from dropping out of the skills development programme in relation to the individual factors that they highlighted during the interviews.

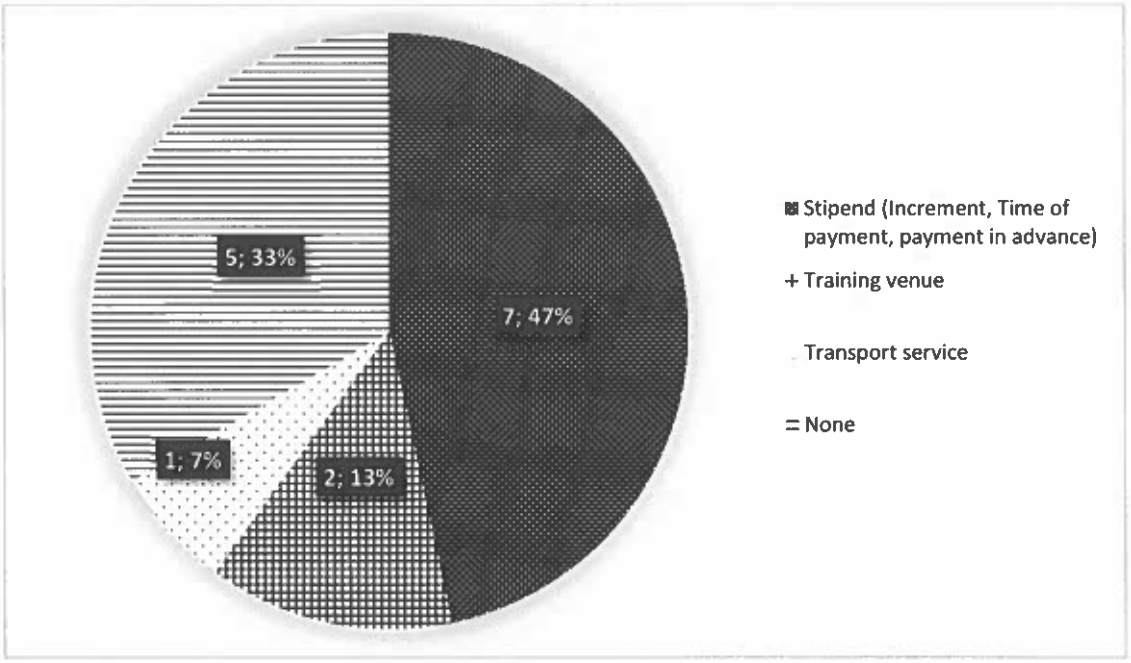

Figure 4.5: Strategies recommended by respondents to prevent them from dropping out of the skills development programme in relation to individual factors (percentage and number)

Completion of the skills development programme

In a process of identifying respondents' behavior regarding completing the skills development programme, they were asked whether they would return if they were allowed to complete the programme again. The majority of the respondents indicated that they were keen to go back if given the opportunity. The reactions that emerged from the participants were positive as Respondent 2 said, "*If I can be allowed to complete the programme, I will consider going back because the certificate will be beneficial for my future. I will use the certificate to apply for a job. Especially because I am not working and since I dropped out of the programme, I have been home, and I have never worked.*" Some learners indicated that the repercussions of dropping out of the programme were not good; and that if the opportunity was offered again, it would be great as they did not have qualifications, so it would be their first qualification.

The respondents also highlighted that the entity's intervention to provide opportunities for youth from "*disadvantaged areas*" is a great initiative (Respondent 2). If given a chance, they would consider completing the programme. Respondent 8 elaborated that "*in a short period, I have learned some basic skills in plumbing; hence I wish to complete the programme.*"

Even though most respondents were keen to go back to the skills development programme, a few respondents indicated that they would not take the opportunity, mainly as they are committed elsewhere. Some mentioned that they were working or currently attending another programme. These respondents were particular about their decision, with Respondent 1 saying, "*No, because I have a permanent job.*" Respondent 3 said, "*No, I wouldn't consider going back to complete the programme because I am currently studying something that I am interested in, Human Resources.*"

However, despite some of the respondents' interest in completing the programme, the respondents highlighted several prerequisites. These included

transport issues and training centres to be established closer to their communities. Respondent 2 said, "*I have acquired a lot of knowledge about plumbing in a brief period, and if these issues are addressed, I will go back to complete my training*".

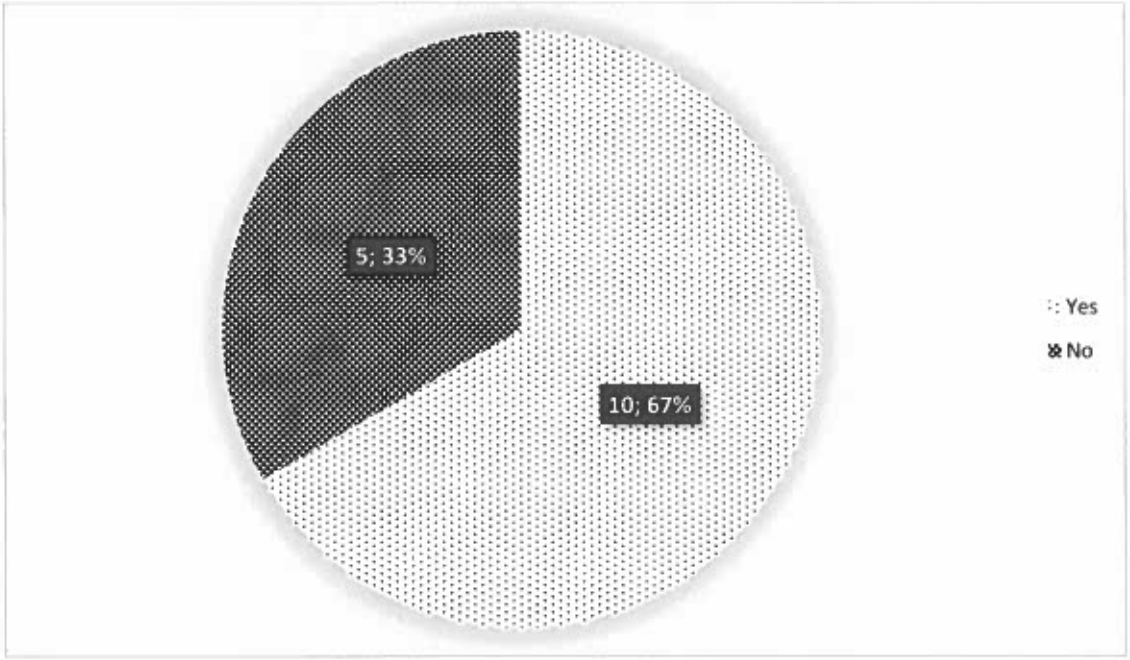

Figure 4.6: Percentage and number of respondents' responses regarding returning to the skills development programme.

Based on the responses in Figure 4.6, the respondents' overall reasons for dropping out of the programme were financial challenges, transport costs, stipend challenges, non-payment, late payment, and payment of less than the agreed value. Moreover, the stipend issue links to the fact that the respondents reside far from the training centre or venue, which raises another challenge relating to high transportation costs. Most of the respondents generally demonstrated that dropping out of the programme impacted their career as they were currently not working, while their peers who had continued with the programme were working.

4.4. Institutional factors

The second group of questions interrogated the institutional factors relating to the training centre/institution, which contributed to the learners' decision to drop out of the skills development programme. Institutional factors refer to the elements stimulated by the training centre environment, structures and activities that contributed to the high rate of dropouts from the skills development programme (Wells et al., 1989). Such factors play an influential role in pushing the learners to disengage from their daily learning activities and are constituted mainly by actions and interactions at the training centre.

Learners' expectations on the skills development programme

The first question posed to the respondents focused on their expectations when enrolling for the skills development programme. The responses revealed a number of similarities across the respondents. A significant number of the respondents indicated that they had decided to register for the skills development programme as they wanted to get a stipend, acquire skills, complete the training programme, and be issued with a certificate. The respondents further indicated that getting certification would assist them as they could use the certificate to apply for a job and uplift the living standard of their families. Respondent 6 highlighted, "*When I enrolled for the training programme, I hoped that I would complete the training, get a certificate, and start looking for a job. But because I did not complete it, I do not have the certificate, and it's challenging to get a job.*" This participant emphasised the impact of not completing the skills development programme and how it affected their future or career.

Irrespective of the fact that many respondents had reasonable expectations when they decided to enrol for the programme, a few respondents had different expectations. Respondent 1 said, "*I was hoping to get paid monthly and get a certificate at the end of training.*" This response essentially highlighted that the stipend played a role in attracting learners to enroll for the programme. Figure 4.7 shows a summary of the reactions to the respondents' expectations.

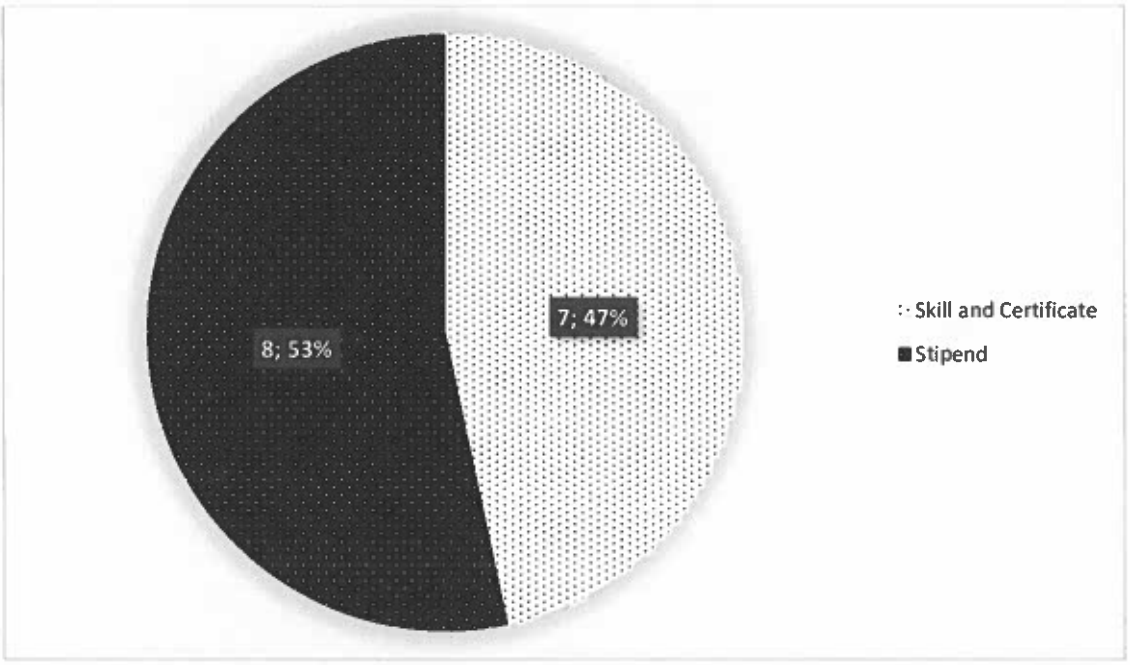

Figure 4.7: Respondents' expectations when they were enrolling for the skills development programme (percentage and number)

The summary highlights that seven of the respondents enrolled in the programme expected to acquire a skill and a certificate. At the same time, the other group, eight respondents, hoped to get a monthly stipend payment and certificate at the end of the programme.

Training institution reasons for dropping out of the skills development programme.

In addressing the main question and purpose of this research related to the training institution, the respondents were asked about factors relating to the training centre contributing to their decision to drop out of the skills development programme. Based on the interview responses, there is a connection to the factors that emerged from the section on the individual factors. The factors mentioned by the respondents are related to the stipend, which includes the non-payment of the stipend, the late payment of the stipend, and the amount paid being less than expected.

One of the respondents highlighted that the late payment of stipends by the training centre was the main reason they decided to drop out. This decision was taken mainly because the transport cost was expensive; "*R250 per week*". The respondents further emphasised that the training centre had failed them as they did not show any interest in resolving the stipend payment delays. One respondent indicated that when following up or enquiring about the payment of the stipend, the facilitator told them "*to persevere*," and they further responded that "*one can only persevere if one has money for transport*" (Respondent 2). Some participants also highlighted that the stipend was not enough to cover the travelling cost.

In highlighting that the training institution played an essential role in the respondents' decision to drop out, Respondent 4 said, "*the non-payment of stipends contributed to my decision to drop out from training because I would have used the stipend money to pay for transport. At some point, I took my child's grant to pay for transport, and the money was meant to buy food.*" Respondent 3 indicated that "*the main reason why I dropped out from training was the fact that the stipend was not paid as agreed. The training venue was too far for me because even after I get off from the transport, I still had to walk a distance.*"

Another factor that emerged from the interview was that the training centre did not communicate with the learners regarding the stipend challenges or any other challenges that affected the learners. Respondent 4 emphasised that "*MRTT does not care about us and the challenges we go through. We did not get any support from MRTT; even when we raised our issues as learners, they did not want to get involved in our problems. Some of the facilitators that were providing the skills development programme were very rude.*" Figure 4.8 outlines the summary of the institutional factors that resulted in respondents dropping out of the skills development programme.

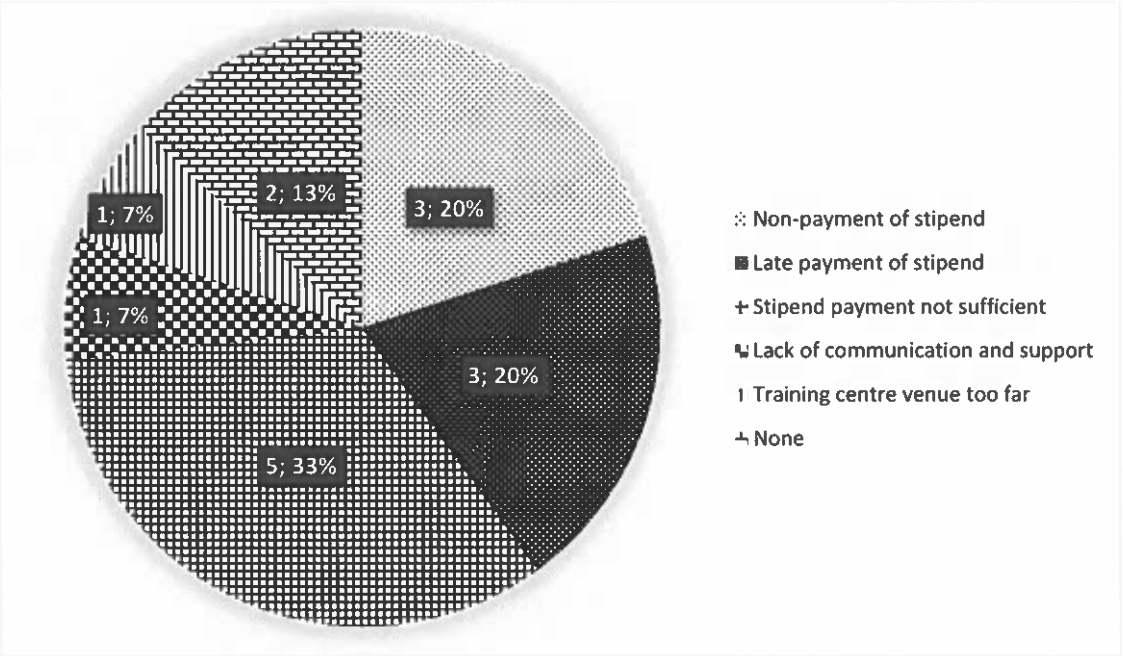

Figure 4.8: Percentage and number of institutional factors that resulted in learners dropping out of the skills development programme (number and percentage)

Based on the summary of the responses in Figure 4.8, the dominant institutional factors that resulted in the respondents dropping out of the skills development programme were the fact that the stipend was not enough, late payment of the stipend, and non-payment of the stipend. Respondent 4 indicated that it was R80,00 per day; however, sometimes, it was less than R80,00 per day.

Training institution measures to address the dropout.

The researcher asked the respondents about the measures taken by the training centre to encourage them to complete the skills development programme and all the participants indicated that the training institution did not take any initiatives or measures to enable them to complete the training programme. Respondent 5 said, "*Honestly, nothing; I think the training centre doesn't care about the learners because even when I was absent from school, they didn't even ask why I was not at school. Even after I stopped attending, they did not call or do a follow-up to check why I am not coming to school anymore.*"

Furthermore, the respondents emphasised that despite their initiatives to report their challenges to the training practitioners, the practitioners did not show any concern or any interest in helping the participants complete the training programme. The respondents also emphasised that even though the training institution did not communicate the stipend issues or challenges, the respondents took some initiative to inquire about the payment of the stipend to resolve the challenges as it was affecting their performance progress negatively in training. However, the training institution was not keen to resolve the challenge as Respondent 8 mentioned, "*When I told them my transport challenge and asked why they're not paying stipend, the training practitioner told me to persevere, and they provided no reason or resolution. Unfortunately for me, it was impossible to continue the training because I didn't have money for transport.*"

Respondent 2 said, "*I think the training centre must ensure that they pay the stipend on time because I relied on the stipend money to pay for transport. The training centre must also consider offering transport to the learners because most of us are from a poor background and that will help us attend and complete training.*"

Additionally, the transport services option emerged as an alternative in case the increase of the stipend was not possible. In addition, a respondent also highlighted that the training centre should pay a stipend "*in advance*" and pay a stipend as per the agreement entered into at the beginning of the training programme.

Preventative measures

In finalising the institutional deliberations, the respondents were asked about the training centre's preventative measures to ensure that the participants completed the skills development programme. The respondents recommended several preventive measures, which differed from one participant to the next, although

they mainly related to the stipend and transport. A large number, 47%, of respondents recommended that the training centre consider increasing the monthly stipend or providing transportation to the learners daily.

Furthermore, Respondent 8 stated that "*the stipend amount should be communicated clearly with the learners at the beginning of training. If there are changes, such should be communicated to the learner.*"

In addition to the preventative measure raised about transport services, Respondent 2 stated that "*the training institution must consider establishing the training centre closer to the targeted communities.*"

Respondent 13 said, "*the training institution should review the skills development programmes, the curriculum, they're offering; they should make them interesting, consider including business management skills.*" The respondent further explained that if the programme is not interesting, they will move to other exciting programmes.

The respondents also emphasised that the training centre should secure work placement to do experiential learning before training. In deliberating about this preventative measure, Respondent 4 stated that "*I had to look for a place to do experiential learning. The training centre should consider involving the community when implementing the programme because this will assist in securing the workplace for the participants from the community members. For example, some community members might allow the learners to do the experiential learning in their businesses and homes especially plumbing and carpentry*". The community's involvement in implementing the training programme will help with the sourcing for work placement.

Developing a platform where learners can share their issues or training challenges was one of the preventative measures that the respondents raised

during the interview. Respondent 10 stated, "*I wish the training centre could have someone we can report or discuss our issues with. The Practitioner I was dealing with was not treating us well. Being a woman, I expected her to understand my challenges; being pregnant, we always expect a woman to understand our situation, but she was different.*"

In addition, the communication platform was also raised by Respondent 15, who said, "*the practitioners should at least try to have a relationship with the learners undergoing the training. I'm saying this because it was difficult even to share our challenges with the practitioner.*"

Based on the responses provided, some respondents recommended more than one preventative measure that would have influenced or encouraged them to reconsider dropping out of the skills development programme. Two participants indicated that nothing would have prevented them from dropping out.

The majority of the respondents made recommendations that will address the stipend challenges, which include increasing the value, paying in advance, and paying on time as per the agreement. In addition, other recommendations included providing transport services to the learners and establishing the training venue in the communities. The development of the communication platform was recommended to improve communication with the learners and the review of the curriculum to include business management skills. One respondent highlighted that the training center must secure the workplace for the learners.

During the gathering of information, respondents raised some positive comments about the MRTT and their work. Respondent 2 highlighted that "*even though I have decided to drop out from training, I have learned a lot in a brief period. With that little experience, I was able to get part-time jobs; therefore, MRTT must continue to provide training to the underprivileged areas.*" Below are some of the comments from the participants about the training institution:

Respondent 2: *"As much as I did not complete the training, I wish MRTT can continue providing training to the disadvantaged because some of my friends have completed and are now working. They need to be more involved in addressing the learner's problems that result in them not completing training."*

Respondent 8: *"MRTT is a good institution; the practical experience acquired from MRTT was beneficial."*

Respondent 11: *"MRTT is a good institution because I managed to get communication skills and basic skills in construction through it. This helped me especially because I dropped out of school and did not manage to acquire matric."*

The comments above indicate that the out-of-school youth are aware of the vital role of the CETA initiative implemented by the entity and the objectives of the programme.

4.5. Family related factors

The third group of questions interrogated the family-related factors, which contributed to the respondents dropping out of the skills development programme. Family-related factors refer to the factors that are influenced by the environment at home. Such factors include the socio-economic standing of the family, the parental relationship and support (Wells et al., 1989).

The key objectives of this section were to determine whether the respondents' family was involved in their decision to enrol for the skills development programme, to determine whether the family environment or the socio-economic position contributed to the decision to dropout, and whether the family was involved in the decision-making process. Based on the interview results, it appears that the decision taken by the respondents was taken with their families, because of the consultative processes undertaken before a decision was taken.

Most respondents specified that their family was involved in the decision to enrol for the skills development programme as they saw it as an opportunity to acquire a skill and qualification, they can use to secure a job later. Respondents also highlighted that the family did not see it as only an opportunity for their children, but an opportunity for the entire family, because having a qualification increased their chances of securing a job. If their children can manage to complete and get a job, it will be a turning point for the whole family considering their current standard of living.

Respondent 6 said, "*My family was very supportive regarding my decision to join the training, especially because no one has a qualification at home. So, they were hoping I would complete and get a certificate and apply for a job. They hoped that one day I would be able to uplift our family and improve our standard of living.*" Respondent 7 stated, "*My family was involved in my decision to join the programme because they hoped that I would obtain a certificate and be able to secure employment and help the family.*"

While most of the respondents indicated that their family was involved in their decision to join the skills development programme, some families supported the decision for a different reason. Respondent 4 said, "*My family supported my decision to enroll in the programme because I was at home doing nothing.*"

Based on the interview outcome, it appears that the decision taken by the participants to enrol for the skills development programme was taken together with their families, except for Respondent 9, who said, "*I do not have parents, and I did not involve anyone in my decision.*"

In addition to the above, the researcher posed a question to determine the family's reaction toward the respondent's decision to leave the skills development programme. A substantial number of participants specified that their families were

not happy about the decision. Respondent 4 mentioned that the family was "*disappointed and sad about the decision to drop out and unfortunately the situation was beyond the family's control.*"

Respondent 3 highlighted that dropping out of the skills development programme was a decision taken with the family as they could not afford transport money. The respondent also emphasised that none of the family members worked and, therefore, "*raising transport money was a challenge for the family.*"

Most participants expressed that their families had no choice, but to support their decision to drop out of the skills development programme because of their family background. Respondent 4 specified, "*My family advised me to drop out of the training programme because sometimes I took money that was supposed to buy food and use it for transport.*" This highlighted that the participant's socio-economic status affected or played a role in their decision, which the family also recommended.

Respondent 6 indicated that the family was not impressed with the dropout decision, by saying, "*My parents were very disappointed because as a first-born child, they had hopes that I would become something in life through the training programme and be able to uplift our family's standard of living.*"

The respondents also highlighted that enrolling in the skills development programme has worsened the family's financial challenges. Respondent 8 said, "*My family was stressed about transport money because they did not afford to pay for my travelling expenses and the fact that they had to help me pay off the loan shark for the money I borrowed when I started training. Hence, they supported my decision to drop out of the training programme.*"

In addition, Respondent 4 said, "*My mother did not have any other choice but to support my decision to drop out of training because being a single parent, relying*

on the child maintenance or grant, it was not easy for her financially. For me to get money for transport, it means my family had to compromise money to buy food, which was not fair, and because of that, I decided to drop out." Figure 4.10 summarises the family factors that resulted in or persuaded the respondents to drop out of the programme.

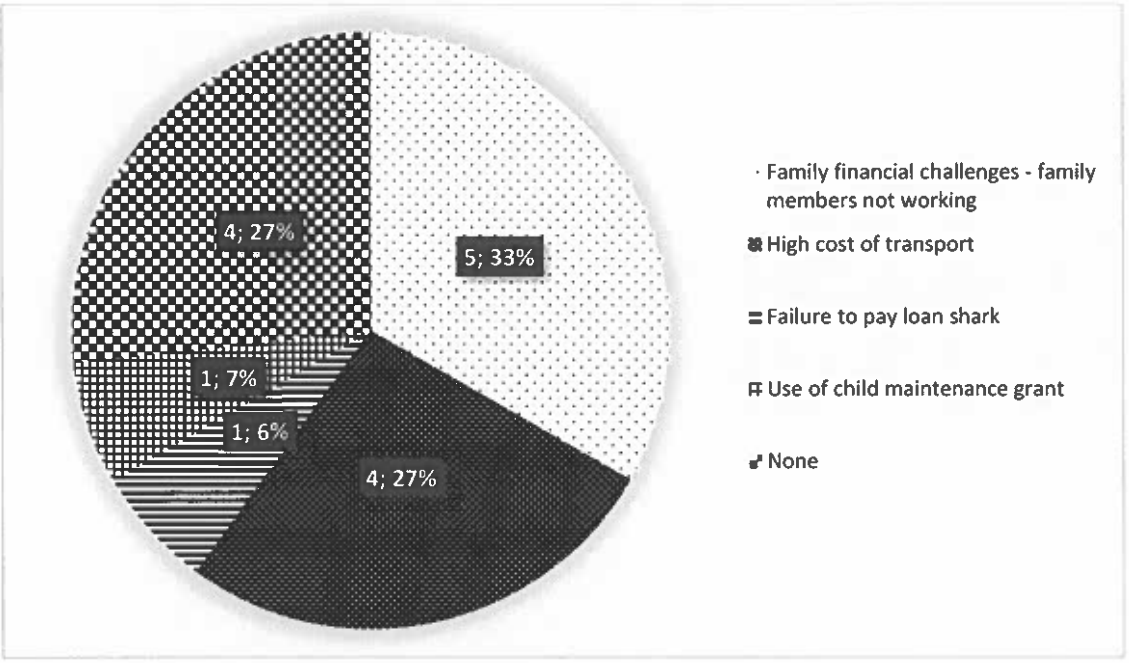

Figure 4.10: Family factors that resulted in learners dropping out of the skills development programme (number and percentage)

Finally, from the respondents' perspective, it was evident that there was nothing that the family could have done to persuade them to complete the skills development programme because they were aware of the problem and failed to resolve the issue as they did not have money for transport. Respondent 4 stated, "*if my family had money to pay for my transport, I would have finished the training. But because they didn't have money, there was nothing they could do.*" Respondent 3 said, "*honestly, there was nothing my family could do because I am from an impoverished background, and all I needed was money for transport, and they did not have money.*"

According to the responses provided by the participants, the family's socio-economic status appeared to be one of the factors that influenced the learners to drop out from the skills development programme for the out-of-school youth. The information gathered in this study demonstrates that the family's socio-economic status has played an enormous role in assisting the learners in deciding to drop out of the skills development programme.

4.6. Community factors

The fourth group of questions interrogated the factors that arose from the community environment that might have increased the high level of dropouts from the skills development programme. Wells et al. (1989) defined community-related factors as the factors that link with the current community environment, and it was highlighted as a factor that could likely increase the probability of learners dropping out of training.

The key objective of this section was to determine and assess whether the community played any role in the learners' decision to drop out of the skills development programme. Most respondents confirmed that they did not experience any community challenges based on the responses. The respondents provided recommendations of what would be conducive when implementing the skills development programme, which involves the community. Respondent 13 said, "*I did not experience any challenges from the community, but I wish MRTT can involve the community in implementing this training programme because the participation of the community in the execution of the training programme will ensure that the community helps in resolving the issues or the challenges we experience as learners easily.*"

Furthermore, the respondents highlighted that the community was helpful, with Respondent 6 saying, "*the community supported the initiative. Some even allowed us to do the experiential learning at their homes.*" This is an indication that the community supports the skills development programme.

According to the responses provided, the community did not appear to contribute to learner dropout. Instead, it came through as what would have been a positive element to ensuring that the learners finish the training programme.

While the data collected has emphasised the community as an environment that played a positive role in the implementation of the skills development programme, empirical evidence reflected the community as one of the variables that contributed to learner dropout. The community factors that resulted in learners dropping out of the programme include peer pressure (Böhn & Deutscher, 2022; Mdluli, 2017), poor and disadvantaged area, violent neighbourhood, and lack of facilities and parks (Cerda-Navarro et al., 2017; Van der Bijl & Lawrence, 2019).

4.7. Conclusion

The voices of the 15 learners who participated in the interviews conducted for this study were echoed in this chapter. These interviews were conducted to determine the underlying factors behind learners dropping out of the CETA skills development programme for Building and Civil Construction and identify the training institution's strategies to address the dropout issue.

Based on the information collected in this study to investigate the factors contributing to learners dropping out of the skills development training for out-of-school youth, most participants shared that more than one factor caused them to drop out. The factors that emerged during the interviews were related to the individual, institutional and family environment. The individual factors that emerged from the study were input challenges that includes home resources, financial challenges, the high cost of transport to the training centre, job opportunities, movement to other skills development programmes, and finally, the caregiving responsibilities especially among females like childbearing. A substantial number of respondents acknowledged that dropping out of the skills

development programme was an independent decision; however, the training centre contributed to such a decision.

Furthermore, the family factors that emerged from the study were socio-economic challenges. The family's financial challenges were highlighted as the one of the factors that resulted in the respondents dropping out of training. This challenge is related to other family-related factors that emerged, such as the high cost of transport, using child maintenance grants for transportation, and interactions with a loan shark. In addition to the family-related factors, the respondents shared the factors linked to the training institution are operational challenges, including stipend challenges, lack of support and communication, and the geographical location of the training institution.

The respondents have shown interest in determining the training institution's strategies to address the dropout issue, and some provided more than one strategy. The preventative approach provided varied from one respondent to the other. These were all related to the reasons they shared that led to them dropping out from the skills development programme. The strategies provided include a review of the current stipend, the payment timeline, and the location of the training facility. Additionally, the current curriculum should be reviewed and improved to include business skills. Lastly, a communication platform should be developed where learners can discuss the challenges experienced while undergoing training.

Following the discussions about the factors that emerged from the study regarding skills development absconsion, in the next chapter, the information gathered during the interviews in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 are analysed.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1. Introduction

In the analysis chapter, the meaning and analysis of the information generated through the interviews are presented, considering the research questions, the underlying conceptual framework and the literature presented in Chapter 2. The analysis of the responses informed the critical findings of the study and the conclusions.

The data analysis includes identifying themes from the transcribed information and further fragmenting the collected information into the themes. The thematic data analysis method was used for this research mainly because it assisted with the determination of common themes on the information gathered through the interviews with the participants who had dropped out of the CETA skills development programme.

5.2. Themes and categories identified from the data collection.

The themes emanating from the semi-structured interviews are discussed in this section. The factors contributing to learners dropping out of the skills development programme, which emerged from the study, were grouped into categories, themes, and sub themes.

Table 5.1 summarises the main factors identified in the previous chapter and literature review. Each of these are discussed separately in this chapter.

Table 5.1: Categories and themes emanating from the interviews.

CATEGORIES	THEMES
Individual factors	Input challenges o Financial difficulties o Female caregiving responsibilities o Movement between programmes

CATEGORIES	THEMES
	○ Job opportunities
Training institution factors	Operational challenges ○ Stipend challenges ○ Lack of communication and support from the training institution ○ The geographical location of the training venue
Family-related factors	Socio-economic challenges ○ Home resources
Community related factors	Environmental challenges ○ Violent, poor, and disadvantaged neighbourhood ○ Peer pressure

5.2.1. Individual factors

The data analysis revealed several factors contributing to the high dropout rate among the learners who had enrolled in the skills development programme based on the responses that were provided. Some of the factors contributing to learners dropping out of the programme were personal issues or challenges experienced while in training. The following themes emerged from the responses:

5.2.1.1. Theme 1: Input challenges

Sub theme: Financial difficulties

The analysis revealed that numerous factors related to financial challenges contributed to learners dropping out of the skills development programmes. Financial challenges appeared to be one of the critical factors that emerged from this study. It came to light that initially, some learners had enrolled for the skills development programme mainly due to financial struggles, which appeared to be the driving force behind their enrolment. A significant number of participants

stated that as they were unemployed and in need of a job, they regarded the skills development programme as an opportunity to raise money owing to the stipend that is paid while attending the programme. This theme was confirmed in a study conducted by Kanjere (2014), who indicated that payment of stipends is one of the factors that result in a high dropout rate as it attracts individuals who do not have an interest in the programme.

In the current study, the majority of the respondents indicated that they enrolled for the programme owing to the stipend. As most learners enrolled for the skills development programme to generate money and not acquire the skills required by the labour market, they became frustrated, which resulted in them dropping out of the programme.

One of the factors that arose due to the individuals' financial positions was transport issues. The majority of the respondents emphasised that they decided to drop out of the skills development programme as they could not afford to pay for transport to the training centre. They further indicated that transport was too expensive, and they could not afford it.

This theme matched the previous research regarding dropouts. Rumberger and Lim (2008) highlight that the challenges experienced by learners, which significantly results in their decision to drop out, are in most cases influenced by the underlying factors that are related to their socio-economic status. From the findings of this case study, it is evident that financial constraints resulted in learners dropping out of the skills development programme, which was also confirmed by the literature.

Sub theme: Female caregiving responsibilities

According to empirical studies, another factor contributing to learners dropping out of skills development programmes is gender (De Witte et al., 2013; Kambouri & Francis, 1994). Child bearing has been highlighted as one of the contributing

factors to learners dropping out from these programmes (De Witte et al., 2013; Kambouri & Francis, 1994). This factor also emerged in this study as one respondent indicated that she had dropped out of the skills development programme due to being pregnant and further mentioned that walking to the training centre was difficult due to the pregnancy. In this case study, the results show that caregiving responsibility especially among female contributes to learner dropout. This appears to link to the finding identified in this study as a learner indicated that they had dropped out as they were pregnant.

Sub theme: Movement between programmes

One of the findings identified in this case study was the movement of the respondents from one programme to another. For instance, if a new programme starts and the learners are interested in it, they will drop out of the current programme as they had initially joined owing to the stipend. Previous studies by Cerda-Navarro et al. (2017) and Kraak et al. (2013) have revealed that learners move from one skills development programme to another due to their financial challenges. Once a new programme is introduced with the skills training they are interested in, the learner will dropout and register for the other programme (Kraak et al., 2013). A total of 19% of the selected respondents dropped out of the skills development programme to join other programmes.

In this study, the results show that moving from one programme to a newly introduced programme is one of the factors that resulted in the high number of dropouts. One of the respondents indicated that the training institution should consider including business skills as part of the curriculum to make it interesting.

Sub theme: Job opportunities

Previous research has revealed that the majority of learners, specifically the youth, drop out of skills development programmes to accept job opportunities (Furlong, 2007; Kambouri & Francis, 1994). This issue links to the findings as some respondents indicated that they had dropped out of the skills development

programme as they had secured a job. This factor appears to potentially contribute to the high dropout rate as the data revealed that most of the learners who enrolled for this skills development programme had opted for it owing to the stipend. Based on the responses provided, 87% of the participants indicated that they had enrolled for the programme to get a stipend as a job opportunity would allow them to substitute the stipend with a presumably higher wage.

Furthermore, De Witte et al. (2013) indicates that the jobs that learners secure are usually short term; however, in this study, one of the respondents indicated that they had secured a permanent job while in training; hence, they had decided to drop out. What is important to note, however, is that the majority of the sample remained unemployed and further research might interrogate the types of jobs learners are offered and this would help us understand what happens to people who complete the programme.

5.2.2. Training institution factors

Learners spend a great deal of time in the training institution environment and, therefore, the institution and the practitioners are vital role players contributing to the factors that result in the respondents dropping out of the skills development programme.

Given the high rate of high school dropouts highlighted by the Minister of Education (Minister of Basic Education, 2018), training institutions must develop turnaround strategies that can be implemented to address the factors that emanated from the interviews, given that these skills development programmes are important tools to upskill learners who fail to complete their secondary school. In so doing, it will ensure that school-leavers are capacitated with the skills that the labour force requires.

5.2.2.1. Theme 2: Operational challenges

Sub theme: Stipend challenges

The stipend challenge was one of the factors that dominated the discussion during the data gathering. This challenge appeared to be a common problem highlighted by almost every participant. Figure 4 highlighted that 75% of the respondents decided to drop out of the skills development programme due to stipend-related issues. Participants highlighted different reasons linked to the stipend, including non-payment, late payment, and being paid less than anticipated, which resulted in learners deciding to leave training. The decision was taken mainly because the participants used the stipend money for transport costs. This challenge has also been highlighted by Engmann et al. (2017), who asserts that the stipend is very useful as learners usually use it to pay for transport and other basic needs.

On the other hand in a study conducted by Kanjere (2014), it was identified that the payment of stipends appears to be one of the risk factors that fail programmes as stipends attract individuals with no interest in the programmes. The stipend issue links with the findings identified in the current study as more than 80% of respondents indicated that they had registered for the training owing to the stipend. Even though the participants stated other benefits, such as acquiring skills and certificates, the stipend was the main reason they had decided to join the programme.

The finding has also been argued by Tinto (1993), who emphasises that people needs to be committed to their careers and have clear educational goals to complete their training. The results in this case study indicate that stipends are one of the main factors that contributed to learners dropping out of the skills development programme.

This, however, is an indication that many training programmes are a vehicle of survival for the majority of the out-of-school youth. This highlights the extent of the hardships and lack of opportunities, especially income opportunities, many young people endure in the South African economy.

Sub theme: Lack of communication and support from the training institution

The respondents indicated that there was no involvement and communication from the training institution. Based on the experiences shared by the respondents, it was found that the training institution did not put in any effort when it came to assisting learners with their challenges or problems. The majority of the respondents emphasised that the training practitioners did not want to become involved in the learners' problems and challenges. In most cases, the respondents stated that the practitioners merely ignored the situation, despite learners taking the initiative to discuss their issues with them. These shared experiences highlight the significance of having a platform where the training institution can address the learners' problems and challenges.

Empirical evidence revealed an association between learners dropping out of the programme and the lack of a relationship between and communication with the educators. The dropout rate is usually high in training institutions with unfriendly training practitioners or no connection between the learners and the practitioners (Aarkrog et al., 2018). This finding also links to the study performed by Yi et al. (2015), in which it is highlighted that when learners feel ignored and misunderstood by training practitioners, they are more likely to leave training.

The current study revealed that the practitioners were not providing any assistance in relation to the learners' queries or challenges. Therefore, it is recommended that a learner support unit be established in the training institution to manage communication between the learners and the institution, and to attend to the learners' challenges and problems as educators could perhaps be

overwhelmed with focusing on the content of the training, as well as the administration. This theme links to previous studies that highlight that an inadequate learning environment could have a negative effect on learners, and the teachers' treatment and attitudes towards the learners increase their chances of leaving the training (Cerda-Navarro et al., 2017; Tas et al., 2013; Kambouri & Francis, 1994).

Based on the data collected in this study, a lack of support and communication by the training institution, and the lack of a platform or office where learners can share their challenges or emotions were the main drivers of difficulties indicated by the respondents. This is one factor that contributed enormously to the learners resorting to dropping out of the skills development programme.

Sub theme: Geographical location of the training venue

The majority of the participants highlighted the training institution's location being one factor that largely influenced the learners' decision to leave the skills development training. Based on the responses, more than 70% of the interviewed learners planned to use their stipend money for transport to and from the training centre as the location is far from the targeted communities. This theme links to the study conducted by Engmann et al. (2017) regarding bridging the skills gap, in which it is stated that a stipend is useful as the learners usually use it to pay for transport and other basic needs.

According to Figure 4.8, one of the respondents highlighted that the training venue is far from their homes. Some of the learners even recommended that the training institution should consider providing transportation services to ensure the completion of the skills development programme. This theme was also argued in a study conducted by Ainsworth (2005), in which it is stipulated that the dropout rate keeps escalating in the areas where the training providers are far from the targeted beneficiaries, mainly due to the distance one has to walk.

However, this factor is closely linked to the financial difficulties many of the respondents experienced while on the programme. Economic factors are, therefore, important underlying drivers of the decision to drop out from the skills development programme.

5.2.3. Family-related factors

Many respondents spoke about family-related challenges that contributed to them leaving the skills development programme. Family environments emerged as a contributor to the increasing dropout rate due to the difficulties learners experienced while training, which link to their families. As much as the family challenges or difficulties contributed to the respondents' decision to leave the training programme, the families played a vital role in encouraging them to enrol for the training.

5.2.3.1. Theme 3: Socio-economic challenges

Sub theme: Home resources

While this study revealed the factors contributing to learner dropout, the reasons that were indicated varied from one learner to another. Their low-income family backgrounds, which resulted in the majority of young people who had enrolled for the skills development dropping out of the programme, led to the respondents not being able to afford transport costs. This appeared to be a commonality among many of the respondents.

The non-affordability of the transport costs to the training centre by the families highlighted several family-related challenges that increased the probability of the learners dropping out of the skills development programme. One of the factors was unemployment. The fact that many family members were not working meant that the learners could not afford to pay for transport to the training centre.

This theme matched with the findings in previous studies, in which it has been highlighted that parental income is one of the predictors that contribute to learners dropping out. If parents cannot generate income, it becomes challenging to help the learners with the resources, such as transport fare and stationery, resulting in learners dropping out (Marks & Fleming, 1999; Van der Bijl & Lawrence, 2019).

Another finding associated with the family environment was the prevalence of single-parent households. This finding links with the previous literature, which indicates that families with single parents who do not work and depend on public assistance, are more likely to drop out of training due to financial constraints (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). Some participants highlighted that their mothers are single parents who are not working and that, at some point, they had taken money for food or the child's maintenance grant to pay for transport.

In addition to the above, another family-related finding identified in this study was that a family's poor background had driven one learner to borrow money from a loan shark as they needed to pay for transport to the training centre. This finding links to the study undertaken by Lamb (2011), in which it is argued that most learners who leave training before completion tend to come from a socially disadvantaged background, resulting in them being less motivated and disengaged from school.

5.2.4. Community-related factors

The participants highlighted community as one of the variables that played a good role in the implementation of the programme, however, through empirical observations it was highlighted that the community has contributed on the factors that resulted in leaners dropping out of the skills development.

5.2.4.1. Theme 4: Environmental challenges

Sub theme: Violent, poor, and disadvantaged neighbourhood

The environmental challenges within the neighbourhood were highlighted as one of the reasons that resulted in the learners dropping the skills development due to the violent activities that occurred within the communities. Furthermore, poverty was also emphasised to be one of the contributing factors for leaner dropout because when one is undergoing challenges they normally resort to crime.

Sub theme: Peer pressure

The pressures from the peers like, employment, have resulted in learners dropping out of the skills development programme because of the aspiration to secure employment and be like their friends. In addition to the employment pressures, other learners drop out of the programme because of the time they spent with their friends that are out of school.

5.3. Conclusion

In this chapter, an in-depth analysis and discussion of the findings in this research were conducted using the feedback provided by the respondents. The data were gathered through the interviews and the researcher clustered the collected information into themes. The focus of this interpretation was to respond to the primary question of this study, which was undertaken by comparing the findings with the literature reviewed for this study.

This analysis revealed that socio-economic challenges played an enormous role in influencing the high rate of learners dropping out of the skills development programme. The challenges included respondents enduring difficult situations that influenced the families to support the participants' decision to drop out of the skills development programme. This theme has been highlighted in many studies, in which it has been found that learners from low-income single-parent

households and families are more likely to leave skills development programmes (De Witte et al., 2013; Christenson & Thurlow, 2004; Marks & Fleming, 1999). In the next chapter, the summary of the findings, conclusion, and recommendations for future research are outlined.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1. Introduction

In the penultimate chapter, the data analysis and the discussion of the findings were outlined. In this final chapter, a summary of the findings and recommendations for the study are presented. In addition, the general conclusions to the study and future research recommendations are presented.

It is imperative to recall that the purpose of the study was to establish the underlying factors that resulted in learners dropping out of the skills development programme for out-of-school youth offered by the MRTT. The study was also focused on identifying the strategies that could be implemented to address the dropout challenge.

The study was informed by the growing dropout rate in the CETA skills development programme at the MRTT. As stated in Chapter 1, the number of learners dropping out is increasing annually while the government is continually allocating funds to assist out-of-school youth with the skills needed by the labour force. The study concerned itself with the underlying factors contributing to learners leaving the programme and establishing preventative measures that training institutions could apply to prevent learners from dropping out of skills development programmes. Furthermore, this study explored why learners decided to drop out of the skills development programme by allowing the respondents to share or articulate their experiences.

Skills development is one of the South African government's main tools to assist in addressing the challenges currently being experienced by the country, including a skills shortage, and maximising the employability of the youth. The government introduced these programmes to link learning, including workplace experience, with the desired skills of the labour market. The overall goal of this intervention is to capacitate out-of-school youth with a formal or accredited

qualification and practical experience, and by doing so, increase their chances of securing employment (National Planning Commision, 2012).

To this end, government has established legislative frameworks such as the SDA, Skills Development Levies Act, 1999 (Act No. 9 of 1999), and Skills Development Strategy to support government's priority of capacitating out-of-school youth with the skills desired by the labour market (National Planning Commision, 2012). In addition, government put institutions such as SAQA and SETAs in place to provide appropriate guidance on implementing these interventions (National Planning Commision, 2012).

This research focused on the underlying factors that resulted in learners dropping out of the skills development programme for out-of-school youth and the factors that contribute to an increase in the probability of learners leaving these programmes before completion.

In this study, it was identified that although the number of factors related to dropout are interlinked, the most substantial aspect potentially influencing learners dropping out of the programme appeared to be related to the training institution and socio-economic challenges. However, the training institution factors stood out most prominently.

This research revealed numerous reasons or factors associated with the high number of learner dropouts at the MRTT, specifically for the funded CETA skills development programmes. The factors identified by the researcher cannot be addressed in isolation as they are related and impact each other.

6.2. Summary of the findings

During the interviews, it was revealed that most of the respondents did not enrol for the CETA skills development programme because it was their first preference or their aspired career. However, they decided to register as it was readily

available and an opportunity for them to gain skills that they could use in the labour market. The primary significant reason for enrolling for this skills development programme was the stipend as the respondents highlighted that they would be able to get an income through the programme.

Based on the responses provided by the respondents, one respondent revealed that they had joined the programme as they wanted to acquire skills, which highlights the fact that the individuals who were enrolling for this programme generally were not registering to capacitate themselves. They had mainly joined as it was an opportunity to generate income through the stipend. Some participants dropped out of the skills development programme as they had secured an opportunity to study another programme and others dropped out owing to job opportunities. Moreover, other findings relating to individual factors were financial challenges and the movement from one skills development programme to another.

Over and above the individual findings, the training institution factors identified in this study were related to the stipend. The issues raised were the non-payment of the stipend, the late payment of the stipend, and the payment timelines not being as per the learner agreement. Furthermore, the training institution paid a smaller stipend than the agreed amount at the commencement of training. These issues influenced the high rate of dropouts.

Furthermore, it was found that the training institution conducted no follow-ups to determine why learners had decided to drop out of the programme. A lack of communication by the training institution is one factor contributing to learners dropping out from the programme. The last set of findings identified in this study were family-related factors. Socio-economic challenges contributed to the high rate of learner dropout.

6.3. Recommendations

Based on the findings identified in the study, it is recommended that the training institution review the skills development programme to assess whether the stipend is enough to cover the transportation cost or provide learners with transport to and from the training venue.

Furthermore, the training practitioners should be capacitated on managing communication and mentoring the learners or a unit should be established that can support the learners. It is also recommended that a platform be developed where learners can log their training issues or challenges and an official should be availed to assist the learners in resolving their problems.

Lastly, the training institution should make learning relevant to the targeted beneficiaries of the out-of-school youth. The skills development programme curriculum for out-of-school youth should be reviewed to include business skills.

Overall, the study has responded to the research questions to identify the underlying factors behind learners dropping out of the skills development programme, which were specified in Chapter 1. The factors contributing to learners dropping out of the skills development programme for out-of-school youth include stipend challenges, financial challenges, and their socio-economic status. However, many of them are a result of economic hardship in the communities or the families of the respondents. Therefore, a larger social response is needed to address the issue of absconsion; one which addresses the impoverished conditions of individuals.

Moreover, the study provided answers to the secondary research question, which was to identify the strategies that the training institution can implement to address the dropout issue. The respondents highlighted that the training institution should consider increasing the stipend value and paying the stipend on time as the learners use the money for transport to the areas where training is provided.

6.4. Recommendations for further research

The objective of this study was to investigate the factors that resulted in learners dropping out of the CETA out-of-school skills development programme. Following the findings that emerged from this study, the following can be considered as possible areas to research within the skills development programmes:

6.4.1 As the study was aimed at targeting the learners who had dropped out from the skills development programme, it would be interesting to investigate the skills development practitioners and the training institution management's perspectives on learner dropout and how they will support the institution in terms of managing dropouts.

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APPENDIX 1: LEARNER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Components of the conceptual framework	Interview Questions
Individual Factors	How did you know about the training programme? What resulted in you joining the programme? How would you describe your academic experiences before enrolling on the programme? What influenced you to decide to leave the programme? What would have prevented you from dropping out of the programme? Would you go back to complete the programme if you were given the opportunity? What do you think could be a solution to address students' drop-out?
Institution/School Factors	What were the expectations when you enrolled in the skills programme at a Training centre? What factors related to the training centre contributed to your decision? Was there any measure taken by the training centre to assist or encourage you to complete the programme?

	What could the training centre have done to prevent you from dropping out of the programme?
Family/Friend Factors	Was your family and friends involved in your decision to enrol for the programme? How did they react when they noticed you dropped out from the programme? What could your parents or family have done to persuade you not to drop out from the programme?
Community factors	Did you experience any challenges from your community while attending the programme?
Others	Is there anything else you want to share with me that we haven't talked about?

APPENDIX 2: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of project: Investigate the factors that resulted in learners dropping out of the skills development programme for out-of-school-youth.

Name of researcher: Raesetja Augustina Raphela

I, ..., agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in his / her research report	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers, subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained.	YES	NO

.....	.....	.....
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

.....	.....	.....
Name of Person seeking consent	Signature	Date

APPENDIX 3: MRTT PERMISSION LETTER REQUEST

UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG

University of the Witwatersrand,
School of Governance

General Manager: Technical Training Operations
Ms. Zanele Khoza
Mpumalanga Regional Training Trust
Bureau de Paul
N4 Office Park
Emalahleni
1035

23 July 2020

Dear Madam,

Re: Permission to conduct research at Mpumalanga Regional Training Trust.

My name is Raesetja Augustina Raphela.

I am studying for a Master of Management in the field of Public and Development Sector in the School of Governance at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am seeking permission to do research at Mpumalanga Regional Training Trust (MRTT).

I am conducting research on the leaners that dropout of the skills development programmes. The main aim of the study is to investigate the factors which result in learners dropping out of the skills development programme for out-of-school-youth and to determine their experiences while undergoing the training. This study was influenced by the increasing number of dropouts annually at MRTT and in other the training institution in South Africa. Furthermore, the study was also influenced by the fact that the Medium-Term Strategic Framework highlighted that most learners quit school before completion and these school leavers will negatively affect the country's economy.

MRTT was selected mainly because the entity's mandate is to empower the youth through training and providing them with an opportunity to be involved in the

economic activities within the Mpumalanga province. Additionally, MRTT is providing skills development programmes training for the out-of-school youth and annually experiences learner dropout which is a challenge affecting training institutions in the country.

The research will entail collecting data from the learners that were enrolled for the out of school skills development programmes and did not complete the programme. I request permission to get access to a database, list of learners that dropped out of the skills programme and contact details.

Participants will be asked to give their written or verbal consent before the research begins. Their responses will be treated confidentially, and identities will be anonymous unless otherwise expressly indicated. Individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

The results will be communicated through a dissertation.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

I, therefore, request permission in writing to conduct my research at your organisation. The permission letter should be on your organisation's headed paper, signed and dated, and specifically referring to myself by name and the title of my study.

Please let me know if you require any further information. I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Raesetja Augustina Raphela
Cell No: 071 009 4686
Email: 1502077@students.wits.ac.za

Supervisor: Odile Mackett
Tel No: +27 11 717 3655
Email: odile.mackett@wits.ac.za

APPENDIX 4: MRTT CEO APPROVAL LETTER

MPUMALANGA
REGIONAL TRAINING TRUST

No 8 Bureau de Paul, N4 Office Park, Witbank, 1035

Empowerment Through Training

Our Reference:

MRTT

Head Office
Private Bag X7288
Emalahleni, 1035
Tel: (013) 656 0857/75
Fax: (013) 656 0832
E-mail: info@rttrust.co.za
Website: www.rttrust.co.za

Emalahleni Training Centre
Private Bag X7288
Emalahleni, 1035
Tel: (013) 699 0350/1/3
Fax: (013) 696 1047
E-mail: info.centres@rttrust.co.za

Elsendustria Training Centre
P.O. Box 1451
Bronkhorstspruit, 1020
Tel: (013) 983 3420
E-mail: info@rttrust.co.za

Kabokweni Training Centre
P.O. Box 96
Karino, 1204
Tel: (013) 656 0857
E-mail: info@rttrust.co.za

Hospitality and Tourism Academy Kempemazane
P.O. Box 96
Karino, 1204
Tel: (013) 794 3891/2/3/4
Fax: (013) 794 3933/3938
E-mail: reservations.hta@rttrust.co.za

18 August 2020

Ms Raesetja Augustina Raphela
University of Witwatersrand
JOHANNESBURG

Dear Ms. Raphela,

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEACH

I refer to your letter dated 23 July 2020 requesting to conduct research at Mpumalanga Regional Training Trust on learner dropout on skills development programmes.

After discussion with the General Managers responsible for our Skills Development Programmes in Hospitality and Technical Training permission is hereby granted.

We are looking forward to the results and recommendations from your study and believe it will assist not only the entity but also other providers to mitigate dropout figures.

Kind regards

R. OOSTHUIZEN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Board of Directors: Mr. TR Mokgoshi Chairperson | Ms. T Mawelele Deputy Chairperson | Mr. B Sibanyoni Member | Mr. PP Maoko Member | Mr. MI Tibane Member | Mr. JH Mathabe Member | Ms. GA Deiner Member | Mr BM Singwane Member | Mrs. M Mhlabene HOD & Ex-Officio | Mr R. Oosthuizen CEO & Ex-Officio | Ms. KM Mohlala Company Secretary

APPENDIX 5: WITS UNIVERSITY ETHICS COMMITTEE CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

WITS SCHOOL OF GOVERNANCE

Research Office:
Sithembile Xaba
Tel: 011 717 3133
Email: Sithembile.Xaba@wits.ac.za

Research Director:
Prof Pundy Pillay
Tel: 011 717 3501
Email: pundy.pillay@wits.ac.za

02 February 2021

Dear Miss Raesetja Augustina Raphela

Title: Investigating the factors which result in learners dropping out of the skills development programme for out-of-school-youth
Student Number: 1502077
Degree: Master of Management in the field of Governance
Ethics Clearance Number: ***WSG-2021-08***

All candidates must satisfy the University's ethical standards for research. Your ethics application has been received and reviewed by the Wits School of Governance Human Research Ethics Committee.

Your ethical clearance has been approved subject to you getting permission to conduct research from all sites where research is conducted. The letter(s) of permission to undertake research must be submitted to the WSG Research Office and kept on file with your final proposal and other ethics documents.

You may commence your data collection under the guidance of your supervisor. In the event that the scope, methodology or nature of the research changes, you are required to submit another ethics application reflecting the changes.

The onus is on you as the candidate, with support from your supervisor, to ensure that your research complies with university human research ethics policies and protocols at all stages of the research process.

It is recommended that you keep this letter in a safe place as you are responsible for ensuring that you have proof of ethics clearance and have lodged the ethics clearance / protocol number with Faculty before final submission of your research report. If you do not have an ethics clearance number, you are not permitted to graduate.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

Professor Pundy Pillay
Research Director