How teachers manage absenteeism of orphaned learners in primary schools

by

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DECLARATION

I, Ramare Masilo Norman, hereby declare that the dissertation: **How teachers manage absenteeism of orphaned learners in primary schools**, is my own original work and that all sources consulted and quoted have been acknowledged in the list of references.

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Mr. Ramare Masilo Norman May 2016

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving family: my loving and supportive wife, Castalia; my four boys, Makau, Mpho, Thabiso and Dithetho who have been so patient during all the times not available for them due to my studies, my parents, Mokumo Mothanyi and the late father Matome David Ramare, may his soul rest in peace, my brother Daniel and my four sisters, Gloria, Rosemary, Elisabeth and Irene, my late mother-in law Rosina Ramoshaba, may her soul rest in peace. I appreciate the support they gave to me and acknowledge the role they played to ensure that I complete my studies.

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To God be the Glory

ABSTRACT

The study was based on the increasing number of orphaned learners and child headed families in our schools and our community. Some of the orphaned learners are unable to attend school regularly. A review of literature reveals that parent or other care givers are held responsible for learners` school attendance and in the case of orphaned there is no parent figure to ensure that learners attend school. The purpose of the study was to explore how teachers manage the absenteeism of orphaned learners in selected primary schools in Limpopo Province. The research approach used in this study was qualitative. I choose qualitative methods because as a researcher, I intended to gain holistic overview of how teachers manage absenteeism of orphaned learners at school. As a researcher I anticipated that teachers shared with me the challenges they experienced when learners are absent from school. I chose qualitative research approach because of its interactive nature. Research design chosen for the study was multiple case study involving three schools within one circuit in Limpopo province.

Purposive sampling was used. The participants selected for the study were teachers who are responsible for orphaned learners, Life Orientation teachers and class teachers. A total number of ten (10) teachers were selected from the three schools. The school principals in the respective schools were involved in identifying the participants. Data were collected by using interviews and doing document analysis. The interviews were semi structured with pre-set questions. Learner attendance policy and attendance registers were analysed. The research findings showed that childheaded families are less likely to attend school than non-orphans. The recommendations in the study are made in terms of the findings and within the context of this study.

Key words: Orpahned learners, non-orphans, teachers, manage, community, absenteeism, primary schools, challenges, childheaded families and caregiver

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

UNICEF	-	United Nations Children's Fund
PED	-	Provincial Education Department
SASA	-	South Africa School Act
RSA	-	Republic of South Africa
UNIAID	-	United States Agency for International
AIDS	-	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HIV	-	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
NGOs	-	Non Governmental Organisations
ILO	-	International Labour Organisation
OVC	-	Orphan and Vulnerable Children
ASCL	-	Association of School and College Leaders
UK	-	United Kingdom
SST	-	School Support Teams
HOD	-	Head of Department
SRDA	-	Soetfontein Rural Development Association
HAC	-	Health Advisory Committee
NSNP	-	National School Nutrition Programme
ZOCS	-	Zambia Open Community School
DBE	-	Department of Basic Education
GHS	-	General Household Survey

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The Convention on the Right of the Child stresses on children`s rights lies in the state, families and guardians who are entrusted with ensuring that children's rights are realised. The Convention helped to transform attitudes towards childhood by outlining the standard for child treatment, care, survival, development and protection until the child reaches 18 years (UNICEF, 2009). The phenomenon occurs across the world, but its unique features in South Africa are reflected in the 2013 Department of Basic Education (DBE) reports. The report conducted by the DBE indicated that in 2002 the attendance of orphaned learners was approximately 3% and the number increased in 2013 to approximately 6 % of orphaned learners attending school (General Household Survey, 2013). The death of a parent is a crisis for any child. When children are orphaned they lack the emotional support and guidance normally provided for by parents. In some cases the orphaned children take up parental responsibilities to care for their younger siblings (De Witt, 2009). Without help from the parents, children are likely to miss the opportunity of attending school and may develop juvenile delinquent tendencies (UNICEF, 2005). Orphaned children need caring adults to nurture them to adulthood. Earlier studies undertaken by Abebe and Aase in Ethiopia (2007) and by Foster in Zambia (2002) found that the number of orphaned children was increasing steadily and was over-stretching the help provided by the community and other relatives. The gap in providing care affects the education of orphans. According to Operario *et al.* (2008), orphans are absent from school more often than non-orphans. Similarly, Pillay (2012) concludes that orphans spend a lot of time doing household chores and are unable to attend school.

A study done in Kenya by Ombuya, Yambo & Omolo (2012) also reports that orphaned girls in high schools have no time to do homework because of heavy domestic chores

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after school. The older orphaned learners take care of themselves and their younger siblings with no parental supervision. Other studies reveal that orphaned learners are punished for being late for school; failing tests; and that they are unable to do homework due to their responsibilities at home (Mohlakwana, 2013; Ombuya *et al.*, 2012). Because of the situation at home and what is expected of them at school, some orphaned learners are not able to cope and, as a result, they play truant.

There are orphans who live in extreme poverty - sometimes without both the means to attend school and the basic essentials for life. According to Mishra (2008), learners who are often absent from school because they are required to care for ill parents perform poorly in school even before being orphaned. The inability of the orphaned learners and other vulnerable learners to attend school regularly contributes to their poor academic performance (Wilson, Giese, Meintjies, Croke & Chamberlain, 2002). Orphaned learners who perform poorly in school have the tendency of giving up on their education (Ombuya *et al.,* 2012). When learners do not attend school, they miss out on opportunities to learn a variety of skills as well as obtain knowledge that will prepare them for the labour market; they will, therefore, be unable to make a more meaningful contribution to their families. The education received by children should focus on changing the behaviour and providing guidance that leads to responsible adulthood (UNICEF, 2005). All societies have values and young children need to be taught these values that will encourage them to learn and to be responsible members of society. Hayward (2007) maintains that a society that has moral values is characterized by hardworking, honest and humane people; such values can be nurtured by the education system.

Malcolm and Keane (2001) suggest that educators should encourage classroom environment that is favourable for teaching and learning and if learners are absent it means that the lessons of care, respect, empathy and love within the classroom are missed. The classroom is a place of critical inquiry where the value of outcomes, the

processes of learning and the claims of different ways of knowing are discussed and evaluated. According to a study by Masondo (2006), most educators lack the capacity and resources to adequately support orphaned learners and encourage them to attend school regularly.

In order to reduce learner absenteeism, the Department of Education's policy on learners attendance was introduced in 2010 to encourage regular school attendance at public schools and the use standardized procedures for recording, managing and monitoring learner attendance (Department of Education, 2010). The policy introduced two school registers, namely, class and period registers. A class register is used to monitor learner attendance in terms of policy (Department of Education, 2010) while the period register is used to monitor lesson attendance and if the class teacher is absent; another staff member is required to complete the period register. Regular monitoring of learner school attendance helps teachers to identify learners who need support. Managing the absenteeism of orphaned learners is a challenge because some of them have no adult figures to accept responsibility for ensuring that they attend school regularly (Mohlakwana, 2013).

The Policy on Learner Attendance is silent on who should be held accountable for the school attendance of orphaned learners who have no adult caregivers. Teachers are not given direction on how or who to approach in the case of orphaned learners with no adult care (Pillay, 2012). The term "parent", as described in the South African Schools Act (SASA), does not include caregivers or relatives who assume the parenting role with orphaned learners; it also does not provide guidance in terms of children from child-headed families.

1.2 RATIONALE

As a teacher working in a primary school in a remote area of Limpopo Province, I have noticed that orphaned children who live on their own without the support of caregivers were increasing in numbers. The orphaned learners take on adult responsibilities at a

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young age in the absence of adult care and supervision. In a study by Pillay (2012) found that young children under the age of 14 years are compelled to take on adult roles in the absence of their parents. When children perform the role of adults, they are unable to attend school and this leads to poor academic achievement; by not attending school the learners' rights to a basic education are violated. However, in attending school children grow intellectually and are given opportunities to fulfil their emotional, physical, psychological and interpersonal needs by establishing social relationships. Schools are expected to function according to set values that include love, respect and peace which give orphaned learners hope (Mohlakwana, 2013).

Pillay and Nesengani (2009) maintain that orphaned learners lack school uniforms; they are not able to pay school fees or buy books; they have no money to buy food; and it is impossible for them to pay for educational excursions. These learners often feel that they do not fit in the school system and easily drop out of school. Hoadley (2009) believes that schools have to take up the responsibility of holistic development of children. However, the problem is that teachers do not have appropriate skills needed in handling the challenges experienced by orphaned learners (Pillay, 2012). Some teachers regard the task and the responsibility of providing for the needs of the orphaned children daunting especially due to lack of appropriate training (Hoadley, 2009).

This study explored the extent to which teachers manage the gap created by the absence of parents and caregivers in ensuring that orphaned learners attend school regularly.

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

According to SASA (Department of Education, 1996), in South Africa learners from Grade 1 to Grade 9 have an obligation to attend school up to the age of 16 years. Normally, parents or other caregivers are held responsible for learners' school attendance; however, in the case of orphans - especially from child-headed households,

there is no parent figure to ensure that the learners attend school. In Zambia several educational opportunities are available which help to reduce the absenteeism of orphans and vulnerable children, such as support for the participation of orphans and other children in difficult circumstances in primary education; the provision of opportunities for further education and training; and the introduction of a well-functioning education management system at school and district levels which assist in the early identification of young people at risk (Robson & Kanyanta, 2008).

In South Africa the Policy on Learner Absenteeism (Department of Education, 2010) stipulates that parents should be held responsible for ensuring that learners attend school regularly. The SASA (Department of Education, 1996) provides for action to be taken against parents of learners of age who do not attend school without explanation. The act is, however, silent on action related to learners from child-headed families where there is no adult caregiver. When children are orphaned a parental gap is created and some orphans end up with no alternative caregiver who may be held responsible for ensuring regular school attendance. The SASA (Department of Education, 1996) insists that parents must see to it that learners attend school up to the age of 14 years.

The researcher's interest in conducting this study was based on the increasing number of orphaned learners and child-headed families in his school and in the community as well as the inability of the learners to attend school regularly which may have a negative impact on their future lives (Ng'ondi, 2012). Another reason for conducting the study was that orphaned children are at jeopardy of having their education interrupted and he was concerned about the need to support child-headed households in terms of the expenses of schooling (UNICEF, 2003, UNAIDS/UNICEF/USAID, 2004).

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to explore how teachers manage the absenteeism of orphaned learners in selected primary schools in Limpopo Province. The researcher's

interest was focused on managing the school attendance of orphaned learners by means of caring relationships between teachers and learners.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question was: *How do teachers manage the absenteeism of orphaned learners in primary schools in Limpopo Province?* The sub-questions were:

1. *What are the experiences of teachers regarding learner school attendance?*
2. *What are teachers` perceptions of the causes of absenteeism of orphaned learners?*
3. *What are the challenges experienced by teachers when orphaned learners are absent from school?*
4. *How do teachers manage the absenteeism of orphaned learners?*
5. *What do teachers perceive as their responsibility to absent orphans?*

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was based on the theoretical framework of an ethic of care. Ethics can be defined as moral principles governing or influencing conduct (Pearsall, 2008:397). Noddings (2007:232) defines caring as a process that involves moral reasoning in interpersonal relationship. Caring is also an exceptional activity which comprises of different behaviour that contributes to making the world a better place (Engster, 2005). It involves a person confronting others and responding to their needs and abilities. In education the ethic can be seen as a commitment to do the right thing for others in a learning environment. Caring in education refers to the relationships between learners and teachers. According to Noddings (2007:226), caring embraces the relationship connection between the person who gives care and the person who receives care. In the school situation teachers assume the role of providing care while the learners assume the role of the cared-for.

The ethic of care encourages teachers to help learners and to care for them. The theory assumes that teachers teach the curriculum; that they are a source of happiness; and

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that they provide a secure environment for the learners. The theory also suggests that teachers should have a good relationship with learners; be approachable; and have learners' interests at heart - caring for others is regarded as a moral obligation. Noddings (2007:226) argues that moral education has four key components, namely: modelling, dialogue, practice and confirmation. Modelling is about the development of carers and the people who receive care. Teachers should show learners that they care for them. In this study teachers are seen as engaging learners in conversation about caring. The care theory state that we cannot model caring if we do not engage in it and emphasizes that engaging in dialogue should allow learners to evaluate the attempt to care and that it contributes to the growth of the cared-for; dialogue is about conversations based on caring for others. The practice of care is about helping learners to develop mentally and in assisting them to care for others while confirmation is about exploring and appreciating the potential of others. It involves trust and continuity in the act of providing care.

The ethic of care is relevant to the study because, as a caring community, schools and teachers should care for all learners and be concerned about school attendance – more so for learners who are orphaned and may be from child-headed families with no adult figure to provide guidance in terms of school attendance. Caring is cultivated when teachers model caring by engaging learners in meaningful dialogue; confirm and applaud caring; and provide opportunities for learners to practice caring. In applying the theory of the ethic of care in this study, the researcher explores how teachers demonstrate care-giving in managing the absenteeism of orphaned learners. The underlying assumption is that the caring responses that learners receive from teachers who are accessible and open may help them not only improve on their school attendance and school work but also develop their own ability to care for their siblings.

The theory is used to identify data in texts that is relevant to the four major components of the theory, i.e., modelling, dialogue, practice and confirmation. The researcher

examined the data looking for evidence of modelling in the caring behaviour of teachers who encourage the school attendance of orphaned learners. He also analysed the data in search of evidence of dialogue that suggest teachers' engagement with orphaned learners; how they give feedback in encouraging their school attendance; how they are involved in the practice of care-giving; and how they reflect on managing the absenteeism of orphaned learners. The dialogue included the ability of the teachers to investigate the causes of learner absenteeism. In terms of confirmation - one of the elements of the care theory - the data was scanned looking for relationships of trust between teachers and orphaned learners and the ability of the teachers to manage the absenteeism of the learners.

1.7 RESEARCH APPROACH, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research approach, design and methodology are briefly described below. A more detailed description is given in Chapter 3.

1.7.1 Research approach

The researcher in this study uses qualitative research approach to obtain a holistic overview of how educators manage the absenteeism of orphaned learners in their schools. The perceptions of the teachers about the causes of absenteeism of orphaned learners and how they encourage learners to attend school regularly were also explored; teachers were encouraged to share their challenges and experiences of learner absenteeism with the researcher. The researcher purposely chose a qualitative approach because it is interactive and he was able to have in-depth discussions with the participants (Creswell, 2007).

1.7.2 Research design

The research design was a case study involving three schools and six teachers (two teachers from each school). Case study is a research design that describes and explains

a research study in a systematic manner (Merriam, 2009). In doing case study, the researcher investigates a phenomenon within a real-life context (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2009; Merriam, 2009). A case study was suitable for this research because it provided a narrative of events relevant to the topic as well as an in-depth understanding of the topic. Case studies are bounded by time and place; they are descriptive and detailed; they help researchers to discover new insights; and enable them to make judgements (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, and 2009:254).

Case study research design has its advantages and its disadvantages. Case study allows for generalisation about a phenomenon only within the cases studied. The researcher was able to generalise the phenomena from the data supplied by the sampled teachers who participated in the study (Merriam 2009). The advantages of case studies are that they recognize the complexity of social truths from rich descriptive material and interpretation. Data may be collected from multiple sources. The disadvantages of case studies are that the findings are not generalisable beyond the cases and they are often too voluminous and complex to analyse. As data management requires meticulous cleaning up, sorting and categorizing, some researchers may lack the skills required to conduct case study research. In this study, the researcher sorted and categorised the data collected into themes and sub-themes with guidance from his supervisor.

1.7.3 Research Methodology

The research methodology included elements, such as the site of the research, sampling and the collection of data.

1.7.3.1 Research site

The research was conducted in three primary schools, School 1, School 2 and School 3. Ten teachers from the three schools were selected: School 1 (Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher C and Teacher D); School 2 (Teacher E, Teacher F and Teacher G); and School 3 (Teacher H, Teacher I and Teacher J). The researcher wrote a letter to the circuit manager and the principals of selected primary schools to obtain permission to access

the sites. He also wrote letters to the ten teachers requesting their consent to participate in the study. He collaborated with the class-teachers responsible for learner school attendance; teachers responsible for orphans and vulnerable children; and Life Orientation (LO) teachers or guidance teachers at the different schools. Research was done in selected schools in the Mopani District in the deep rural area of Limpopo Province where most community members are unemployed. Those who are employed are mostly farm workers while others are migrant workers. The schools in Mopani District are mostly Quintile 1 schools and the performance of the schools is graded as average.

1.7.3.2 Sampling

A sampling process involves the use of small groups of individuals from the population to be involved in a study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Purposive sampling is a sampling strategy which aims at selecting participants with the potential to provide rich data and thick descriptions (Johnson & Christensen, 2012:23; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:319). The participants were ten teachers from three selected primary schools with a high number of orphans and a high absenteeism rate; they included both male and female teachers and information about them was obtained from the principals. The participants were, largely, class-teachers responsible for learner school attendance; they were also responsible for orphaned learners and vulnerable children. However, in some of the schools Life Orientation or Guidance and Counselling teachers were included in the sample. Schools were selected in the area where the researcher's school is situated and where there are fewer orphans in the schools; he looked for schools with characteristics that would answer his questions.

1.7.3.3 Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data from the different participants (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2009). The teachers were asked questions about their experiences in managing the absenteeism of orphaned learners. The researcher's role

was to conduct the interview using the pre-determined interview questions (Cohen *et al.,* 2009:321). The researcher obtains permission from the participants to record the interviews. The collected data was compared with the findings of other researchers (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011). The researcher did a content analysis of the interview transcripts which meant analyzing the contents of interviews in order to identify the main themes from the interviews and the observation notes (Kumar, 2011). He analysed sentences and paragraphs and reduced the data by capturing the key phrases on the transcripts; grouped the segments into categories; and, then, formed themes and sub-themes to answer the research questions.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study suggest policy implications for school attendance - mostly where vulnerable children, such as orphans, are concerned. This study also suggests the changing roles of educators working in schools with many orphaned learners as their work extends beyond the classroom and the school environment in order to increase the school attendance of orphaned learners. Schools operating in teaching and learning contexts similar to the ones described in this study may benefit from the findings of this study. The participants involved in this study were able to reflect on their practices - especially their ability to provide care for learners - as they shared their experiences with the researcher.

1.9 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Definitions of concepts used in this study are given below.

1.9.1 Caregiver

When parents pass away the extended family takes up the parenting role and provides care which includes material, medical and emotional needs (Monasch & Boema, 2004). A caregiver is a person who is not a parent but is responsible for providing care to the orphaned children. This includes foster parents, a person who cares for a child in

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temporary safe care, head of shelter or youth care-worker who provides care to the child (Department of Social Development, 2012). In this study, the caregiver refers to any person who is responsible for caring for an orphaned child.

1.9.2 Orphan

An orphan is described by UNICEF (2003) as a child whose both parent are dead. The concept "orphan" is socially constructed and may have different meanings (UNAIDS 2004); in some cultures it means children who have lost one parent while in other cultures it refers to children who have lost both parents. In this study orphaned learners refers to children who have lost both parents and are receiving care, or a lack of it, from caregivers or guidance officers. This definition includes child-headed families.

1.9.3 Child-headed households

This is when older children of not more than 18 years of age take responsibility for their siblings in the absence of an adult figure in their households (UNAIDS/UNICEF/USAID, 2004). In some cases, in such households the children receive support from neighbours and other well-wishers. Child-headed households also include families with children who have caregivers but who are who are terminally ill and cannot provide for the children; the children then assume the adult role of caring for the family (Zamani *et. al.,* 2007). An extended definition of child-headed households includes abandoned children with no adult family member to care for them (Department of Social Development 2012). In this study, child-headed household are families where orphaned children head the family in the absence of an adult to guide them and provide for their needs.

1.9.4 Community

Community refers to all people living in a specific geographical area who consider themselves as belonging to that place and relate to one another in some respect

(Department of Social Development, 2012). In this study the community refers to the people living in the same area where the orphaned learners live and go to school.

1.10 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The study will consist of five (5) chapters as follows:

Chapter 1

Introduction and background to the study

Chapter 2

Literature review on learner's absenteeism, orphaned learners and child headed families, management school attendance and the theoretical framework

Chapter 3

Research approach, design and methodology

Chapter 4

Presenting research findings and data analysis

Chapter 5

Summary of main findings, conclusion and recommendation.

1.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter provides the background and rationale for the study were outlined and the problem statement, research questions and methodology used were discussed. In the next chapter, Chapter 2, the relevant available literature related to learner absenteeism is reviewed.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter one, the background and rationale for the study were outlined and the problem statement, research questions and methodology used were discussed. This chapter presents literature review related to learner absenteeism is presented.

A review of the relevant available literature suggests that a major cause of orphanhood in southern African countries is the deaths of parents from AIDS (Rosenberg, Hartwig & Merson, 2008). Statistics South Africa on household survey (2005) reports approximately 143,167 orphans without caregivers. A few years later, in 2009, it was reported that 16.6 million children worldwide had lost one or both parents due to AIDS. Of these, 14.9 million orphaned children were from sub-Saharan Africa (UNICEF, 2011). UNAIDS (2008) estimates 15 million orphans of which 77% are in Africa. Cases of orphaned children are also reported where parental deaths resulted from other causes (UNICEF, 2011). Van Rooyen, Frood and Ricks (2010) maintain that in 2008 South Africa had the highest global number of people infected with HIV; this implies that South Africa may have the highest number of orphaned children in Africa. A major consequence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Southern Africa is that many children are orphaned (Bonthuys, 2010:45).

According to Van Rooyen, Frood and Ricks (2010), losing a parent has a negative impact on the school performance of learners. In their study Makhonza (2006) and Masondo (2006) state that all children require basic needs, such as food and clothing, and as they are minors they are unable to fend for themselves. However, in the case of orphaned learners some of them are required to take care of their ill parents and do household chores; therefore, they are not able to attend school.

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Orphanhood, resulting from HIV/AIDS, is greatly problematic because the death of one infected parent may soon be followed by the death of the other parent - leaving the children without parental care and which may result in a child-headed family (Bonthuys, 2010). In these families the children are faced by empty homes after school; nobody to cook for them; and no one with whom to share the good and the bad experiences that they may have had at school (Masondo, 2006). The number of such families may increase in the long term; when a grandparent who is caring for the orphans dies, they may end up living as child-headed households (Bonthuys, 2010:46). The literature contains very few references to child-headed households which may be as a result of children being abandoned by existing next-of-kin and other relatives. Cases of orphaned children who choose to live in child-headed households instead of living with relatives to protect their property rights or as a temporary measure while relatives make arrangements to accommodate them are reported (Foster & Makufa, 1996).

The HIV/AIDS study by the Nelson Mandela Human Sciences Research Council (2002:11) reports that in 13.0% of child-headed families the orphans are between the ages of 2 and 14 and 3.0% are between 12 and 18 years old. In terms of the young age of the children in some child-headed families, there is risk that the older children may not be able to care for their younger sibling and themselves with no support from adult caregivers (Bonthuys, 2010). Orphaned children who care for their siblings in child-headed families miss out on their schooling as they need to find ways of providing food for the families and perform household duties.

According to a study conducted in sub-Sahara Africa by Mishra and Van Assche (2008), orphans experience changes in living arrangements after the deaths of their parents as well as the availability of schooling resources, health care and food. After the deaths of the parents, grandparents tend to become the caregivers. These grandparents are not able to provide proper health care, nutrition and schooling. Most orphans in African countries, such as Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria and Uganda, are taken care of by their grandmothers and

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relatives (Jini& Roby, 2011). In South Africa 64% of orphaned learners stay with their grandmothers while in Tanzania it is 50% and in Zambia the percentage is 33%. In Thailand it was found that of all learners orphaned because of AIDS, 47% are cared for by their grandparents who tend to be poor and less educated (Jini & Roby, 2011).

Xiaoming *et al.* (2009) are of the opinion that in China the academic performance of orphaned children is low because of anxiety, depressions and lack of time for learning. Vulnerable children are a reality in South Africa and teachers are required to deal with managing their needs in their schools and classrooms (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006). In Uganda Dalen (2009) found that child-headed households are shunned by their communities. They are often psychological abused, abandoned, forced to undertake exploitative work instead of attending school (Plan's submission to General Day of Discussion on Children without Parental Care, 2005).

The number of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) is likely to increase which poses a severe threat to economic and social welfare structures of a country (Ganga & Maphalala, 2013).

2.2. LEARNER ABSENTEEISM

Xiaoming *et al.* (2009) believe that schools need to pay attention to managing the school attendance of orphaned learners to improve their performance. School attendance helps orphaned learners recover from psychological experiences of social disruption by getting a certain routine in their lives (USAID, 2008). According to Barlow and Fleischer (2011), absenteeism is a failure to attend classes. The causes of truancy are increasingly recognized by researchers but workable solutions are difficult to find. Non-attendance is, at times, caused by a lack of school structures, rules and organisation to enforce and monitor school attendance; these need to be revised and improved (Reid, 2008). Most schools in the United Kingdom (UK) have effective recording and reporting systems for learner attendance and most refer to the school policies on first day of school (Reid, 2008). Enforcing structures that monitor attendance and absenteeism is important

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because persistent absenteeism tends to result in low academic self-concepts and general levels of self-esteem in learners (Reid, 1999).

In Russia, Asia and Africa funds are a factor of concern for caregivers to ensure that AIDS orphaned learners attend school. Research evidence suggests that orphaned children in informal care have lower rates of attendance than children living with their parents (Jini & Roby, 2011).

Policies in South Africa on learner attendance are silent about the management of the absenteeism of orphans and learners who head families; they make little provision for teacher training that develops knowledge and skills required for managing absenteeism – particularly that of orphaned learners.

2.3 CAUSES OF LEARNER ABSENTEEISM

Reid (2008) advocates that the absenteeism of learners can be divided in three main categories namely: children who are not interested in attending school, children who from troubled families and children with psychological problems. Other researchers, like Ingul *et al.* (2012), argue that school absenteeism is a complex phenomenon and they suggest that externalizing problems would be the main predictor of school absenteeism, followed by internalizing problems. Internalizing problems refers to a refusal to attend school whereas externalizing problems refers to truancy. School violence, bullying, family work and poor health increase school absenteeism (Ingul *et al.,* 2012).

There are many reasons for learner absenteeism and some factors that contribute to absenteeism include a lack of guidance from parents; inadequate support for children's learning; poor parenting skills; a lack of home discipline; no support when doing homework; and poverty (no uniforms). In their final report the Catholic Relief Services state that the quality of parental care and the conflict in families can strongly affect children`s vulnerability (USAID, 2008). Orphans suffer long term psychological effects of emotional deprivation caused by the loss of their parents (Moletsane, 2013). Reid

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(2007) believes that parent and carer attitudes strongly contribute to learner absenteeism from school; Reid (2008) is of the opinion that there are parents who try to tackle poor attendance but that there are those who are powerless in tackling the problem as they do not engage with the schools.

In Lesotho, Tanga (2013) reported that separation of siblings, lack of financial and material resources, lack of school requirements, lack of food and lack of assistance with homework are the main factors that have a negative impact on the education of orphans. The quality of care provided to orphans in Lesotho is often below standard and living conditions poor. The caregivers who care for these orphans misuse public assistance money which means that there can be no changes in the lives of the orphans. They lack basic school needs, such as uniforms, shoes, stationary and warm clothing during winter which leads directly to their non-attendance of school. A shortage of food for orphans in Lesotho makes it impossible for them to attend school and perform well. The caregivers in Lesotho cannot read and write and so they are unable to assist or support orphaned learners with their homework. These factors contribute to many orphans not attending school.

A study conducted in Malawi found that the lack of appropriate basic needs, such as clothing, resulted in high levels of absenteeism in some orphaned learners (Bennell, 2010). There are many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Lesotho but they too are unable to assist because they experience financial crises. According to the research by Smiley, Omoeva, Sylla and Chaluda (2014), orphaned learners are often absent from school due to economic reasons for example school fees and lack of money for buying food. The NGOs provide housing to households caring for orphaned learners as well as educational requirements for orphans who lack basic learning resources.

The psychological make-up and personalities of pupils are other factors that distinguishing between learners who are regular in school and those who are often

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absent. Nyamukapa *et al.* (2007) maintains that orphans have greater psychological distress than non-orphans. According to Mishra and Van Assche (2008), orphaned learners are considerably less likely to attend school than non-orphans. Caregivers may lack parenting skills needed to deal with orphaned children's psychological suffering arising from the loss of their parents (Jini & Roby, 2011). Persistent absentees do not perform well in school and have low self-concept and self-esteem which manifest in different unacceptable behaviour compared to student pupils who attend school regularly (Reid, 2008).

Ingul *et al.* (2012) comprehend school absenteeism as a multifaceted problem and suggest that externalizing problems are the main cause of school absenteeism, followed by internalizing problems. External problems are family-related, such as family structure, family relationships and parental problems. The primary responsibilities for orphaned learners rest with the caregivers or legal guardians (Jini & Roby, 2011). Internal problem are related to deficiencies in schools, such as inconsistent or absence policies; poor school climate; low school connectedness; poor adult supervision; and child self-care. School violence and bullying increases the risk of school absenteeism and family work and health is a factor that, along with externalizing problems, predicts school absenteeism best. Researchers have observed that older orphans prefer to head their households when their parents die (Ganga & Maphalala, 2013).

Zhang (2003) maintains that children from poor families are more likely to be absent from school than other learners. Bonthuys (2010) believes that poverty is the main cause for learners not attending school regularly. In addition, Pillay (2011) indicates that poverty and changing roles in families cause absenteeism; orphaned learners absent themselves from school to take care of their siblings at home (Moletsane, 2013). Pellegrini (2007) sees a lack of motivation and social relationships as further reasons for non-attendance and Moletsane (2013) is of the opinion that orphans develop anti-social behaviour.

Xiaoming *et al.* (2009) suggests that the illness of parent and death due to AIDS increases learner absenteeism. Orphans have learning difficulties when they do not receive care and support and when they are required to care for their sick parents and siblings (Smit, 2007; Bennell, 2010). The death of one parent may result in changes in family arrangements and the children, then, have to re-start and adjust to new schools and new friends (Moletsane, 2013). USAID (2008) identifies poverty and lack of care from parents as factors that causes orphaned learner's school drop-out. According to Tanga (2013), economic hardships in extended families make it difficult to provide for the basic needs of orphaned learners. Ganga and Maphalala (2013) also see economic hardship as the factor that causes orphaned learners to absent themselves from school to find ways to exist; they resort to child labour and prostitution in order to earn money.

A study conducted in Tanzania reported that orphans in primary school often fail to attend school because they lack basic needs required at school (Bennell, 2010). In Zambia, orphaned learners prostitute themselves in order to obtain money (Ganga & Maphalala, 2013); and, according to Smiley, Omoeva, Sylla and Chaluda (2014), in Lesotho orphaned learners' experiences of economic disadvantage and the lack of adult care is a cause of learner absenteeism. Avinash, Shetty and Powell (2003) believe that poor learners are deprived of schooling; their caregivers and extended families cite school fees as the major factor for their absenteeism.

It has been suggested that in Africa orphaned learners who are cared for by extended families are abused and neglected and that they risk losing their inherited properties to the so-called caregivers. Research done in Benin indicates that orphans and vulnerable children are treated differently to biological children of the heads of households in that they are given extra work and less food which lowers their school attendance rates (Jini & Roby, 2011). Avinash, Shetty and Powell (2003) also believe that orphans in Africa are

deprived of their lands, homes and possessions by relatives and caregivers after the deaths of parents. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that 54 000 orphaned learners under the age of 15 work as domestic workers in Southern Africa while in Guatemala 38 000 learners between 5 and 7 work as domestic workers; the learners work for food, clothes and shelter which makes it difficult for them to attend school (UNICEF, 2011). In Vietnam orphaned learners work 13 hours a day, 7 days a week which prevents them from attending school (Jini & Roby, 2011).

There appears to be an inconsistent approach to the absenteeism of orphaned learners by teachers. Government is lenient in the application of the law and the curriculum is not suited to accommodate orphaned learners. Teachers appear to be confused about their roles in managing non-attendance cases while learners lack career aspirations and have low self-esteem.

2.4 THE ROLE OF TEACHERS AND THEIR DUTY OF CARE

Section 24 of the Constitution states that everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to his/her health and well-being which means that learners have a constitutional right to receive education in a safe school environment (RSA, 1994). Parents of learners entrust them, both psychologically and physically, to the care of teachers during school hours. Learners need mental and psychological protection because they are vulnerable - being under-age with a low level of maturity - and their physical welfare includes protection against injury and other hazards. Internationally, teachers have a legal duty of care of learners entrusted to them for either curricular or extra-curricular purposes (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2009). Parents delegate their authority to teachers and schools while learners are at school; teachers act *in loco parentis* which means "in the place of a parent." The teachers` duty of care stems from a special relationship of trust between teachers and learners and an obligation to take control of any danger (Oosthuizen, 2005:72). Joubert and Prinsloo (2009:145) believe that

educators act *in loco parentis* on the grounds of original and delegated authority which emanates from their profession; however, the duty to care does not replace the parents who remain the primary educators of their children. The main duties of the educator *in loco parentis* include the following: achieving teaching aims; maintaining order in school as stated in the code of conduct for the particular school, and ensuring that the learner is safe at school (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2009:145).

The duty of care means that teachers assume the responsibility for the safety and well-being of the learners for as long as they are in their care. In the case of orphaned learners the duty of care may go beyond what is legally expected from teachers who, then, also accept some responsibilities that are normally those of parents. Teachers are expected to develop caring relationships with orphaned learners and put these relationships into practice (Smedley & Pepperell, 2010). In Namibia all education sector employees are expected to be sensitive to the special needs of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) and they should facilitate their access to supportive and counselling services.

Teachers are required to employ and adopt appropriate strategies that meet the needs of orphaned learners who are absent from school and also match their developmental stages; they should accommodate orphaned learners who are absent when planning and presenting lessons; and they should be able to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the learners. Teachers may consider using different learning styles to motivate these learners and should have access to, and understand, strategies that may be used to address the absenteeism of orphaned learners.

Subject teachers need to be experts not only in delivering the content of the curriculum, but also in adopting and adapting teaching methodologies that are based on caring for learners (United Kingdom, Policy Paper 55, 2001). Teachers are further expected to be duty bound to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of orphaned learners and address

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their absenteeism (Department of Education, 2000). In planning the curriculum teachers should take into account all the variables and the relationships between norms, values and cultures which need to be addressed (De Witt, 2009). Teachers are the initial agents for learner well–being and should be in a position to translate values into experiences for individual learners (De Witt, 2009). They should not only provide academic support and tutoring across curricula, but also give personal support and encourage the learners (United Kingdom, Policy Paper 55, 2001).

Decisions made by teachers should be appropriate to learners' academic levels. Their other responsibilities include managing teaching and learning; carrying out administrative duties that relates to teaching and learning; and participating in school other activities in the school. The teachers should be flexible in dealing with issues in a democratic manner in classrooms. They should understand the National Policy on Learner Attendance and procedures in completing registers (Department of Education, 2000). The National Policy provides standard processes for recording, managing and monitoring learner attendance. The principal has an obligation to identify learners who are frequently absent from school and is required to establish the cause of the absenteeism. Nodding (1992:14) believes that the public must take responsibility for ensuring healthy, competent and happy children and those schools cannot achieve their academic goals without providing caring and continuity for learners.

Norms and Standards for Educators (2000) indicate that teachers are expected to play the role of educator which is discussed in term of caring for the needs of orphaned learners. In the role of learning mediator teachers are expected to be sensitive to the diverse needs of learners; they should construct learning environments that are appropriately contextualised and inspirational; and they should communicate effectively and with respect for orphaned learners.

The role that teachers play as a leaders, managers and administrators involves managing the learning environment to accommodate learners who attend school

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irregularly. In these roles, teachers are expected to manage learning in their classrooms with the understanding that orphaned learners may frequently be absent from class. Teachers must be flexible and deal with issues in the classroom in a democratic manner; they should use various approaches in managing the frustrations of absenteeism amongst orphaned learners; they are expected to reflect on the changing circumstances of absenteeism in orphaned learners; and they are required to help them adapt to existing programmes.

Learner assessment is important in the learning process and to perform this role effectively, teachers need to understand the purpose of assessment and the methods to be used in implementing the different processes. Assessment should occur in a manner appropriate to the subject and should provide feedback to learners in sensitive and educationally helpful manner. Teachers should judge the competence and performance of learners in ways that are fair and acceptable. They should establish effective recording methods as well as procedures for reporting the academic performance of learners to parents and the orphaned learners (Department of Education, 2000).

Community, citizenship and pastoral roles enable teachers to practice and promote critical, committed and ethical attitudes and develop respect and responsibility for others. Internationally, teachers in Britain view children as more than empty buckets to be filled with knowledge and recognize pastoral care as a professional obligation of teachers (Best, 1990). They also need to promote democratic values and practices in schools and society and plan programmes for learning that contribute positively to the personal and social development of the children (Best, 2010). Teachers should be able to demonstrate an understanding of caring for absentee orphaned learners and protect and develop them as whole individuals. Orphaned learners who are absent from school need a supportive and empowering environment; valuable information that affects the community should be communicated to them and supportive relationships with the parents and the absent orphaned learners must be developed (Mohlakwana, 2013:15).

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According to Best (2010), due to the young age of the learners, they need security, guidance, moral support, and love. Parents play an important role in meeting these needs. Teachers should provide learners with meaningful and relevant learning experiences but in order to provide meaningful relevant experiences they should to be trained and empowered with skills associated with counselling. Observational skills are important as they equip teachers to recognize orphaned learners who are in need of help; they need to know learners as individuals and be able to encourage them to share their problems with their teachers. Best (2010) is of the opinion that pastoral task teams in schools should have management and administration skills. School managers and teachers need to be trained in proactively identifying orphaned learners and providing for their learning needs (Bennell, 2010).

In terms of this study, teachers need to be able to motivate, support and encourage orphaned learners to attend school regularly. The practical competencies of the pastoral role include demonstrating care, protection and the holistic development of children (Ogina, 2010). Teachers need to be open and receptive if they want to play an effective supportive role for the orphans. Through in-service training, they may be able to help change the behaviour and attitudes of orphans (Bennell, 2010). Schools should track and undertake a simple needs assessment to monitor the absenteeism of orphaned learners (Bennell, 2010).

2.5 PASTORAL CARE

Grove (2010) describes pastoral care as a wide range of activities that focuses developing the full potential of an individual, success and happiness in understanding their own humanness. Grove (2010) further divides pastoral care into three Rs, namely: relationship, respect and responsibility. Teachers need to have relationships with learners that are functional and positive to encourage orphaned learners to be open and honest; they need to be able to share freely with orphaned learners and respect their rights as learners; and they need to motivate orphaned learners to feel that they belong

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and are valued at school. The second R is respect; teachers need to provide good pastoral care by creating schools where orphaned learners are respected and valued. Respect should be accorded to all in schools. The third R is responsibility that the teachers are expected to take in providing pastoral care in schools.

Teachers lack adequate training on their pastoral roles and, therefore reluctant to accept the responsibility of pastoral care because of inadequate knowledge they have on pastoral care. Without proper training teachers are faced with challenging situations in guiding orphaned learners in schools; they lack referral knowledge and training (Nkhoma, 2013). Vulnerable children have a lot psycho-social needs that is additional burden on teachers in their classrooms (Nkhoma, 2013). Teachers should enhance learners' personal development and academic learning. Teaching is about working with young people and gaining their confidence and trust (Association of School and College Leaders, UK, 2007). Schools have a responsibility to prepare teachers for their pastoral roles; they should be able to identify orphaned learners and provide care and support in conducive learning environments in the classrooms. In order to monitor the attendance of orphaned learners' teachers should be empowered with knowledge and skills to enable them to provide pastoral care to learners (Bennell, 2010).

In South Africa the KwaZulu–Natal Department of Education has developed strategies to identify vulnerable learners, supplemented by a variety of classroom management strategies and teaching and learning techniques. Besides orphaned learners having access to services and resources, such as food, grants and psycho-social support, the department also introduced and advocated the idea of schools as centres of care and it provided schools with the resources they needed (Argall & Allemano, 2009). In KwaZulu-Natal there are schools that are clustered to form centres of care and support for needy learners. An audit of orphans and vulnerable learners was done and all schools formed School Support Teams (SSTs) to plan and provide care and support for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). The school-based carers help learners write grant proposals for OVC and needy families (Argall & Allemano, 2009).

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2.6 MANAGING ABSENTEEISM OF ORPHANS

The non-attendance of learners is, at times, caused by a lack of school structures and policies that enforce and monitor school attendance. Reid (2008) maintains that schools need to change their structures, rules and organizational practices in order to manage learner absenteeism. Citing experiences in the UK, Reid (2008) reports that there is evidence of effective recording and reporting systems on learner attendance in most school. Enforcement of structures used to monitor attendance and absenteeism is important because persistent absenteeism tends to result in lowering learners' academic self-concepts, self-esteem and may also be manifested in different forms of disruptive behaviour (Reid, 1999). In South Africa policy on learner attendance is silent about the management of absenteeism in orphans - especially those who are from child-headed households. Policy is also limited in stipulating how to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills required in managing school attendance.

2.7 ETHIC OF CARE

This study focused on the views of teachers regarding factors that influence learner school attendance and absenteeism as well as the caring behaviour of teachers towards orphaned learners' school attendance. The school is a place where orphaned learners interact with others which may reveal physical, social and emotional problems. Therefore, teachers need to be trained to identify the needs of orphaned learners under their care (De Wet & Lessing, 2009). Schools are seen to be at the centre of community strategies to improve the education, health and socio-economic well-being of orphaned learners (Argall & Allemano, 2009). The schools are where learners are cared for in many different respects.

The ethic of care applies to schools and relationships between teachers and learners. This study was based on a theoretical framework of the ethic of care. Noddings (2007) defines caring as a moral attitude informed by interpersonal relationship and reasoning. It involves people confronting others and responding to their needs and abilities. In

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education, the ethic of care speaks of obligations and a sense of doing the right thing. Caring in education refers to the relationships between learners and teachers. According to Noddings (2007), caring involves connections between carers and the cared-for; it is helping other people to care for themselves and for others (Owen & Ennis, 2005).

The role of the cared–for is to acknowledge the carers and to respond by sharing experiences and feelings. In schools teachers assume the role of carers while learners are in the role of the cared-for. The ethic of care encourages teachers to help learners and give them love and care. The theory assumes that teachers have good relationships with learners; are approachable; and have learners' interest at heart. Teachers actively listening to learners help them develop trust relationships with learners. Noddings (2007) believes that moral education is about caring for others and developed a model based on Modeling, Dialogue, Practice and Confirmation.

Modeling is when teachers who are concerned with the growth of learners show them how to care and they give them opportunities to be caregivers (Noddings, 2007) It is grounded in the belief that a child can only learn to care through experiencing care (Noddings, 1984; 1992). Providing basic needs such as food, water, clothing, shelter and clean environment shows that we care for other people (Engster, 2005).

Dialogue is a component of caring which includes being open and approachable and teachers are expected to engage learners in conversation about caring. The theory states that we cannot model caring if we don't engage in it. Dialogue enables learners to evaluate attempts to care for the natural world. Noddings (2007) explains that in order to promote the ethics of care, teachers need to provide opportunities for learners to acquire skills in care giving. Engster (2005) also sees caring as helping others to develop and sustain - as much as they are able to - the capabilities for basic functioning in society and to pursue their concept of a good life. Learners should practice caring in

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multiple ways that give them the opportunity to care for each other within the group (Noddings, 2007).

Practice is a component of caring which helps learners develop mentally and assists them in caring for others. In practicing care, learners' attitudes and the way they think about helping others is shaped by experience (Owens & Ennis, 2005) Caring teachers provide opportunities for learners to care for others and improve their caring ability. A caring person notices when other people are in need and responds appropriately (Engster, 2005).

Confirmation is the fourth component in which Noddings (2007) defines as an act of affirming and encouraging the best in others. This component can be seen in the curriculum in the support teachers offer learners and the relationships they develop with them. Feedback given by teachers to learners confirms that they value learners. Caring is cultivated when teachers model caring for learners by engaging them in meaningful dialogue; confirm and applaud caring; and provide opportunities for learners to care for others.

In applying the theory of the ethic of care in this study, the researcher explored how teachers demonstrate care giving in managing the absenteeism of orphaned learners. The underlying assumption was that the caring responses that the learners receive from teachers who are accessible and open may help them not only to improve their school attendance and school work but also develop their own ability to care for their siblings. A caring teacher is friendly, open-minded and interested in developing interpersonal relationship with their learners. Such relationship is based on trust and respect for each other (Vogt, 2002). Nodding (1992) sees all learners as in need of care and desiring caring relationships.

In South Africa the pastoral role of an educator is one of the seven roles of an educator listed in the Norms and Standards for Funding (Department of Education, 2000). It is expected that teachers should perform a caring role for learners in schools.

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2.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the relevant available international and national literature on learner absenteeism was reviewed with a focus on the causes of non-school attendance and the role of the teacher in managing learner school attendance. The ethic of care was introduced as the theoretical framework underpinning this study; the role of the teacher was examined through a care giving lens; and the care giving approach to managing the absenteeism of orphaned learners by teachers in schools was presented.

The research approach, design and methodology are discussed in the next chapter, Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH APPROACH, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the literature related to the causes and management of learner absenteeism was examined; the focus was mainly on how teachers respond to the needs of orphaned learners who are often absent from school. This chapter deals with the methods used to collect data to answer the research questions. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how teachers manage the absenteeism of orphaned learners in selected primary schools in Limpopo Province. The intention was to gain a holistic overview of how teachers manage absenteeism of orphaned learners in schools.

This chapter sets out the research approach, research design, research methodology used in the study. It also describes the research site, sampling, data collection, data analysis, ethical issues raised by the study and its challenges as well as the steps taken to deal with those limitations.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

The research approach was qualitative as it was a good fit to this study; the researcher's intention was to gain a holistic overview of how teachers manage absenteeism of orphaned learners by interviewing teachers. The researcher anticipated that participant teachers would be able to describe the challenges they experienced when learners were absent from school and how they managed those challenges. A qualitative research approach was chosen because of its interactive nature (Creswell, 2007:51). The approach provided the researcher with opportunities to speak directly with the participants in interviews and acquire in-depth knowledge of their experiences of managing learner school attendance.

The researcher collected data in the natural setting of the participant teachers which was the primary schools where they experienced the problem of managing absenteeism of orphaned learners. A qualitative approach was used because the researcher needed to develop a complex and detailed understanding of how teachers manage and address the absenteeism of orphaned learners (Creswell, 2007). The qualitative approach was used because the researcher wanted to enter an appropriate research environment in order to obtain some knowledge of participants' personal experiences; acquire detailed data on how teachers manage the absenteeism of orphaned learners; and understand the settings in which the participants address the problem of orphaned learners.

The advantages of qualitative research are that data is collected in a natural setting where the participants experience the problem being researched; in this instance the absenteeism of orphaned learners. The researcher gathered information by directly talking to the participants at their schools. Qualitative researchers use multiple forms of data, such as interviews, observations and document analysis.

The disadvantage of qualitative research is that data collection and data analysis is a time-consuming process. The data analysis process involves large amounts of data collected in the form of interview transcripts, observation notes and documents which are reduced to categories and identify themes. Interviews often produce hundreds of pages of transcripts. Analysing data is challenging, especially because the data could consist of complex texts and images. Qualitative data analysis is less technical, less pre-scribed and less "linear" and more iterative ("back and forth") than quantitative analysis (Briggs *et al.*, 2012). All the information requires critical examination; careful interpretation; and challenging synthesis. Qualitative data analysis is not intended to be generalized to a larger population as a statistically analyzed large-scale survey would be (Briggs *et al.*, 2012). The generalization often sought is the generalization of ideas so that they can be applied to many contexts (Creswell, 2007).

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The ontological assumption of the study was that social reality can be understood from external points of view (Manion, 2009). Ontology relates to the nature of reality and its characteristics. The researcher embraced different realities as individual participants were studied; he believes that reality is "out there" and should be approached and detached (Nieuwenhuis, 2011; Creswell, 2007). The researcher conducted the study and recorded the multiple realities of how participant teachers manage the absenteeism of orphaned learners in primary schools in Limpopo Province. He included multiple realities by using multiple codes based on codes from individual participants to present their different perspectives (Creswell, 2007).

Another paradigm assumption is epistemology, the assumptions of which relate to how things can be known and how the truth or facts - if they do exist - can be discovered and disclosed (Creswell, 2007). Epistemology looks at how one comes to know the reality and the method of knowing the nature (Nieuwenhuis, 2011). The researcher tried to establish a close relationship with the participants and conducted the study in the field where they were working in trying to understand what they were saying (Creswell, 2007).

This mini-dissertation was aimed at exploring how teachers manage the absenteeism of orphaned learners in three primary schools in Limpopo Province. Collecting and analysing data from these schools led to a better understanding of the phenomena. The information obtained during interviews is considered to be true and believable because of the integrity of the participants and the fact that they are teachers who are experiencing the phenomenon being studied.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is the pattern or plan to collect evidence to answer research questions (Saxena, Prakash, Acharya & Nigam, 2013). The research design for this study was a case study on how teachers manage absenteeism of orphaned learners in three specially

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selected schools within one circuit in Limpopo Province. Case studies investigate contemporary phenomena within their real-life contexts when the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly defined (Yin, 2003 & 2009). Merriam (2009) defines the case study as a systematic inquiry into an event or set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2009) consider case studies to be investigations into specific instances or phenomena in their real-life contexts. Merriam (2009) characterizes qualitative case studies as particularistic where the focus is on a particular situation, event or phenomenon; descriptive; and heuristic. The case reveals the phenomenon and what it might represent. In this study the case study concentrated on how teachers manage absenteeism of orphaned learners in primary schools in Limpopo Province.

An advantage of a case study is that it is strong in reality, but difficult to organize. As a case study is anchored in real-life situations it offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand the readers' experiences and it advances a field knowledge base. A case study begins in the world and makes a contribution to the world. The insights of the case study may be used in staff development programmes (Cohen *et. al.*, 2009). Case studies are flexible and researchers use multiple methods of collecting data so that reality may be best revealed (Chih-en Hsieh, 2004).

A case study uses multiple sources and techniques in the data gathering process (Nieuwenhuis, 2011); it has the ability to deal with a wide variety of evidence, such as documents, interviews and observation that confirm the findings (Yin, 2003). In this study the researcher attempted to understand how teachers relate to, and interact with, absent orphaned learners (Nieuwenhuis, 2011). The case study probes events that happen in the natural setting and it allows researchers to use different types of methods to collect data. A multiple case study permits researchers to analyse within individual settings and across settings (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This researcher examined several cases from the three selected schools to understand the similarities and differences between the cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The evidence gathered in a case study is

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considered robust and reliable because of the different data collection methods used; the different sources yield data that can be compared and contrasted to give comprehensive knowledge on the research topic (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

3.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology included the research sites, sampling, research methods, procedures and data analysis.

3.5.1 Research sites

The three schools where the research was conducted are found in the Mopani District, deep in the rural area of Limpopo Province. Many of the community members are unemployed but most adults in the area are farm workers while others are migrants from neighbouring countries; the communities where four primary schools and four secondary schools are situated have two chiefs or traditional leaders. The schools in the Mopani District are mostly Quintile 1 schools and their performance is considered to be average.

3.5.2 Sampling

Sampling is the use of small groups of individuals from the population to be studied (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Purposeful sampling was used in this study to select the participant teachers who had the potential to provide rich data and thick descriptions (Johnson *et. al.,* 2012). The researcher contacted the circuit manager and requested access to the top three schools with the highest number of orphaned learners and the highest rates of learner absenteeism. He obtained permission from the respective principals to conduct research in the identified schools. The principals assisted the researcher in identifying relevant teachers, such as those responsible for orphaned learners, Life Orientation teachers and class teachers. A total number of ten teachers were selected from the three schools - three teachers *per* school. Class teachers were interviewed because they are responsible for keeping attendance registers and Life

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Orientation teachers were interviewed as they may also have been involved in caring for orphaned learners.

3.5.3 Research Methods

A research method is a way of collecting data or obtaining information (de Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2012). In this study the researcher used interviews to collect data from different participants. An interview is a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks participants questions to collect data and learns about their ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviour (Nieuwenhuis, 2011). The interviewer developed, and used, an interview guide containing the questions that were asked during the interviews. Although the guide was followed, it was also possible to follow topical trajectories in the conversation that deviate from the guide when there was need to probe further and ask follow-up questions (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

3.5.4 Research procedures

Before conducting the study, permission for access to schools was negotiated with the Limpopo of Department of Education. An application letter was sent to the head of the relevant department giving details of the topic to be researched. Upon receiving the permission letter from the province, an application letter and research instrument in the form of the interview guide and confirmation were submitted to the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria; permission to conduct the research was granted and an application letter was written to the circuit for permission to use its schools. The researcher contacted the circuit manager and requested that the top three schools with the highest number of orphaned learners and high rate of learners' absenteeism be used in the research.

Notices were then sent to the three identified schools to inform them about the research to be conducted in their schools. The researcher sought permission from the respective principals to conduct research in their schools. The principals assisted the researcher in

identifying teachers who are responsible for orphaned learners, including Life Orientation teachers and class teachers.

The researcher met with the potential participants and had further briefing sessions with them before making arrangements for the interviews. During the briefing sessions the researcher provided them with a background to the study and the purpose for doing the research. He also gave teachers letters of informed consent that confirmed that participation in the study was voluntary and that no one was forced to participate. The letter also indicated that participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time if they wished to do so. They were informed that no incentives would be used to avoid bias and promote voluntary participation; that they would be asked to comment on the interview transcripts in the form of member-checking; and that they would be given an opportunity to delete data which they did not want to be used in the research and to make additions to the data already collected.

A letter of informed consent was given to the participants before commencement of the interviews. The letter included the participants' rights to withdraw from the study at any time when they felt uncomfortable participating in the study. The researcher obtained informed consent from the participants by explaining the purpose and the significance of the study. He also provided the participants with a letter of informed consent containing the aim of the study and the procedure of the research process; the voluntary nature of the research; and the procedures to be used to protect their identities.

Appointments were organized with the help of the principals of each selected school and participant teachers were informed of the dates, times and venues for the interviews. All interview sessions were scheduled to be held at the schools during school hours and after school to ensure that they did not disrupt participants' school routines and to take into account that some teachers had to travel great distances to and from school every day and use public transport. This proved to be an advantage for the

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researcher because it was easy to meet participants at their schools; it also helped those who needed to take public transport home. The participants were class teachers and Life Orientation teachers responsible for orphaned learners who were able to communicate in English and although some mixed English with Sepedi when responding to the interview questions their responses were translated into English during the process of transcribing the interviews. All the participant teachers agreed to the researcher recording the interviews using a tape-recorder.

3.5.5 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is an iterative process aimed at understanding how participants make meaning of the phenomenon under study (Nieuwenhuis, 2011). When collecting data each interview was coded with the number of the school: School 1, School 2 and School 3 and a code name for each participant; School 1's teachers were Teachers A, B, C and D, School 2's were Teachers E, F and G and School 3's were Teachers H, I and J.

A tape recorder was used to ensure that the interviews could be analysed *verbatim* - as recommended by McMillan and Schumacher (2006); the researcher listened to the tapes repeatedly to ensure that his understanding of the participant responses was as accurate as possible. Thick descriptions with direct quotations in the narratives of the data were also provided to enhance the credibility of the findings.

After transcribing the data *verbatim*, the researcher read each transcript and made notes in short phrases that summed up what was said in the text (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). After transcribing the collected data the transcription were printed.

Coding is the process of carefully reading through the transcribed data line by line and dividing it into meaningful analytical units. The data from the teacher interviews was coded in meaningful segments (Nieuwenhuis, 2011). After generating codes, they were

clustered in related ideas. The different segments of data were marked with different colours. In reducing the data the researcher generated categories and coded the data. The concepts that seemed to relate to the same phenomena were grouped together and the phenomena were given conceptual names. The researcher coded the data line by line (De Vos *et al.,* 2012). The themes were refined in terms of the overall meaning that was captured and definitions were generated for each theme. Extracts or quotes were used to capture the essence of each theme (Crowe, Maree & Porter, 2015).

The researcher reviewed the data and made sense of it by organizing it into categories or themes that cut across all of the data sources (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative researchers build their patterns, categories and themes from the bottom up and work back and forth between the themes and database until a comprehensive set of themes has been established. In this study, the researcher constantly checked the emerging themes against the data collected. During the research process he focused on the understandings that teachers have of the absenteeism of orphaned learners.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Prior to conducting the study the researcher obtained permission from the Limpopo Department of Education to use its schools and teachers in the project and ethical clearance was sought from the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria. The researcher is aware that in life everything we do may harm someone, so he made sure that participants would not be harmed physically or emotionally; in this study precautions were taken to avoid exposing the participants to psychological harm. At the beginning of the data collection process, the participants were informed the about the purpose and the potential impact of the study (Creswell, 2013). They were made aware of the fact that participation was voluntary and of their rights to withdraw at any time they wished to do so (De Vos *et al.,* 2011). The researcher told the participants how the data would be collected and that when doing data analysis the multiple perspectives would be recorded using pseudonyms to conceal their identities (Creswell, 2013). The

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Section 14, states that everyone has the right to privacy and in this study the researcher ensured that every participant's right to privacy was respected all the times; information given by the participants was dealt with in a confidential manner. The researcher guaranteed that no hidden apparatus, such as videos, cameras and microphones that could have violated the participants' right to privacy, was present.

The researcher met with the potential participants for a briefing session before embarking on an interview. During the briefing session the participants were given a background to the study and the purpose for doing the research was explained; they were told what was expected of them as participants so that they knew in advance what they were consenting to in participating in the study. They received letters of informed consent that stated that participation in the study was voluntary; that no one was forced to participate; and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time if they wished to do so. The teachers were informed that no incentives would be used to avoid bias and promote voluntary participation; that they would be asked to comment on the interviews transcripts in the form of member-checking; and that they would be given an opportunity to delete data which they did not want to be used in the research or to make additions to the data already collected.

No informed consent was required from parents or guardians because learners did not participate directly in the study. The participants were class teachers and Life Orientation teachers who were responsible for orphaned learners who were able to communicate in English although some mixed their responses with Sepedi when responding to the interview questions. However, the researcher translated their responses into English during the transcribing of the interviews.

The benefit for participants was in the draft copies of the main findings that they were given and in the recommendations that were made. The participants would be able to

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use the information to improve their management of the absenteeism of orphaned learners and by reflecting on their responses to the interview questions.

3.7 CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

In qualitative research the credibility and trustworthiness of the data may be enhanced by means of the triangulation of data from different sites and participants (Schwandt, 2007:299). The same research procedure was used for all participants in order to be consistent in collecting data; the data from different participants was corroborated; the findings were cross-checked; and follow-up interviews with the participants were conducted in order to achieve data clarity and depth (Schwandt, 2007). Cohen *et al.* (2011) refer to the cross-checking of findings as "investigator triangulation". The researcher did member-checking by giving the participants an opportunity to comment on the interview transcripts and his reflective notes to confirm findings and reduce possible bias in reporting the findings.

Other strategies used to enhance the credibility of the study were the provision of thick descriptions for the readers with a vivid image of the context the study. The researcher also engaged his peers in discussion of the study at different stages, namely, the raw data stage and when reporting research findings and making tentative interpretations, to obtain their insights and reduce personal bias in the research process. An audit trail was kept of all the research procedures in terms of methods used in collecting data, data analysis, triangulation of research findings and the interpretation of the findings (Merriam 2009).

3.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the research approach, research paradigm, research design and research methodology were discussed as well as ethical issues and how the quality of the research was enhanced. The findings of this study are discussed in the next chapter, Chapter 4.

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CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

4. 1 INTRODUCTION

The data collection process was discussed in the previous chapter. In this chapter the data gathered during the semi-structured interviews with Life Orientation teachers, class teachers and other teachers responsible for orphaned learners is presented. A lack of information concerning the extent to which the teachers manage the absence of parents and caregivers in ensuring school attendance of orphaned learners was identified as a gap in the relevant literature.

The aim of this study, therefore, was to explore how teachers manage the absenteeism of orphaned learners in selected primary schools in Limpopo Province. The research questions were: *What are the experiences of teachers regarding learner school attendance?; What are the teachers` perceptions of the causes of the absenteeism of orphaned learners?; What are the challenges experienced by teachers when orphaned learners are absent from school?;* and*How do teachers manage the absenteeism of orphaned learners?*

4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

The biographical details of participant teachers are included in the following table, Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Biographical Information of Teachers Involved in the Study

School	Teacher	Gender	Teaching Experience	Grades	Subjects
1	A.	Male	Four years	6 & 7	Mathematics & Technology
	B.	Female	Four years	6 & 7	Sepedi& EMS
	C.	Male	Five years	5 & 7	English, LO & Social Sciences
	D.	Female	Twenty-five years	5 & 6	Mathematics & NS and Tech
2	E.	Male	One Year	6 & 7	Social Sciences, English & LO
	F.	Female	Thirteen years	3	Sepedi, English, Mathematics & Life Skills
	G.	Female	One Year	4	Social Sciences, NS and Tech & Life Skills
3	H.	Male	Twenty-one years	5	Social Sciences, NS & Tech and LO
	I.	Male	Nineteen years	6	Sepedi& Social Sciences
	J.	Male	Fourteen years	7	Social Sciences & LO

Most of the teachers involved in this study had more than four years' teaching experience. The majority of the teachers' subject areas were Social Sciences and/or Life Orientation. Four female and six male teachers participated in the study.

4.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS, INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND IDENTIFIED THEMES

The research questions, the interview questions and the identified themes are reflected in the following two tables, Table 4.2 and Table 2.3, which are followed by a detailed explanation and discussion.

Table 4.2: Research Questions and Interview Questions

Research Questions	Interview questions
What are the experiences of teachers regarding learner school attendance?	What can you say about the school attendance of learners in general? What about orphaned learners?
What are the teachers` perceptions of the causes of absenteeism of orphaned learners?	What is your opinion on what you think are the causes of absenteeism in orphaned learners?
What are the challenges experienced by teachers when orphaned learners are absent from school?	What challenges do you experience when orphaned learners are absent from school? What support do you need to help the orphaned learners attend school regularly?
How do teachers manage the absenteeism of orphaned learners?	What are you doing in your school to help orphaned learners attend school? What do you do when orphans are absent from school? How do you manage the absenteeism of orphaned learners?
What do teachers perceive as their responsibility towards absent orphans?	What do you think your responsibilities are to orphaned learners in terms of school attendance?
Is there anything else that you would like to tell me regarding the school attendance of orphaned learners?	

Table 4.3: Research Questions and Themes

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	THEMES/SUB-THEMES
1. *What are the experiences of teachers regarding learner school attendance?*	1. Low rate of absenteeism as a result of school feeding scheme 2. Inability of teachers to cope with the absenteeism of orphaned learners 3. Non-school attendance of learners

		from child-headed households
		4. School absenteeism of orphaned learners compared to non-orphans.
2. *What are the teachers` perceptions of the causes of absenteeism of orphaned learners?*		1.Lack of physiological needs
		2. Lack of family care
		3. Lack of social support.
3. *What are the challenges experienced by teachers when orphaned learners are absent from school?*		1. Workload and the lack of parental involvement
		2. Relationships between the teachers and the caregivers/guidance of the orphaned learners
		3. Need for external support from social workers, the community, NGO's and government.
4. *How do teachers manage the absenteeism of orphaned learners?*		1. Providing for the basic needs of orphaned learners
		2. Collaborative efforts between the school, the community, NGOs and the Department of Social Services
		3. Pastoral care
		4. Monitoring school attendance.
5. *What do teachers perceive as their responsibility towards absent orphans?*		1. Leadership role in identifying orphaned learners and monitoring their school attendance
		2. Pastoral role
		3. Policy implementation
		4. Involving the community, social workers and NGO's in providing care for orphaned learners.

4.4 THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

The five identified themes are discussed below and related to identified sub-themes; the discussion is supported by quotations from the transcribed responses of the teacher participants.

4.4.1 Theme 1: Teachers` experience regarding learner school attendance

The first theme identified issues related to low rate of absenteeism as a result of the schools' feeding scheme; the in-ability of teachers to cope with absenteeism of orphaned learners; non-school attendance of learners from child-headed households; and school absenteeism - comparing orphaned learners to non-orphans as sub-themes.

4.4.1.1 Low rate of learner absenteeism

The majority of the participant teachers in this study experience low rates of learner absenteeism in their schools. They spoke about good school attendance, especially by orphaned learners who are encouraged to attend school and receive meals in terms of the school feeding programme. The participant said:

> *Orphan learners also they are attending well. They come to school regularly, but there are some exceptional cases where we find that some of the orphaned learners do not come regularly but we do make follow up. We check with them; we check with the family they are living with and make follow up that they should come to school. So we work together with the families to minimise absenteeism* (Teacher A).

> *Orphaned learners are the ones who attend school on daily basis because of the feeding scheme. If there is left-over food, I used to call those needy orphaned learners and divide those foods to them, especially after school or at the end of each term* (Teacher C).

> *Some I can say if they don't come to school they can't get food. Because outside we have drop-in centres, when they eat here at school, after school they go to drop-in centres to eat food. I think they feel safe about the nutrition programme* (Teacher F).

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4.4.1.2 Inability of teachers to cope with absenteeism of orphaned learners

Despite the positive influence of the feeding scheme on the school attendance of orphaned learners, some teachers expressed the opinion that they were not able to cope with the absenteeism of orphaned learners because they do not know where they live:

> …there are cases where teachers will not be able to know the whereabouts of the learners or the reason why they are absent from school (Teacher E).

> So, the children will be finding themselves that they are under the supervision of another child. Maybe with secondary school so that in itself make it difficult for follow ups and it is orphan that are not present (Teacher F).

4.4.1.3 Non-school attendance from child-headed households

The teachers find it difficult to follow-up on non-school attendance of orphaned learners in child headed families. Teachers J and G said:

> Also the majority of these learners who are orphans we find that some of them are child-headers, or what we call child-headed families, because they lost all their parents. They are the only ones who are looking after their siblings and the families at home which sometimes makes it difficult for these learners to come to school (Teacher J).

> Especially children who are orphans, most of these children are Child headed family. It means they don't have someone who takes care of them and they just stay at home alone no one take care of them (Teacher G).

4.4.1.4. School absenteeism - orphaned learners and non-orphans

Some of the participants also believe that orphaned learners are more likely to be absent from school when compared to non-orphans because they lack supervision and guidance. Teachers I and G made the following comments:

> Generally, the attendance of learners is at a satisfactory level, but with the orphaned learners is not good due to lack of parental guidance. And so these learners they got immoral behaviour. It means that their behaviour is not normal. Their life, generally, is not good and it affects their school attendance (Teacher I).

> Yaa, orphaned learners are the ones that experienced more problems because at home they cannot find someone to help them. May be coming to school they cannot find someone to push them to school (Teacher G).

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4.4.2 Theme 2: Teachers' perceptions of the causes of the absenteeism of orphaned learners

The teachers identified physiological needs and a lack of family and social support as causes for the absenteeism of orphaned learners. In terms of physiological needs the interview data shows that teachers perceive poverty, financial hardship and a lack of resources as causes for non-school attendance. One teacher said:

> *You know that… er, growing up without parents is very difficult. You find that sometimes the money is not there to cater for you and then maybe you find that parents left those learners without money. So we find that these learners face financial hardship. They lack funds to buy basic things like food, etc.* (Teacher I).

The lack of family support is another factor that discourages learners from attending school. Most of the teachers in this study spoke about a lack of support from relatives, guardians and the next-of-kin of the orphans as a reason for the school absenteeism of learners. The teachers mentioned that in some schools physical abuse and excessive domestic chores cause non-attendance of school. Teacher I maintained:

> *And again you find that orphaned learners are mostly abused. They are affected at home because, er, we find that people, er, living with them they instruct them to make unnecessary work because they have to do some jobs at home. And then, er, we find that early in the morning they wake up, er, they are tired and then they cannot come to school because of such abuse. Also the demand of the family cause even though they may not have the guardians at home, you find that there are lot of works to do* (Teacher I).

Some learners experience sexual abuse by family members and this prevents them from attending school. The following two quotations contain evidence of this:

> *The common kind of abuse we sometimes find is with the girl child. The kind of abuse that they experience is sexual abuse. Some of them are abusing drugs but the most serious one is sexual abuse. Which really takes away the virginity of these kids and as a result their future becomes bleak, is like doomed because they don't come to school and concentrate on school work* (Teacher J).

> *Previously, there was a learner who was doing Grade 6. She was twelve years old. She was also abused sexually by a grant father and she gave birth to a baby while she was still doing Grade 6. You can see how serious these type of abuse more especially sexual abuse in our community* (Teacher J).

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The teachers also talked of orphaned learners who are neglected by their guardians and grandparents that include physical abuse and the misuse of orphans' grants which they gamble away instead of using them to provide for the basic needs of the children. This is supported by the following quotation:

> *From home, their guardians take the money; the little money that they get "ba thiya dikarata ka tšona" meaning that they are playing gambling cards using the money. They use the grant money for gambling instead of buying food and clothes for the children* (Teacher F).

Some learners do not attend school for emotional reasons. One teacher said:

> *The other thing I think causes absenteeism is depression and stress. The orphaned learners get depressed. In my opinion, I think that generally people without parents go through a period of depression and stress (Teacher I).*

The teachers also perceived a lack of social support as a factor that causes non-school attendance. They maintained that some orphaned learners stay away from school because of being bullied and discriminated against by their peers. Teacher D said:

> *Some of the orphans are discriminated by their peers because of their health condition they take medication and their peers tend to isolate them. Some are discriminated because of poverty and the inability to bring lunch to school (Teacher D).*

4.4.3 Theme 3: Challenges experienced by teachers when orphaned learners are absent from school and the support they need

This theme is examined and discussed in terms of child-headed families; learner workload and the lack of parental involvement; relationships between the teachers and caregivers/guidance of the orphaned learners; and the need for external support from social workers, the community, NGOs and the government.

4.4.3.1 Child-headed families

Some teachers mentioned that child-headed families are a challenge because there is no adult figure to talk to the orphaned learners when they do not attend school. Their comments included the following:

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We have some challenges where they stay and we find that there is some orphaned "ke gore badula ka bo bona" meaning that some orphans stays with their siblings at home. They are all learners and when we do home visit we find that there is no one to talk to (Teacher F).

Mm, my concern with the absenteeism of those who don't have guardians. Err, meaning that the child-headed. Those learners from the child-headed families because they don't have somebody to push them or encourage them. So I would like us maybe to make follow ups to call the social worker to do their work. Maybe to visit these children and help them. (Teacher D).

4.4.3.2 *Learner workload and the lack of parental involvement*

The teachers cited heavy workloads as a particular challenge; they are required to do what is expected of them in terms of teaching in class as well as preparing and giving absent orphaned learners work to do. Teacher A commented:

So, here we have programmes that extend after school hours; so, if the learners miss some of the programmes we just make an arrangement with those particular learners and after school hours we give them additional classes to catch up with curriculum. (Teacher A).

Some of the teachers interviewed in this study declared that orphaned learners fail to submit their work which results in the teachers' submissions to the circuit office often being delayed due to absenteeism. The teachers expressed their concern that the learners do not have anyone to ensure that they do their homework. They disclosed this in the following:

We find some difficult in terms of activities because there is no one to encourage them to write home works even though some are have guardian we find that that guardian cannot read and cannot write. They just come to school without a home work (Teacher C).

So we find that we have to write letters for postponing submission. Which in itself affect the management of the school and the management of class you as the teacher or the subject teacher concern? (Teacher E).

4.4.3.3. Relationships between teachers and caregivers/guidance of the orphaned learners

The teachers mentioned that some guardians and grandparents do not cooperate when they request them to come to the school to talk about the absenteeism of the orphaned learners. According to the teachers, the guardians only come to school if the name of a social worker is mentioned because they are afraid that the orphan grants may be taken from them. Two participants disclosed the following information:

> *I have experienced that most of the guardians don't stay with the learners during the night. Some of them are alcoholics by nature and so they don't care about their children. They only come to school when you say that the social worker will be in school* (Teacher B).

> *Number one, you find that we lack the directives in terms of liaising with the guardians or the persons concerned. We find that the persons responsible for providing care as a guardian is not around at all. So the contact is not there* (Teacher E).

A lack of knowledge about the guardians who are responsible for obtaining grants or foster-grants on behalf of the orphaned learners was said to be another challenging issue, especially when learning support resources were needed. According to one teacher:

> *Someone accepts to take funds; when it comes to the education of the child we find that the person is not there and to ensure that the child comes to school. What I am saying is that the social workers first must liaised with the guardians and intervene at school level on behalf of these orphans to ensure that we reduce absenteeism of orphans* (Teacher E).

Orphaned learners experience emotional abuse at home and lack concentration in the classroom because guardians or foster parents drink alcohol and fight in front of them. Many orphans are sexually abused, especially the girls who are raped by community members because they are vulnerable. Teacher D remarked:

> *Mmm, the challenges that we experience is that they get raped sometimes by the people in the committee, community may realise that they are no parents or maybe guardians are gone to work. If there are girls they get raped. And they miss classes. And then this results in poor performance.*

OK, in such cases we always call the social worker because we don't have those words that will may be make them fill comfort. Even the nurses we call them just to talk to them so that they can realise that they are still loved (Teacher D).

A lack of appropriate training is a challenge; some of the teachers said that they did not know how to help the orphaned learners. They believe that the Department of Education should support them in developing the skills they require in managing the needs of the learners. They asserted:

No, I did not get training; just this thing of working in community is within me. And this enrolment of Life Orientation it makes me to deal with learners, even that thing of working with the injuries. This means that it is volunteer work that I am doing (Teacher F).

I can say for me for now up to now we have never went to a training where we specifically dealing with orphans. We were dealing with the management of the school in terms of learners in general irrespective of whether they are orphans or learners who are in good stand (Teacher E).

…the only training that I have come across is that one of being trained a s a teacher. Then I am just gaining an experience by busy working with this type of the situation (Teacher B).

Teachers need support from guardians when orphaned learners are absent from school. During the interviews the teachers reported that there is a lack of support from guardians when attempts are made to share problems experienced by orphaned learners with them. Teachers need support from guardians, brothers and sisters to assist orphaned learners with their school work. This is evidenced in the following quotes:

The first support that we need is from the family. And the second one we need to share the problems of the learners. We need support in providing the learners with basic needs such as food, such as clothing and so on (Teacher A).

We have another community volunteer structure such as "Thusalusaka" which is helping us a lot. Those people have been trained on child protections and social work in the community who is making regular visits to the orphaned children (Teacher B).

Mm, I think we need the support from the guardians and even their relatives' maybe to make sure that they come to school regularly. And to the sure that they sleep being eaten something or may helping them to do their home works (Teacher D).

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4.4.3.4 External support from social workers, the community, NGOs and the government

The teachers asserted that support was needed from social workers to assist orphaned learners to obtain social grants with which to buy basic needs. They also mentioned the need for the Department of Social Development to liaise with the Department of Education regarding the registration of guardians to receive social grants of behalf of the orphaned learners. Teachers E and I confirmed this by adding:

> *I think the direct support is that I wish and hope that the social development department can liaise with the education department in terms of the parenthood. In guardianship that is registered with the social department for helping the learners with child grant* (Teacher E).

> *We need assistant from the social worker to grant this learner opportunity to get social grant to buy school basic things which I have already mentioned* (Teacher I).

One of the teachers disclosed that in their schools they get support from social services and this reduces the challenges of managing the school attendance of orphaned learners, saying:

> *So when they come to school they ask those learners, they take them into a separate classroom, then they interviewed the learners about the relationship with the foster parents. So the interview is confidential place where we find that the learner is free to say everything that troubles him or her* (Teacher A).

The teachers in this study are also of the opinion that there is a need for support from the community in ensuring the safety of the learners by them helping to monitor learners who roam around the community during school hours. They recommended that the entire community should prioritize the education of all learners to ensure a sense of belonging and collective responsibility in order to improve school attendance. They said:

> *That is why, we once we realised or noticed they are absent from school, we don't waste any time. We call their relatives or their neighbours or we go ourselves to check if these kids are save wherever they are. Because being orphans they are very*

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much vulnerable. Anything dangerous can happen to them, as people can take advantage of those kinds of kids who are orphans (Teacher J).

Again we have got we need the support from the community members who will encourage learners to attend school. Community as large here I am referring to if you see a learner, if a community member sees a leaner roaming at home, you must question him why are you here. That is the support that we need from the community members (Teacher I).

Teachers also suggested that NGOs should continue with the support they offer orphaned learners; for example, buying the learners bicycles that they may use to ensure that they come to school. Apart from the community and the NGOs, the teachers expect the Department of Education to support them in providing the necessary resources to improve school attendance. They also expressed the expectation that the Department of Education should provide structures in terms of guidelines and resources that could be used to support the education of orphaned learners. They recommended that

…the department should provide us with the resources that we require as a school to deal with these orphaned learners. We need the documents may be the guidance the guidelines of how to deal with these orphaned learners. This is of outmost important (Teacher I).

Yaa, if maybe we can have a particular place where we can report these matters of orphaned learners maybe the government will assist in some other ways so that these learners can be the same as other learners (Teacher H).

4.4.4 Theme 4: How teachers manage the absenteeism of orphaned learners

The fourth theme concerning how teachers manage the absenteeism of orphaned learners is discussed in terms of providing for their basic needs; collaborative efforts between schools, the community, NGOs and the Department of Social Services; pastoral care; and monitoring school attendance.

4.4.4.1 Providing for the basic needs of orphaned learners

One of the strategies used by the teachers in this study to improve school attendance of orphaned learners was to provide for the basic needs of the learners in terms of food, school uniforms and pocket money. They disclosed that

> *Er, we have got a kitchen which running. The department is supplying the learners with food so we make sure that they eat enough at school. And if they are supplement when the school closes, we sometimes give food to these types of learners* (Teacher B).

> *And then if maybe there are in shot of uniform we meet with the NGO`s to make sure that they try and help them by buying them those uniforms* (Teacher A).

> *I make sure that motivate them to some an extent I buy uniform where possible, er… pocket money* (Teacher H).

Other strategies that encourage learners to attend school regularly include some teachers helping learners with their homework while others give them tests they missed when they were absent:

> *Er, sometimes when they are not present at school. When I visited them, if I found them at homes, I used to assist them to write the work at home.* (Teacher B).

> *Right er the learners who miss the tasks are given the opportunity. In our school whether the learner has legitimate or illegitimate reason we give the learner opportunity to write the any tasks that he or she has missed. So learning er is not a privilege is the right. If we have an ample time we give them opportunity to write* (Teacher A).

Exposing the orphaned learners to various sporting activities is another way of encouraging them to attend school regularly. Teacher I added:

> *… the absenteeism here is managed by exposing learners in various activities and to instil love of sport, sporting codes, cultural activities, er… by so doing we will be able to manage the absenteeism* (Teacher I).

The teachers spoke about motivating orphaned learners by encouraging them to attend school telling them that education is the key to success and by giving them examples of educated people who were role models in the community. The following extracts from their responses illustrate this:

Er, one thing that I usually do is to encourage them about the importance of education. Every day I usually talk about education as the key to success. I sometimes indicate that when learners attend school is not a matter of his or her parents. Is for their own benefit (Teacher B).

I give them examples of how to be educated and I will tell them the important of education, because education opens the doors of every difficulty like to be an orphan. If an orphan can be educated he/she will be something in life (Teacher C).

A teacher who manages absenteeism by involving the HOD and the principal and who does home visits said:

When they are absent from school I tell the Head of Department at School (HOD) er the HOD go to the office and the office write a letter to call the guardian of the learners. If they don't come, we do a home visits and If we go and find no one we tell the next door that when they come they must tell them (Teacher F).

In some schools there are committees that deal with orphaned learners' absenteeism by visiting them at their homes to find out the reason for non-school attendance.

4.4.4.2 *The schools, the community, NGOs and the Department of Social Services collaboration*

The teachers in this study use community-based structures and social workers to manage the absenteeism of orphaned learners. Social workers appear to make regular visits to schools to check on the attendance of the orphaned learners. Some of the teachers spoke about sharing the problems experienced by orphaned learners with their foster parents and they requested the caregivers to encourage the learners to attend school. They maintained:

We have got a register for all learners from all grades who are orphaned learners, such that every time like when people like NGO who normally come to visit our school frequently to check for these learners and even the department of social work. They are always come to check these learners because they are paying them social grant and foster grant. They check that are they really come to school (Teacher J).

So for the grandmothers who don't come to school we make a home visit to the grandmother to solve the problem. We also encourage the grandmother so that if

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they don't encourage the orphaned learners we will go to other social department such as social grants. We invite them to come and speak to them that it is better for them to withdraw the grant. Then the grandmothers understand if may be we tell them about those grant (Teacher A).

The schools work together with non-governmental organisations to buy and provide for the basic needs of the orphans, such as uniforms and school bags, to help solve their non-attendance problems. They also involve community structures to supply the orphaned learners with uniforms and school bags; committees in the community work with social workers to assist orphans with obtaining documents, such as birth certificates to access grants. This is confirmed in the following quotes:

…with our school we are having, er, World Vision, er, called Thusalusaka. It helps our learners with the uniforms. They come to school and make us identify the learners with problems or orphaned learners who don't have, er, basic needs. Like maybe if they don't have uniform as I mentioned they buy for them. And if they don't have school bags they do buy for them and then if there is need maybe these orphaned learner want go to secondary school they also go there and make the learners to identify them again, maybe help them with the uniform in other grades.(Teacher A).

So we must also engage the community structures to help and protect them. So like for instances here at our area we are very much fortunate because we have got the community structures such as like the Association, Rural Association (SRDA).Then we must also engage them and also other community structures like the Home Based Care people. The caring people local, we engage them to help these learners by caring for them even after the school, we have got drop in centres where in we engage them to make sure that they are helped with doing homework so that they may be able to have the love of coming to school the next day. Then we must also adopt orphaned learners who may encourage them to attend school (Teacher I).

Community engagement is also carried out by teachers engaging neighbours to monitor attendance of orphaned learners for guardians who work far away from school:

There are guardians who are working away from home. So we just go and talk to the neighbour to encourage the learner to come to school. We also make a record at school about the learner's attendance so that the learner who is not having the foster parents or guardian in the vicinity comes to school. We just monitor frequently monitor them in the morning. So that they must know that we kept an eye on them (Teacher A).

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The government supports learners by providing for some of their needs which enables them to attend school. Two teachers noted the provision of books and bicycles as a means of transport for learners who have to travel a long distance to school:

> *There is no reason for parents that my child cannot go to school because does not have this and that books. It is the responsibility of the department to see to it that all learners have got all books or all learner support materials. So the department is really helping very much, transport wise, learner support materials and also food* (Teacher J).

> *They gave them the bicycles those who are far away, they helped them by giving them the bicycles and sometimes they bought them uniforms and give them food parcels* (Teacher C).

4.4.4.3 Pastoral care

Teachers play a pastoral role by identifying orphaned learners; getting to know their background; and by involving community structures to ensure that the learners are cared for. The teachers' pastoral responsibilities include communicating with guardians, relatives and elderly people who live with orphaned learners and talking to them about encouraging the learners to attend school. The teachers asserted that

> *We make follow ups. Er, we have got our as the care and support leader. I make sure that I sent one of our teachers or even I go to their homes. To check on them if they are ill or maybe there is something terrible happened to them. We make sure that we meet with them so that we can know what holding them back* (Teacher D).

> *We share with them their experiences, their problems as learners, what problems are they experiencing. So we also make them to feel at home and so we can help those learners to solve the problems especially if may be the learner has the problem of uniform as the school we devise a means that any teacher who can help that learner to help. By so doing we are encouraging learners to feel at home, to attend the school properly because they know that at school they also have the parents* (Teacher A).

4.4.4.4 Monitoring school attendance

Teachers monitor the attendance of the learners by marking a register every morning and every period. They liaise with peers of the orphaned learners to check whether they

know of the whereabouts of the absent learners. The teachers also involve the principal in following up on the whereabouts of the absent orphaned learner. The following extracts from participant responses give evidence of this:

> *I manage those orphaned learners by marking daily register every day to see if they attend school or if they attend period, school period. Because we have attendance registers and period register* (Teacher C).

> *OK, I think I have said it before that we have a register whereby we are trying by all means to mark the register every day so that we can know who is not coming to school regularly. And then we make follow ups if there are some problems* (Teacher D).

> *What we first do we note time register that we take each and every morning, the class list that circulate each and every period? Then we liaise first with the peers if they know the where about of the peers. Sometimes learners can dodge without the parent being aware. Normally information we liaise with the office. The office we take it to task through that committee or the principal himself or herself will go to check or follow up with that* (Teacher E).

The monitoring of the school attendance of learners goes beyond the school premises. Teachers communicate with neighbours and make home visit after contacting guardians; they check with the neighbours to learn who the relatives of orphaned learners are in order to visit them during breaks to find out reasons for their absenteeism. Teachers I and J said:

> *Er, mm, the one the most important thing is to know the where about of the learners. We as school after realising that the learner is absent from school, we must ask the classmate may the learner staying with next to that particular er learner. We must know his or where about. If they have no information we will have to contact his or her guardian. Or may be er they have a visit to that particular learner* (Teacher I).

> *Yes when orphans are absent from school. We always try by all means to find out where they are. Sometimes we will find out from fellow learners who are themselves their neighbours. We ask they learners did you see this and this learner. When did you see learner B or when do you see learner C and learner X? They will tell us where these learners are. Even if they are not at home they will tell us their relatives or where they might have gone. It becomes easy for us to go and trace and fetch them. Other than that, we call their guardians, also we go for ourselves during breaks, we go and find out, if they are ok wherever they are* (Teacher J).

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4.4.5 Theme 5: The responsibility of teachers for absent orphans

Elements of the responsibilities of teachers for absent orphan learners include their leadership in identifying the learners and monitoring their school attendance; the pastoral role they play; policy implementation; and involving the community, social workers and NGOs in providing care for them.

4.4.5.1 Leadership role in identifying orphaned learners and monitoring their school attendance

The teachers assume the roles of leaders and administrators in identifying orphaned learners and having their names on a list or in a register which they use to check their school attendance. The participant teachers believe that they are responsible for monitoring the school attendance of the learners:

> *I think my responsibility is to make sure that orphaned learners are always present at school* (Teacher B).

> *My responsibility is that I should ensure that at all times that learners are at school. And theses can only be done when there is a good relationship between us teachers, the school and the parents. Whereby the class register must be checked day to day; subject lists must be done in each and every period to ensure that there is no dodging or absenteeism in class or in school* (Teacher E).

> *…is to ensure that an attendance register is monitored and controlled on daily basis. To read school policy to the learners so that they may know that, er, being absent from school is not allowed. To write a classroom policy, I also write a classroom policy and remind their responsibilities of which one of them is against unnecessary absenteeism at school*

4.4.5.2 Pastoral role

Teachers play a pastoral role by sharing orphaned learners' experiences and by being caregivers. They motivate orphaned learners to attend school by informing them of the importance of education and of caring for themselves which is confirmed by the following extract from a response:

> *My responsibility is to motivate them to come to school on daily basis because if they cannot come to school they will be in trouble for example, they can be thieves,*

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they can be abused and even feel lonely. If they come to school every day the can be safe and at school they are going to socialise with other learners. Er, I motivate them to read their books and to know how to carry for their bodies (Teacher C).

Teachers take parental roles by encouraging and motivating orphaned learners to attend school; by providing for their physiological needs which include food; and by protecting them from all foreseeable harm. The following examples are how four of the participants described this function:

I think my responsibility is to make sure that orphaned learners are always present at school. And I must check as to whether they have enough food every day (Teacher B).

Er, mm, my responsibilities towards the school attendance of orphaned learners, number one, er, as an educator I will have to ensure that they are looked after. It is also my obligation and responsibility as an educator to protect them (Teacher I).

My responsibility is to motivate them to come to school on daily basis because if they cannot come to school they will be in trouble for example, they can be thieves, they can be abused and even feel lonely. If they come to school every day the can be safe and at school they are going to socialise with other learners (Teacher C).

I sit them down every now and then try by all means to encourage this kids that even though they are orphan but they can still become better people, better qualified and responsible, er, residents of our communities one day. And that they can only attain or achieve by attending schools, do their school work and getting the resource serious about their school work (Teacher J).

Teachers' pastoral roles include developing school support system committees, such as the Health Advisory Committee (HAC). Teachers H and C said:

And I will also established and develop social based support system such as the Health Advisory Committee (HAC) at school, wherein we are going to deal with learners who are experiencing problems with learning support, emotional support, nutritional support, poverty alleviation, child-headed families and learner without proper uniform (Teacher H).

So let us make these orphans feel at home and as if they have parents. Let us share their experiences, let us solve their problems. Let us always be near them and give them the necessary support (Teacher C).

The teachers also spoke of lifting the self-esteem of the orphaned learners by showing them that they cared – as the two following extracts affirm:

Er, mm, er, the most important thing, er, that I can do as an educator to bring back the self-esteem is to encourage learners, these orphaned learners to participate. Er, when they participate that is where they can bring their self-esteem. They will be, they will get used to be with the friends. That is how I can bring the self-esteem (Teacher I).

I want to believe that we all know that orphans are learners or kids that do not have either parents or both of them. So this kids most of them we find that the people who are to looking after them are really not playing any role in encouraging them to go to come to school. Also they are not looking after these learners as we expected. (Teacher J).

Other teachers who were interviewed mentioned that they attend to their pastoral roles related to orphan problems on a daily basis and they ensure that the orphans receive their grants and that they are used to pay for the orphans' needs. Teacher F was quite adamant:

OK, as a teacher I am dedicated and I teach learners and encourage learners to do school work and I guide them to take care for them. Life style how can they live and I provide first aid for emergency cases or injuries in the school. I look after orphaned learners and make sure that they get their grants. And another thing, I make sure that family members use grant, er "Ba šomiša di grant gabotse mo baneng" for the child. I further investigate the matter if they don't use grant "gabotse akere" meaning well (Teacher F).

Some teachers divulged that they play a parental role by adopting orphaned learners and catering for their school needs by paying for educational tours. They also mentioned that they model these learners by training them to take care of themselves and look after the money they receive. Teacher F added:

I even train them how to handle blood when one is having blood to wear hand gloves. They must not touch the blood of any one (Teacher F).

4.4.5.3 Policy implementation

Different views were offered regarding policies related to learners' school attendance. Some teachers discussed their roles and responsibilities in their schools in implementing the meagre policy on managing the absenteeism of orphaned learners - developed from the National Policy on Learner Attendance which assists teachers with

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interventions if orphaned are absent from school. In these schools the teachers use their school attendance policy as a frame of reference to manage absenteeism. They added that they audit the orphaned learners' absenteeism register on quarterly basis so that they could develop strategies to improve attendance. Two teachers declared:

> *Yes, there is a policy on learner attendance. This policy is also the addressing the absenteeism of orphaned learners. Every school has the policy on learner attendance. So from that, er, policy we come up with an audit on quarterly basis on the rate of the absenteeism and so that we can iron this for future* (Teacher A).

> *In the school, yes, there is such a policy in the school where the parents know very well that it is their duty or responsibility to ensure that learners come to school. If there are not coming, they must account for it. So far as we will push them in order for all of us to create a special person that our country wants to make through education* (Teacher E).

Other teachers were of the opinion that there is no policy on managing the school attendance of orphaned learners:

> *There is no policy regarding managing school attendance of orphaned learners, we just volunteer to do that and with the help of may be social workers, er, correctional services, then we make sure these learners attend school* (Teacher G).

> *Er, mm, in fact, er, mm, we haven't; we do not have not one yet, but we have the Health Advisory Committee which deals with this, er, learners. That is where the learners are helped* (Teacher I).

4.4.5.4 *Involving the community, social workers and NGOs in providing care for orphaned learners*

The teachers spoke of their responsibility to ensure that other community members were involved in caring for orphaned learners and encouraging them to attend school. They mentioned working together with the volunteer organization in the community and the social workers – the following is an example of what was said:

> *We are also working with other voluntary organisation in the community, such as Thusalusaka (World Vision) and the Department of Social Work. So let us make these orphans feel at home as if they have parents. Let us share their experiences, let us solve their problems. Let us always be near them and give them the necessary support* (Teacher A).

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4.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the data gathered through semi-structured interviews with the teachers was presented. The themes were given in terms of the research questions and quotations from the interviews were included to support the themes. In the next and final chapter the finding from this study are integrated with the literature to determine similarities and differences when compared to previous studies. The discussion on school attendance of orphaned learners with regard to challenges experienced and the management approach are also presented in terms of the ethic of care. In the chapter conclusions are reached and recommendations from the findings are made as well as suggestions for future studies.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study explored how teachers manage the absenteeism of orphaned learners in selected schools in Limpopo Province. In the previous chapter, Chapter 4, the findings from the data collected by means of interviews with the Life Orientation teachers, class teachers and teachers responsible for orphaned learners was presented. A total of ten teachers were involved in the study; the sample consists of six male and four females' teachers. The research questions were: *What are the experiences of teachers regarding learner school attendance?; What are the teachers` perceptions of the causes of absenteeism in orphaned learners?; What are the challenges experienced by teachers when orphaned learners are absent from school?;* and *How do teachers manage the absenteeism of orphaned learners?*

5.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

In Chapter 1 the background and rationale for the study were outlined and a problem statement was formulated. The research questions were posed and the theoretical framework of the study was given. The research design and possible significance of the study was also discussed.

Chapter 2 consisted of a literature review of international and national studies related to the causes of learner absenteeism; the role of teachers in managing learner school attendance; and their duty to care. The ethic of care was cited and discussed as the theoretical framework of this study.

The research approach, design and methodology were explained in Chapter 3 which also included a justification of the choices made with regard to research methodology

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and the strategies used to enhance the credibility of the study as well as ethical considerations were discussed.

Chapter 4 examined the data gathered during the semi-structured interviews with selected teachers from three primary schools in Limpopo Province. The research findings were presented as themes which emerged from the research questions and they were supported by *verbatim* quotations.

The final chapter, Chapter 5, presents a summary of the research findings which are compared to previously studies in the relevant literature in order to identify similarity and differences. In this chapter, the researcher draws conclusions and makes recommendations as well as suggestions for further studies.

5.3 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

A summary of the research findings resulting from the analysis of the data collected is given below.

5.3.1Tteachers` experience regarding learner school attendance

The researcher found that the majority of the teachers interviewed experience low rates of learner absenteeism in their schools because the Feeding Scheme encourages orphaned learners to attend school. Learners' absences from school would mean that there would be no food for them to eat. This finding supports the main aim of the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) which was introduced by the Department of Education to accommodate poor, orphaned and disabled learners as well as disability learners to improve enrolment and retention and to discourage repeat rates (National Norms and Standard for Funding, 2010).

Despite the positive influence of the school feeding scheme, this study found that teachers still feel that they are not able to follow-up on learners who do not attend school, especially in child-headed families where there is no adult supervision. The researcher found that orphaned learners are more likely to be absent from school when

compared to non-orphans because orphaned learners lack guidance and supervision from their parents. A study by Chtoyo *et al.* (2008) in Zimbabwe maintains that children who grow up in child-headed families without both parents face challenges which interfere with their schooling. Similarly, Mishra and Van Assche (2008), Makhonza (2006), Masondo (2006) and Tanga (2013) report that orphaned learners are considerably less likely to attend school than non-orphans due to the absence of an adult caregiver to provide for their needs and to guide them. The findings of the current study and previous studies show how vital it is that an adult should create an environment for learners to attend school; the responsibilities of adult caregivers also include influencing learners' attitudes towards schooling.

5.3.2 Teachers' perceptions of the causes of absenteeism of orphaned learners

In this study the teachers identified a lack of support for psychological needs and poor family and social support as causes of orphaned learner absenteeism. Whereas previous studies, such as those by Smiley, Omoeva, Sylla and Chaluda (2014), Bonthuys (2010), Pillay (2011), USAID (2013) and Zhang (2003) emphasize poverty and economic hardships as the main reasons for the non-school attendance of orphaned learners, the teachers in this current study were more concerned about the lack of emotional, psychological and social support as well as economic reasons for learner absenteeism. The poor supply of basic needs, such as that for food - reported in a study by Bennell (2010) in Zambia - is not the case in this study because school feeding which is provided by the government motivates learners to attend school. This current study revealed that an economic reason for non-school attendance of orphaned learners is the misuse of child support grants provided by the government to meet the needs of orphans. Some guidance councillors and caregivers squander the funds by gambling them away and through excessive drinking of alcohol. Learners, then, fail to attend school because their educational needs are not met which would have been paid for by the grants. Tanga (2013) adds that a factor that impacts negatively on the education of orphans learners is that caregivers misuse the public assistance money/grants of the orphaned learners.

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In this study the emotional needs of physically - in some cases sexual - and psychologically abuse learners were identified as causes of absenteeism of orphaned learners. Some of the teachers cited emotional factors as a cause for the non-school attendance of orphans. Depression and stress in orphaned learners after the deaths of their parents were given as emotional causes of absenteeism. Emotional factors in orphans have been reported in other studies; Makhonza (2006) and Masondo (2006) are of the opinion that orphaned learner without parents lack emotional support, such as communication, love and care. In China, Xiaoming *et al.* (2009) believe that the lack of time for learning results in a lower academic performance among orphans who may suffer anxiety and depression. Moletsane (2013) acknowledges that orphans suffer long term psychological effects of emotional deprivation as a result of the deaths of their parents. In a comparative study on the emotional well-being of orphans and non-orphans, Nyamukapa *et al.* (2007) state that orphaned learners are more psychologically distressed than non-orphans. The emotional and sexual vulnerability of orphans is also reported by Ganga and Maphalala (2013) who maintain that orphaned learners in Zambia are involved in prostitution for economic reasons and not as a result of abuse from their caregivers or other relatives - as is the finding of this current study.

In this study teachers perceived the lack of social support as one of the causes of non-school attendance and they provided examples of non-orphaned learners discriminating and bullying orphaned learners. Reid (2008) and Ingul *et al.* (2012) suggest that school violence and bullying increase the risk of school absenteeism in orphaned learners. According to Dalen (2009), when orphaned learners are bullied they end up without friends and their social network relationships are limited. It may be concluded that such a social environment does not contribute to healthy child development.

5.3.3 Challenges experienced by teachers when orphaned are absent and the support needed

The current research indicates that child-headed families are a challenge in managing the school attendance of orphaned learners because of the absence of an adult figure to support and supervise the learners. According to Moletsane (2013), the deaths of parents have a major impact on the education of orphans; fewer orphaned children attend school because they take care of their siblings after the deaths of their parents. The assumed rule creates problems because learners in child-headed families lack maturity and experience and they need security, guidance moral support and love (Best, 2010). Based on the young age of the children in some child-headed families, there is a risk of children not being able to care for their siblings and themselves without support from an adult caregiver (Bonthuys, 2010).

Another challenge reported by the teachers in this study is the additional workload that they experience when learners are absent from school. The research found that teachers are overloaded by work when orphaned learners are absent from school; they have to teach and, at the same time, prepare to give orphaned learners who are absent work to do. Teachers in this study seem to experience an increase in their workload due to poor relationships between the homes of learners and the schools. Illiterate caregivers lack the ability to help learners with their homework. It was found that teachers have to support relatives and guardians who stay with the orphans; instruct them on how to assist learners with their homework; and make sure that the learners are given basic needs, such as food. Teachers also assist orphaned learners with homework after school hours.

The study found that guardians and grandparents do not cooperate when requested to do so by the teachers who which to discuss the absenteeism of orphaned learners. They only cooperate if they are threatened with the name of a social worker as they fear that the orphaned learners' grants may be taken from them. Reid (2007) asserts that the attitudes of parents and carers contribute to learner's absenteeism from school.

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Guardians and caregivers who do not come to the schools are not able to effectively support the learners and improve their school attendance (Reid, 2008). Jini and Roby (2011) firmly believe that caregivers lack parenting skills that are needed to deal with the psychological problems of orphaned learner suffering from the loss of their parents. Reid (2008) agrees that poor parenting skills are a cause for non-attendance of school by orphaned learners.

The need for external support from social workers, the community, NGOs and the government was highlighted by the participant teachers. The study found that teachers need support from social workers to assist orphaned learners obtain social grants with which to buy basic needs; they also need the Department of Social Development to liaise with the Department of Education in terms of registering guardians receive social grants of behalf of the orphaned learners. The findings by Wood and Goba (2011) support this research's findings that there is a need for cooperation with outside agencies and other sources of support, including parents and the general community, to address the absenteeism of orphaned learners. This researcher found that teachers look for support from the community to ensure that orphaned learners, who roam the streets, are safe by monitoring them during school hours. It is recommended that the community should prioritise education to ensure that every learner belongs to the community and that it accepts the responsibility for learners' school attendance.

5.3.4 How teachers manage the absenteeism of orphaned learners

This study shows that the management of the absenteeism of the learners involves caring which was described by the teachers in many ways. They told about how they strive to meet the basic needs of the learners in terms of food, school uniforms and pocket money in order to improve the school attendance of the learners. Noddings (2007) asserts that caring involves connections between carers and the cared-for. In this study the teachers are the carers and the orphaned learners are the cared-for in meeting learners' basic needs for attending school; some teachers ask NGOs for donations to

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provide orphaned learners with school uniforms; and the government school feeding programme enables them to fulfil the nutritional needs of the orphans. Similarly, Edstrom *et al.* (2008) report that in Malawi a nutritional programme addresses the hunger problem. In addition, the finding concerning the need for the orphans to work to survive is reported in other studies as a barrier to school attendance.

The findings of this research also indicate that some of the teachers visit orphaned learners at home to assist them with their homework. At school the learners are given a second opportunity to write tests that they missed when they were absent. This demonstration of a caring behaviour is aligned with the "modelling" component of Noddings (2007) ethic of care. "Modelling" is about caring for others in order for them to grow and learn to care for others. When teachers help learners with school work they are encouraging them to grow and to be caring and responsible people. The teachers in this study show caregivers what should be done to help learners; they also support the learners by means of additional lessons to assist them in catching-up with the other learners. Beasley *et al.* (2008) recommend that teachers should assist learners who are absent from school so that they do not fall behind other learners.

Another "modelling" aspect of care in this study was carried out by the teachers to motivate orphaned learners to come to school by giving them examples of educated and successful people in the community as their role models. The research also found that teachers exposed orphaned learners to various sporting activities as a way of encouraging them to attend school regularly. International organizations, such as the Right To Play, promote sport as a means of improving health, supporting education and fostering peace. These organisation target orphans and vulnerable children through encouraging regular participation in sporting activities (Right To Play, 2008). According to the ethic of care, caring teachers provide opportunities for learners to develop in many ways to improve their capacity to care for themselves and others. This type of

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caring is explained in a caring component of Noddings' (1984) ethic of care as "practice".

"Practice" is a component of ethic of care which is concerned with helping learners to develop mentally and assist them to care for others. By exposing orphaned learners to various sports the teachers in the current study provide them with opportunities to interact with others which help in encouraging them to attend school regularly. Caring is a process that does not take place in isolation. The teachers spoke about collaborating with other stakeholders, namely: the community, NGOs and the Department of Education. Social workers regularly visit the schools to check on the attendance of orphaned learners. Teachers share the problems experienced by orphaned learners with the caregivers and requested them to encourage learner school attendance. The NGOs and the community structures help to provide and pay for some basic needs of the orphaned learners, such as uniforms and school bags, as a way to solve the non-attendance problem. Jini and Roby (2011) report that in Zambia some NGOs, like the Zambia Open Community School (ZOCS), give schools supplies and fees for orphaned learners. In Tanzania the Tanzania`s Most Vulnerable Child Programme works with the community to identify the most vulnerable children and to assemble resources at local level to support these children. This organisation raises funds from community members; buys uniforms and books; and builds schools (World Bank, 2006).

In Swaziland the "All Children Safe in School" (UNICEF, 2009) initiative addresses the specific needs of orphans and vulnerable children through the provision of grants and the community's "Education For All" pays their school fees. School administrators work with the school committees and community leaders to identify school orphans and vulnerable children to enrol them in schools (World Bank, 2006). The international examples cited above are cases of collaboration between different stakeholders that respond to the needs of orphaned learners. The collaboration requires open dialogue between the different parties involved. Noddings (2007) identifies dialogue as an

essential element in care giving. The findings from this study suggest that teachers need not only to engage learners in conversation about caring but also caregivers in the community, NGOs and government service providers, such as social workers.

The researcher found that teachers provide pastoral care by identifying orphaned learners; getting to know learners' backgrounds; and involving community structures to ensure that these learners are cared for. The teachers' pastoral responsibilities include communicating with guardians, relatives and elderly people who live with orphaned learners and by talking to them about encouraging the learners to attend school. Grove (2010) defines pastoral care as all measures to assist individuals to reach their full potential, success and happiness. Schools have a responsibility to prepare teachers for their pastoral roles which include being able to identify orphaned learners and to provide care and support in a learning environment in the classroom (Bennell, 2010). The teachers need to establish relationships that are functional and positive to encourage orphaned learners to be open and honest; they should also support and encouragement orphaned learners (United Kingdom Policy Paper 55, 2001).

The pastoral role of the teacher is to demonstrate care, protection and the holistic development of the child (Ogina, 2010). The pastoral teacher provides opportunities for orphaned learners to develop and shows them ways of viewing the world to improve their capacity to care (Owens & Ennis, 2005). Parents delegate their authority to the teachers and the schools while the learners are at school; teachers act *in loco parentis* which means "in the place of the parent." In terms of the duty of care teachers accept responsibility for the safety and well-being of learners for as long as they are in their care. Teachers should not only provide academic support and tutoring across the curriculum, but also give personal support and encouraging the learners (United Kingdom Policy Paper 55, 2001).

The findings of this research indicate that the teachers monitor the attendance of learners by marking registers every morning and during every period; they liaise with

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the peers of orphaned learners to check on the whereabouts of absent learners; and they involve principals in following up on the whereabouts of absent orphaned learners. This shows a caring attitude that, in turn, creates a caring culture in schools for vulnerable learners. The Policy on Learner Attendance (2010) states that a class teacher is responsible for compiling and marking the class register in the class registration period on each school day, maintaining it accurately and taking it to the school's office for safekeeping. However, this research found that the monitoring of school attendance of learners goes beyond the school's premises as teachers communicate with neighbours and do home visit after contacting guardians; they check with neighbours of the learners to learn who the relatives of the orphaned learner are in order to visit them during break to discuss reasons for their absenteeism. Teachers' use of such a system enables them to identify the guardians of learners who are often absent from school and give them and the learners support by establishing caring relationships and dialogue.

5.3.5 The responsibility of teachers for absent orphans

The research found that the teachers assume the roles of leaders and administrators in identifying orphaned learners and listing their names in a register which they use to check school attendance on daily basis. They are responsible for establishing good relationships with learners and parents and help them understand school policies and the relationships should be functional and positive to encourage orphaned learners to be open and honest (Grove, 2010). The fundamental duties of the educator *in loco parentis* are to achieve their teaching aims; maintain order by means of a code of conduct; and create a safe environment for the learners (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2009:145). Teachers are expected to develop caring relationships with the orphaned learners and put these relationships into practice (Smedley & Pepperell, 2010). The research found that teachers have developed support system committees, such as the Health Advisory Committee (HAC), that deal with the learners who are experiencing problems, such as a lack of learning support, poverty, no uniforms and being part of child-headed families

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and that uplift the self-esteem of orphaned learners by showing them that they care for them.

Teachers are expected to implement policies on learner school attendance. In this study, teachers had different views regarding policies on learner school attendance. They spoke about their roles and responsibilities in implementing policies on managing the absenteeism of orphaned learners which were developed from the National Policy on Learner Attendance – a policy which assist teachers to intervene when orphaned learners are absent from school. The teachers cited the use of the school attendance policies as a frame of reference to manage absenteeism. They also mentioned the auditing of the orphaned learners' absenteeism register on quarterly basis to guide them in suggesting strategies to improve attendance.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research findings it is evident that orphaned learners, especially learners from child-headed households, are less likely to attend school when compared to non-orphans. The teachers who participated in this study seem to have adopted many different ways to fulfil the needs of orphaned learners so that they attend school regularly. The caring support is showcased through the provision of basic needs, such as food, clothing and finances to buy what is needed at school. The school feeding programme is perceived as a major factor that encourages orphaned learners to attend school. There were self-reports about personal efforts to reach out to learners who are absent from school – with special attention being given to learners from child-headed families where there are no adult caregivers. According to the teachers who were interviewed in this study, some learners experience emotional and sexual abuse at home; these problems need professional support that seems to be lacking. It appears that the teachers, guardians and care-givers do not have the skills to support the stressed and depressed orphans after the deaths of their parents and how to use grants effectively in order to fulfil the needs of the learners.

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Although the teachers do not have formal training in pastoral care they make an effort by working with community structures, NGOs and social workers in supporting orphans to attend school. Another finding was that despite the fact that most schools have policies on leaner attendance, they are silent in terms of orphaned learners and how they should be cared for. A crucial concern is to ensure that orphans from child-headed families attend school regularly; caring relationships seem to have some merit in encouraging better school attendance for all learners and, more particularly, orphaned learners with no adult caregiver to encourage them to attend school.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made in terms of the findings and within the context of this study:

- The government should ensure that guardians and grandparents are given guidance on how to support depressed and stressed orphaned learners.
- Social workers should be involved in advising caregivers, guardians and grandparents on how to effectively use the child support grants to support the learners' education.
- The government should consider instituting caring workshops where teachers are trained in how to identify, and provide caring relationships and support, for vulnerable orphaned learners.
- The policies on learner attendance should provide guidelines on how to bridge the care giving gap in child-headed families with no adult figure to be held responsible for non-school attendance of the orphaned learners.
- All teachers in the schools should work together to address the care and support of OVC (Wood &Goba, 2011). The responsibility of caring for orphaned learners should not only be the responsibility of Life Orientation teacher and class teachers; all staff members should be involved in caring for the learners to encourage better school attendance.

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- NGOs that support orphaned learners should to continue to give them bicycles to ensure that they come to school regularly and on time.
- The school attendance of orphaned learners in child-headed families should be monitored with the help of the Department of Education. The Director-General, in consultation with the Department of Education, should create social-worker posts that focus on monitoring the school attendance of learners in child-headed families.
- Teachers should encourage learners to be the best that they can be by continuing with the support they offer them and by means of the relationships they develop with the learners This type of motivation may help them improve their own self-concept and esteem; it may encourage optimism about their futures through regular school attendance.

5.6   DELIMITATION

This study was limited to three primary schools in Limpopo province. A total of ten participants were involved in the study. Due to the small sample size, the findings of this study are not generalized beyond the context of the study. The collected data excluded the experiences of the learners and the caregivers. The Department of Education, NGOs and community members' views are not reflected in this mini-dissertation.

5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study emerged from data that is limited to the experiences of ten teachers who were involved in the study. The purpose of the study was not to produce data that could be generalized to other school contexts but only within the context of this study. Despite this limitation, the findings provide insights that may be useful in improving the school attendance of orphaned learners, especially those from child-headed families. The current study was limited by the use of a qualitative research

approach and by working within an interpretivist paradigm. The findings and discussion, therefore, rely on interviews which are self-reports from the participants and the observation done by the researcher.

5.8 FUTURE RESEARCH

In order to generalize finding on managing the school attendance of orphaned learners, a more extensive quantitative study could be done that represents a larger population. Apart from interviewing teachers, orphaned learners and other stakeholders, such as social workers, NGOs and community members could be interviewed to triangulate their view to give a greater holistic picture of the phenomenon.

5.9 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter a summary of the research findings was presented and conclusions were reached. Recommendations, based on the research findings, were made and an area of study for future research on managing school attendance of orphaned learners, especially learner from child-headed households, was suggested. From the findings of this study the researcher has come to the conclusion that policy alone cannot address the problems experienced by orphaned learners and their teachers who have to manage their non-school attendance. There are indications that orphaned learners need a different approach to encourage them to attend school when compared to non-orphans in terms of the physical, social and emotional challenges they face at home and at school.

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ANNEXURE A: ETHICALCLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education
Fakulteit Opvoedkunde
Lefapha la Thuto

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**CLEARANCE NUMBER :** EM 14/03/01
DEGREE AND PROJECT	MEd How teachers manage absenteeism of orphaned learners in primary schools
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Masilo Norman Ramare
DEPARTMENT	Education Management and Policy Studies
DATE PROTOCOL APPROVED	25 June 2014
DATE CLEARANCE ISSUED	3 May 2016

Please note:

For Masters applications, ethical clearance is valid for 2 years

For PhD applications, ethical clearance is valid for 3 years.

CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE	Prof Liesel Ebersöhn
DATE	3 May 2016
CC	Bronwynne Swarts Liesel Ebersöhn Prof JL Beckmann Dr TA Ogina

This ethics clearance certificate is issued subject to the condition that the approved protocol was implemented. The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education does not accept any liability for research misconduct, of whatsoever nature, committed by the researcher(s) in the implementation of the approved protocol.

Please quote the clearance number in all enquiries.

ANNEXURE B: LETTER TO/FROM DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

ANNEXURE B.

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Education

Department of Education

Limpopo Department of Education

P.O.BOX X 9498

Polokwane

007

Dear Sir/ Madam

<u>**Application to Conduct Research in Mopani Region, Limpopo: Sekgosese East circuit.**</u>

I, Ramare Masilo Norman, MEd student in Education Management, Law and Policy at the University of Pretoria (27567258) hereby request your permission to conduct research interviews with teachers in Mopani region.

My Research Topic is "**How teachers manage Absenteeism of orphaned learners in Primary Schools?**" In line with the requirements of research ethics and my research design and methodology I am requesting permission from the provincial office to conduct interviews with teachers from primary schools in Sekgosese East circuit regarding Management of orphaned learners' absenteeism.

I hope that my request will be granted.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Ramare M.N.

Contact: 083 699 7703

Email: masilo.ramare@gmail.com

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ANNEXURE B

17 February 2014

TO WHON IT MAY CONCERN

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY/ RESEARCH: RAMARE MN

This is to certify that the above mentioned educator has been given permission to conduct study/research among the educators within the circuit.

The circuit wishes to request the schools to give him permission to interact with the relevant stakeholders at schools without compromising learning and teaching.

The circuit wishes the researcher good luck in his endeavor to complete his research.

Yours faithfully

CIRCUIT MANAGER

SEKGOSESE EAST CIRCUIT
P.O.BOX 136 MOOKETSI Tel: 015 8740032/ FAX: 0158742121
"Working together we can do more in providing quality education"
Education is a Pre-condition for development

LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Enquiries: Dr. Makola MC, Tel No: 015 290 9448. E-mail: MakolaMC@edu.limpopo.gov.za

P O BOX 64

PAULUSWEG

0814

RAMARE M.N

<u>**RE: Request for permission to Conduct Research**</u>

1. The above bears reference.

2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct a research has been approved- <u>**TITLE: HOW TEACHERS MANAGE ABSENTEESIM OF ORPHANED LEARNERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS.**</u>

3. <u>The following conditions should be considered</u>

    3.1 The research should not have any financial implications for Limpopo Department of Education.

    3.2 Arrangements should be made with both the Circuit Offices and the schools concerned.

    3.3 The conduct of research should not anyhow disrupt the academic programs at the schools.

    3.4 The research should not be conducted during the time of Examinations especially the forth term.

    3.5 During the study, the research ethics should be practiced, in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected).

    3.6 Upon completion of research study, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with the Department.

4. Furthermore, you are expected to produce this letter at Schools/ Offices where you intend conducting your research as an evidence that you are permitted to conduct the research.

Page 1 of 2

Cnr. 113 Biccard & 24 Excelsior Street, POLOKWANE, 0700, Private Bag X9489, POLOKWANE, 0700
Tel: 015 290 7600, Fax: 015 297 6920/4220/4494

The heartland of southern Africa - development is about people!

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5. The department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wishes you success in your investigation.
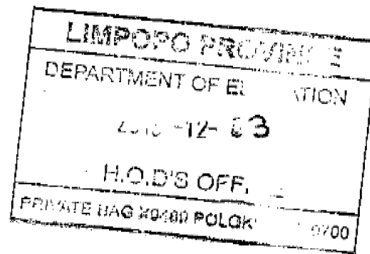
Best wishes.

(signature)   03/12/2013

Dederen K.O   **Date**

Acting Head of Department

LIMPOPO PROVINCE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
2013-12-03
H.O.D'S OFF.
PRIVATE BAG X9489 POLOK... 0700

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UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

Mr MN Ramare

P.O.BOX 64, Paulusweg

0814

Dear Sir/Madam

CIRCUIT MANAGER: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AND INFORMED CONSENT

I wish to apply for permission to conduct research in your circuit. I also seek your consent in assisting me to identify schools with high numbers of orphaned learners and high learner absenteeism rate. I am a Masters student at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies. My research title *is "How teachers manage absenteeism of orphaned learners in primary schools".* I intend to conduct my research in three primary schools in your circuit. Data will be collected through interviews with nine teachers (three teachers from each school).

The purpose of this study is to explore how teachers manage the absenteeism of orphaned learners in primary schools. Participation in this study is voluntary. The interviews will be conducted after school hours so as to avoid interfering with teaching time. The duration of the interviews will be approximately 45 minutes. Further consent will be obtained to record the interviews. The teachers will be interviewed at school or at an alternative venue suggested by them. The name of the circuit, the schools and the participants will be confidential.

Hoping for your favourable consideration on this matter.

Yours Faithfully

Ramare MN Contact No 0836997703 E-Mail: masilo.ramare@gmail.com

ANNEXURE C: LETTERS OF INFORMED CONSENT

Mr MN Ramare

P.O.BOX 64

Paulusweg

0814

Dear Participant

LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT TO THE PARTICIPANT

My name is Ramare Masilo Norman. I am a Masters student at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies. My research topic is: **How teachers manage absenteeism of orphaned learners in primary schools.** The purpose of the study is to explore the strategies that teachers use to manage the absenteeism of orphaned learners and the challenges they experience. I want to explore how teachers manage the gap created by the absence of parents and caregivers in ensuring that orphaned learners attend school attendance regularly.

You are invited to participate in this research study. Your personal contribution and responses are crucial in assisting me in understanding the management of the absenteeism of orphaned learners in primary schools. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time without any penalty. If you consent to participant in this study, you will be interviewed by me for about 45 minutes. The interviews will be conducted after school hours to avoid disrupting your work. The interview will take place at your school or an alternative place that suits you.

I will further seek consent from you to tape the interview. After transcribing the interview, I may ask for a follow-up interview for clarity and depth.

The information obtained during the interview will be treated as confidentiality and your name and the name of your school will be anonymous. Pseudonyms and codes will be used to conceal your identity and the name of your school. Data collected during this study is for research purpose. There are no known risks to you as a participant in this study.

Yours faithfully

Ramare MN Contact No 0836997703 E-Mail: masilo.ramare@gmail.com

CONSENT FORM

Agree/disagree to participate in this research study

If agree please sign the section below

I have read the request letter and I agree to participate in the study titled *"How teachers manage absenteeism of orphaned learners in primary schools".* I understand the nature of the research and give my consent to be interviewed. I further give the researcher permission to tape the interview. I understand that my identity and that of my school will be kept anonymous and the information obtained from the interview will be confidential. I understand that my participation is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the study if I feel uncomfortable to continue or if there are other reasons. I am also not obliged to reveal information that I feel uncomfortable to discuss.

Participant's signature ………………………Date……………………………………………

Researcher Signature ………………………..Date……………………………………………

Supervisor Signature ………………………..Date……………………………………………

CONSENT FORM

Agree/disagree to participate in this research study

If agree please sign the section below

I have read the letter of informed consent and I agree to participate in the study titled *""How teachers manage absenteeism of orphaned learners in primary schools".* I understand the nature of the research and give my consent to assist the researcher in identifying the schools to be involved in the study and giving access to those schools. I am aware that my participation in assisting the researcher is voluntary. I also understand that my identity and that of the schools will be kept anonymous and the information obtained from the schools is for research purpose.

Participant's signature ………………………Date……………………………………………

Researcher Signature …………………………..Date……………………………………………

Supervisor Signature …………………………..Date……………………………………………

ANNEXURE D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Research topic: How teachers manage absenteeism of orphaned learners in primary schools in Limpopo Province.

Date: _____

School Code name _____

Participant Pseudonym: _____

Male / Female: _____Teaching experience _____years, Grade_____

Class teacher/ Life Orientation teacher / teacher responsible for orphaned learners

1. Please tell me about yourself as a teacher in this school?
2. What can you say about school attendance of learners in general? What about orphaned learners?
3. What do you think are your responsibilities towards school attendance of orphaned learners?
4. In your opinion, what do you think are the causes of absenteeism of orphaned learners?
5. What are you doing in your school to help orphaned learner so that they can attend school?
6. What challenges do you experience when orphaned learners are absent from school?
7. What do you do when orphans are absent from school?
8. How do you manage the absenteeism of orphaned learners?
9. What support do you need to help the orphaned attend school regularly?
10. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me regarding school attendance of orphaned learners?

ANNEXURE E: SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Research topic: How teachers manage absenteeism of orphaned learners in primary schools in Limpopo Province.

Date: **25 July 2014**

School Code name: **School A**

Participant Pseudonym: **Teacher A**

Male / Female: **Male** Teaching experience 11 years, Grade 7

Class teacher/ Life Orientation teacher /**teacher responsible for orphaned learners**

1. Please tell me about yourself as a teacher in this school?

    As er in fact in this in this school I have learnt a lot. This school groomed my teaching profession. I learnt to be responsible at the school. I learnt accountability and my administration skills improved a lot through sharing information with other educators. Through given opportunity to offer my knowledge and skills. So it is this school which er put me where I am now, because i feel that er my administration skills have developed a lot.

    Follow up question.

    When did you start working in this school?

    Right i started working in this institution in May 2010 that is five years ago as Head of Department. So when I came here I have a little knowledge about administrative work, but since I joined the staff so my administration skills and knowledge have increased I now I am very competent and I think I have gained intellectual confidence because of this school.

    "Good"

2. What can you say about school attendance of learners in general?

School attendance at the school is good because during the last two quarters the absenteeism rate was at 0.4%. This shows that learners are attending well because we didn't have the situation where absenteeism rate reaches one percent. So this means that the educators and other societal structures in the community er play their part in encouraging learners to attend school.

What about orphaned learners?

Orphan learners also they are attending well. They come to school regularly, but there are some exceptional cases where we find that some of the orphaned learners do not come regularly but we do make follow up. We check with them, we check with the family they are living and make follow up that they should come to school. So we work together with the families to minimise absenteeism.

Follow up question

I heard you saying that some of the orphaned learners absent themselves from school. What type of advices do you give them?

So first we check with er the foster parent the families from which they come. So if they are no valid reason for the learners' absenteeism we visited that family and sit down with the foster parent to take up their role in encouraging the orphan learners to come to school. So we visit the family and sit down with the foster parent especially the grandmother or grandfather and advice him or her about the importance of the learner coming to school.

"Ok"

3. What do you think are your responsibilities towards school attendance of orphaned learners?

Right as the school, in our school we have the list of OVC`s (Orphan and Vulnerable Children) of which er orphans are part of. So we have that list in our office. So the school er always check the attendance of this learners from er the list on weekly basis. We check the frequency of absenteeism of those learners and

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as the school we are not working alone to encourage the orphaned learners to attend school. We are also working with other voluntary organisation in the community such as Thusalusaka (World Vision) and department of social work. So er this two departments they help the school a lot because they make regular visit of the orphaned children at school checking at the attendance, finding out the problems they experienced with the foster parents and sharing with them the challenges they are facing from those respect families. So I think together with those volunteer organisations the school is benefiting more in encouraging learners to come to school.

"That is good"

4. In your opinion, what do you think are the causes of absenteeism of orphaned learners?

    Causes that have been identified hear is lack of parental support. Most orphans lack parental support. They don't get necessary support in the families. The second identified cause is the living conditions where learners come from. Poor living condition without food and without the basics. So this causes them to be frequently away from the school er because they will be looking for those needs and resources. Those are the major causes of absenteeism of orphaned learners. Lack of parental support as most of them are sitting with grandfathers and grandmothers, who do not know to take care of their schooling and those people who are not meeting their basic needs.

5. What are you doing in your school to help orphaned learner so that they can attend school?

    So we also have the contact with OVC`s. We share with them their experiences, their problems as learners, what problems are they experiencing. So we also make them to feel at home and so we can help those learners to solve the problems especially if may be the learner has the problem of uniform as the

school we advise means that any teacher who can help that learner to help. By so doing we are encouraging learners to feel at home, to attend the school properly because they know that at school they also have the parents. They also have the people who are sharing, the people who also understand their problems. "That is fine"

6. What challenges do you experience when orphaned learners are absent from school?

Right as I have indicated earlier on that er most of orphaned children are staying with their grandmothers and grandfathers er who are not supportive. So they don't know encourage this learners to come to school early in the morning. They just wake up go to the veld to fetch some woods or to the field without first encouraging the learners to go to school. That is one of the challenges realised because they lack er the support. They lack parental support, someone who can motivate them to come to school. So that is why some children they wake up because they were neglected they just remain at home while the grandmother went to veld to fetch woods or have gone to the field. So these are some of the challenges. And another challenges they are various abuses in the home they come. So learners are experiencing types of abuses in those families. Those are the challenges that the orphaned children are experiencing.

Follow up

This is a follow up from our last interview, when I interviewed you, you said there is another challenge that they are facing, the challenges of abuses, what are the examples of challenges of abuses.

So these learners are staying with foster parent or guardians at home. So sometimes they are overworked by these guardians and sometimes the guardians nor they drink in front of them, they fight in front of them, these are some of the challenges that the learners shared with us when they come to school

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if we confront them about their absenteeism. They feel tight because they have been overworked. So that is why they don't come to school regularly.

What can you say about the challenges of catching up with their lessons missed? So here we have programs that extend after school hours, so if the learner's misses err some of the programs we just make an arrangement with those particular learners and after school hours we give them additional classes to catch up with curriculum.
Thank you very much.

Follow up question
When you call these grandmothers do they come to school?
Ya some they come, some they don't. So for the grandmothers who don't come to school we make a home visit to the grandmother to solve the problem. We also encourage the grandmother so that if they don't encourage the orphaned learners we will go to other social department such as social grants. We invite them to come and speak to them that it is better for them to withdraw the grant. Then the grandmothers understand if may be we tell them about those grant. So they understand and become more supportive and encourage learners to come to school, fearing that if they don't come to school their grants will be withdrawn. "That is a good work"

7. What do you do when orphans are absent from school?

So first of all we check with the family because we shall have first checked with the class teacher first inform that the learner is not at school. We check with the family whether there are legitimate reasons for the absenteeism. If there are legitimate reasons so we make follow up to the family and we look for the learner, we interview the learner what causes him or her not to come to school. So if there are some of the problems within the family then we sit down with the foster parents and we iron the problem. And we want them to encourage

ANNEXTURE F: EXAMPLE OF DATA ANALYSIS TABLE

Questions and sub	Responses	Segments	comments	Themes/Sub
Question 1 Please tell me about yourself as a teacher in this school	**SCHOOL 1** **Teacher A** As er in fact in this in this school I have learnt a lot. This school groomed my teaching profession. I learnt to be responsible at the school. I learnt accountability and my administration skills improved a lot through sharing information with other educators. Through given opportunity to offer my knowledge and skills.So it is this school which er put me where I am now, because I feel that er my administration skills have developed a lot. Right I started working in this institution in May 2010 that is five years ago as Head of Department. So when I came here I have a little knowledge about administrative work, but since I joined the staff so my administration skills and knowledge have increased I now I am very	Once more I sometimes visit this orphaned learners. *I don't involve the principal I just see that learners are absent from the school two to three days.I take my car and visit the learners.* I am a teacher responsible for orphaned learners at my school*, to teach and guide them about positive self-esteem, self-management skills, caring for animals and basic first aid in different situations.* In 1995 I was I graduated in the Further Education Diploma whereby I was doing Psychology and	The teacher is taking a parental role by visiting orphaned learners at home\n\nThe teacher play pastoral role by encouraging orphaned to reach their potential\n\nKnowledge gained through studying encourage the teacher to help orphaned learners	Teachers perceptions as their responsibility towards orphans\n1. Teach and guide orphaned learners about positive self-esteem\n2. Guide them to take care of themselves (caring)\n3. Assist orphaned learners to get grant\n4. Ensure that the grant money is correctly and for the child.\n5. Training learners to handle blood\n6. In loco parentis\n7. Individual attention is given to the orphaned learner.\n8. Cater for basic needs such as uniform to the orphans

	competent and I think I have gained intellectual confidence because of this school. **Teacher B** Er I started here in 2009 if I am not wrong. Er I contributed a lot in development of the school. Then I contacted the principal in my first class visit to for the requisition of the dictionaries so that I could have to upgrade the standard learners at school. Once more I sometimes visit this orphaned learners. *I don't involve the principal I just see that learners are absent from the school two to three days.I take my car and visit the learners.* **Teacher C** I am a teacher responsible for	Remedial Education. So these encourage me to start helping the learners with special needs and needy ones including the orphaned leaners		

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	<mark>orphaned learners at my school*, to teach and guide them about positive self-esteem, self-management skills, caring for animals and basic first aid in different situations.*</mark> When did you start working in this institution as a teacher? 2010, from another school at Rakgwadu Circuit (Other Circuit in Mopani). **Teacher D** Ok my name is Legadima Makoma Agnes; I am a teacher at Ramaite Primary School. I started teaching at this school in 1990, teaching Mathematics grade 4. I was moved to grade 1, 2 and 3 teaching the same subjects Mathematics and Life skills. And I was moved to grade 4 and 5 this year (2014)to teach Mathematics and Natural Sciences, erbecause these			

	are my subjects, they are my specialisation Mathematics and Life Sciences. They were my major subjects at the College. And I specialised in them in my daily teaching. ==In 1995 I was I graduated in the Further Education Diploma whereby I was doing Psychology and Remedial Education.== ***So these encourage me to start helping the learners with special needs and needy ones including the orphaned leaners.*** Thank you			

ANNEXURE G: DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

07 March 2016

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to confirm that I have language edited and proof-read the dissertation by Mr Norman Ramare entitled:

HOW TEACHERS MANAGE ABSENTEEISM OF ORPHANED LEARNERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The language editing/proof-reading process included the checking of spelling, punctuation, syntax and expression. An attempt was made to simplify complex sentences and, where necessary, combine short sentences to clarify meaning. Attention was given to the use of various language elements, such as prepositions, consistency in language usage and formatting as well as tenses and capital letters.

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