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Think in Other Terms

**CAUSES OF DROPOUTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL
MATHEMATICS EDUCATION IN RURAL AREAS: A CASE
STUDY OF VULINDLELA SECONDARY SCHOOL IN
LUPANE**

A RESEARCH PROJECT BY

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ABSTRACT

The research was aimed at investigating the factors that contribute towards the high dropouts in Secondary School Mathematics education in Lupane rural district. This study was necessitated by an alarming trend of ever increasing number of dropouts in Mathematics education at Vulindlela Secondary School where incidentally, the researcher is stationed. In essence, the 2012 'O' level registration detail revealed a whopping 46% of candidates who did not register to sit for Mathematics in their final November examinations. Most tragic, however, is the fact that the phenomenon is set to continue if not worsen.

The target population for the study consisted of 23 students who did not register to sit for Mathematics in their ZIMSEC 2012 "O" level November examinations as well as a total of 16 teachers at Vulindlela Secondary School. From the target population of 39 units, a sample of 20 subjects was extracted by random sampling. The sample consisted of 10 Mathematics education dropouts and 10 teachers.

The objectives of the study were as follows: to establish from the students' point of view the major causes for Mathematics education dropouts at Vulindlela Secondary School; to find out the perceptions of teachers as stakeholders on the causes of Mathematics dropouts, to come up with knowledge, skills and strategies that will help reduce or eliminate the incidence of Mathematics dropouts at Vulindlela Secondary School in particular and in Lupane rural district in general.

A phenomenological research design was used in which a questionnaire consisting of 12 questions was administered on 10 teachers. Additionally, personal interviews and focused group discussions were used

to solicit the views of Mathematics education dropouts. Further, a pilot study was undertaken to eliminate the threat of contradictions and ambiguities from the questionnaire.

The research findings were as follows; the dropouts perceived Mathematics to be an extremely tough subject, they cited lack of home-work assistance as major contributing factor to Mathematics dropout; the long distances travelled to and from school and the subsequent general exhaustion, they also felt Mathematics is best tackled as a stand alone subject and not in conjunction with other subjects.

Generally, teachers concurred with students that the dropouts is attributed to the complexity of the subject. They also cited peer pressure, lack of career guidance and lack of parental support as some of the major factors leading to Mathematics education as they felt they could secure alternative employment which does not require prior knowledge of Secondary School Mathematics for instance, being a Malayitsha, an illegal gold panner, house girl and so on.

The researcher recommended the following to help reduce or eliminate the incidence of Mathematics education dropouts, the school administrators and Mathematics teachers in particular should make concerted efforts to demystify Mathematics; schools should intensify careers' guidance programmes of which Vulindlela Secondary School does not have any; consultation days and prize giving ceremonies should be used to conscientise parents and/ or guardians on their role in children's education. Moreover, the research needs to be replicated in their entire Lupane district.