

**WHY DO RURAL LEARNERS CHOOSE OR NOT CHOOSE  
HISTORY? A CASE STUDY OF RURAL SCHOOLS IN  
KWAZULU-NATAL**

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## **SUPERVISORS' DECLARATION**

“As the candidate’s supervisors, we agree to the submission of this dissertation.”

Prof. Johan Wassermann

Mr. Marshall Maposa

## PERSONAL DECLARATION

I, Daniel Muziwokubongwa Mhlongo (210555587) declare that:

- The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.
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Daniel Muziwokubongwa Mhlongo

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this Master's Degree in History Education dissertation to my late father Mr. George Mzikayise Mhlongo (1930-1995). As long as your memory is in my heart, father you are never truly gone from my life.

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this case study was to understand why in the rural area of Zululand, South Africa learners chose or did not choose History as a school subject. Qualitative research methods, including open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, were used in the process. Both learners and teachers made up the research population. What emerged in terms of results was that learners in a rural context did not choose history as a subject because they were influenced by their peers, parents, siblings and teachers not to do so. In the process those who did choose History were belittled. Learners also did not choose History because they did not like certain topics like apartheid, found the subject boring and too much work, thought the subject would not give them work and would hamper their efforts to go to university and to leave the rural areas behind. However, a small group of learners did, despite the pressure that they had to endure, elected to do History at school. They chose the subject because they liked the kind of knowledge that History represented and the actual content of the subject and viewed History as something that must be told to others. They also thought the subject would provide them with work in a rural context. Importantly learners who did choose History did see a future for themselves in the rural areas. What can be concluded is that History as a subject is under immense pressure in rural schools from all sides because of misrepresentations and negative experiences around the subject. It is only a small group of dedicated learners who still chooses the subject in a rural context.

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 Background to the study**

For the first time, in 1948 South Africa had a defined ideology where apartheid was officially enshrined in the school history syllabus. During this period blacks started to be conscientised about their own rights and the ways of fighting apartheid. This period has a bearing on future teaching of history in schools and made blacks sceptical about school history which can affect the future position of history education in South Africa.

The history of South Africa during the pre-1994 period has been marked by apartheid education, manipulation by government, blacks' cultural domination by whites, submission of blacks to whites' superiority, prioritization of whites' interests, neglect of economic development of blacks, trusteeship of blacks' education by whites, and semi-skilled jobs for blacks. Kallaway (1988) states, that the history of education in South Africa since 1948 reveals a picture of neglect and indifference regarding black education. This is attributed to the apartheid Bantu Education Act of 1953. Similar sentiments are held by Harber (1989) when he said education in South Africa, since 1948 was marked by the racist political philosophy of apartheid of racial segregation and inequality.

The purpose of education therefore was not to prepare blacks for equal participation in society, but to preserve the cultural identity of the blacks' community, while persuading it to accept Christian National principles and must, of necessity, be organized and administered by whites. Hartshorne (1992) states that education was manipulated for furthering the interest of whites, whose education was superior to black education where pupils were to use Afrikaans as their sole medium of instruction , thereby showing the superiority of whites' culture. Enslin (1988) states that education in South Africa for blacks were designed to fulfil inferiority complex demands made on them. Christie and Collins (1988) state that black schooling during apartheid would be viewed as a main purveyor of apartheid ideology, where it

is argued that blacks were to be taught not merely the values of their own culture, but that such cultures were of a lower order and that in general blacks were to learn how to prepare themselves for a realistic place in white dominated society to be hewers of wood and drawers of water.

Education for blacks was tailored in such a way that they always remained inferior to whites. Hyslop (1999, p. 59) quoted Verwoerd when he said, "education which will make him Bantu feel he is co-responsible for his education but that he is also assisted by the guardian (the European) in so far as he is incapable of assuming co-responsibility for it" These words explain that blacks were to enjoy inferior status and the content of the syllabus was designed to accomplish this. Hartshorne (1999) and Harber (1989) state that the education policy of history education reflected whites' domination and control by the Afrikaner senior trustee and everyone else was deemed politically subservient.

Above all black education was not to be funded at the expense of white education. Hartshorne (1999) states that education in South Africa was designed to enhance the status of Afrikaner power and nationalism, and economic power was to be kept in the hands of the whites by government's tendency of manipulating education policy and resources to ensure this supremacy.

Education was taught to blacks to accept an inferiority complex in relation to whites. This is supported by Kallaway (1988) when he says Bantu education was to prepare young Africans psycho- ideologically for the position in which the Bantustans placed them physically and politically and was designed to make blacks vulnerable to resign themselves to their being exploited. This is supported by Hartshorne (1999) when he said the history of history education in 1951 strived to train blacks in Bantu languages, cultures and above all children were to be schooled in believing in their own inferiority as compared with whites..

Chisholm (2004) stated that according to Christian National Education (CNE), dominant stereotypes of whites were categorized as civilized and blacks on the other hand as barbarous. Furthermore, such representations mirrored patterns of inclusion and exclusion from citizenship rights and played a role in shaping social identities.

This is supported by Weldon (2003) who further explained how history education under apartheid was used as propaganda to further the cause of Afrikaner Nationalists' history which included a number of foundational myths which were presented in history textbooks at school level as facts. She gives examples in this regard - all peoples of South Africa were immigrants arriving more or less at the same time from central Africa and Europe, and that the interior of Southern Africa was empty before being settled by the Boers/Afrikaners in the mid-19th century.

Weldon claims, that the histories of the majority of South Africans were distorted and not therefore, taught in schools. The distortion of history in schools is supported by Du Toit (1978) who stated that Afrikaner nationalist as well as liberal historians went to such lengths to manipulate or selectively distort the evidence in history books in order to create and sustain a historical fabrication. Reputable social scientists all too readily accepted this kind of concoction as the historical myth. The issue of distortion is further confirmed by Mesthrie (2000) who stated that history became a means of making blacks feel worthless. This was done by the state when it attempted to silence resistance by legislation. He furthermore, said that history lecturers for the most part imposed silences on the content of history.

South African history pre-1994 was based on manipulation by the apartheid government with school history textbooks written, curricula devised, and the subject taught from an Afrikaner nationalist perspective which in crude terms portrayed whites in general and Afrikaners in particular as heroes and people of colour as villains. A history in which the struggles of the Afrikaner against both Africans and British were glorified (Wassermann, 2007).

By 1978 blacks started to resist apartheid education and this led to drastic changes in the educational system of South Africa, whereby government introduced the expansion of technical and vocational education in the homelands (Chisholm, 1988). In 1976 there was the introduction of a new state policy towards education of blacks' urban working class, but there were no changes in rural homelands (Hyslop, 1999).

The pre-1994 government policy of apartheid was not challenged by crusaders of change due to the lack of black historians, but this scenario changed in the 1960's

where whites and blacks started to engage in the ideological struggle and furthermore, black activists started to be vocal about the atrocities of the apartheid government. Agitators for change such as Steve Biko began to question the existence of apartheid and its legality to rule blacks and for the first time apartheid legality faced widespread opposition. This contestation between defenders of apartheid and crusaders of change continued until apartheid as an ideology was dismantled. Other forms of resistance were organized by the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) whose supporters were massacred on 21 March 1960. Davenport (1989) claims that after the massacre black protesters in South Africa initiated stay-aways to resist apartheid ideology.

The next period of history education in South Africa takes place during the transitional period where history began to align with the new South African curriculum that was Afro-centric (Howe, 2003). According to Mackie (2007) a national education crisis committee set up a peoples' history commission which was aimed at drawing up an alternative to the official history syllabus. Furthermore, it promoted a more critical approach to history education where African history and the history of the liberation movements were given a position of prominence.

The third period of history education is the post-1994 period which introduced a new dispensation of history and spans time up until the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) was introduced in 2013. During this period history as a subject was under enormous pressure from people who wanted change. The voice of the ANC was now to be heard by all people of South Africa. The new political dispensation history of history education is designed to establish black heroes of the past by looking at contributions of people such as Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Thabo Mbeki (Dean, 1995). History education under the new political dispensation is striving for reconciliation to unite races that were previously separated by apartheid. Chisholm (2003) states that history education after 1994 had a duty to correct bias in history teaching. She said that during the new dispensation there was to be a cleansing of the curriculum of its racist and sexist elements. This is supported by Dean (1995) who stated that history that was previously regarded as unofficial is now included in the new curriculum, Secondary schools during the new

political dispensation offer a curriculum that includes apartheid era history the struggle for land and the history of pre-colonial societies.

Morrow (2000) states, that history must serve the demands of reconciliation as it is encapsulated in aspects of truth and reconciliation. This is suggesting that history should be a vehicle of unity among races, a demand that is hard to accomplish. Vijay (2000) argues that history in the new political dispensation should promote an understanding of the processes of change and development through which human societies have evolved to their present stage of development. Van Eeden (1997) believes that the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), which is synonymous with reconciliation, impacted on history adversely as when the South African political system from 1983 underwent change to accommodate Indians and Coloureds and then blacks in 1994. This undoubtedly played a significant role in the change of national education policy and affected the teaching of history. Seetal (2005) states that during the introduction of the NCS South African history under the revised core syllabus of 1996, experienced a broadening of narrative to move beyond white history. Furthermore, attention was paid to record the liberation struggle and the role of leading political and cultural figures in the making of a post-apartheid country, yet still adapting to the needs of a democratic order. As a result this selection of content decreased or stripped history of some factual knowledge to accommodate the demands of change.

In this period history again was a casualty because a new generation of blacks and whites wanted to bury the past and forget about history and this placed history on the periphery. History in society was no longer accepted as good because to some its duty to oppose was over. This is supported by Stolten (2007) when he says that history education during the many years of apartheid, discredited institutionalised history and even liberal, radical and nationalist groups used history in their struggle for democracy and as a result many black South Africans came to see history as a type of knowledge with which they could not identify. Many South Africans were no longer interested in the teaching of history and this had a negative bearing on its teaching.

Nuttal (2000) states that in a new political dispensation history is perceived as an irrelevant subject in relation to providing jobs in a tight labour market and does not assist with the changing student perceptions of where jobs are found. Further, he says that history courses as traditionally conceived are now less likely to lead to employment in the labour market, which prioritizes technocratic and applied skills. Furthermore, he also says that the negative attitude to history for many students as for many other people in South Africa, both white and black, is that they feel it is potentially a source of discomfort and embarrassment because they claim that it points directly to apartheid bullying, oppression, degradation and humiliation to blacks. As a result some people, he claims, feel history is now irrelevant to their needs.

Schoeman (2006) states that during the introduction of the NCS many South Africans agreed to eradicate history in public schools because they decided it was better to turn their backs on the past. A similar view of forgetting the past is supported by Seetal (2005) who states that the post 1994 generation of students, both black and white are prepared to forget the past. This new generation of students is more career-orientated and have no time for a general discipline. He says that another cause for history's disadvantaged position is the virtual exclusion of history from school syllabi under curriculum 2005 of the new outcomes based education policy and its replacement by integrated studies.

The integration of some disciplines is said to have impacted negatively on history. Seetal (2005) states, that integration destroyed the image of history as a school subject. The absorption of history into the human and social sciences grid by curriculum 2005 is commonly perceived as confirming the marginality or even the irrelevance of the discipline. This view is supported by Fiske and Ladd (2004) who stated that the fundamental tenet of outcomes-based education and curriculum 2005, is that schools would have the same goals and expectations for all learners and was seen as a way to level the playing field that had been so tilted under apartheid. Siebörger (1994) further criticises integration as a root cause for the decline of history, when he says that curriculum 2005 made no mention of history as a subject with the separation between history and geography removed, and the creation of a human social sciences learning area. In an article titled "The decline &



fall of history” in the *Financial Mail* (2000, p. 40) it is said that, “In 1997 the University of South Africa’s first year enrolment in history went down by 75 %”. This shows how the marginalisation of history has led to a decrease in the numbers of history learners.

In 2009 a new phase of history education was being considered for January 2012 through the introduction of CAPS. This is the amendment of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) which is going to replace some of the NCS documents. CAPS, it is claimed, will be responsible for social transformation to ensure that the educational imbalances of the past are redressed and above all it will offer equal education opportunities for all sections of the population. Furthermore CAPS is said to equip learners with skills, irrespective of their socio-economic background, race, gender, physical or intellectual ability (Department of Basic Education 2009).

## **1.2 Location of the study**

It is essential for the reader to understand the location of the study which is set in a deep rural area in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The understanding of place or context will help to clarify the socio-economic and political influences the location of the study might have on the research study. In the view of Fiore (2002) schools’ understanding of what the community expects of them and what the school needs from the community is central in conceptualising a society’s beliefs. This is also true for my study hence it was necessary to broadly locate my study in the context where it took place as it is in this context that learners make choices about their subjects.

Grambs (1965) states that a society is a group of people sharing a common culture, which includes the formal and informal social arrangements, the mores and language, the religious institutions and beliefs, and the process of governing and ordering that envelop a group of similar socialised persons. Since the research project will look at the reasons for rural learners choosing or not choosing history the focus will be on the rural society and community that could possibly influence the subject choices made by rural learners. Mbokazi and Bhengu (2008) state that the discourses on rural school community relations have been underpinned by the acceptance of the fact that a school is not isolated or independent, but operates in a social context such as a local community. This gives a clear indication why it is

necessary to understand life around the school which will form the sample for this study.

To understand the concept of a deep rural setting it is essential to explain the term rurality. The publication *Emerging Voices* (2005) describes a rural area as a place where you will find *Amakhosi* and *Izinduna* as traditional leaders holding some sway. In isiZulu, rural areas are often termed *Emaphandleni* which simply means dust and deprivation. Sometimes they are called *Kwanjayiphume*, meaning to chase the dog, out of the house, suggesting that there is too little food to share with a dog or animal because people themselves have insufficient food to eat. This notion of rurality in South Africa is supported by Hartshorne (1992) who states that education in such a context is influenced by poverty, isolation and feelings of dependency exacerbated by layers of bureaucracy and traditional authoritarianism and ill-health, malnutrition and fatigue in children.

Rural areas are generally located far outside of town, in isolation are vulnerable, have a lack of opportunity and have a commitment to traditional values. Such rural areas in South Africa are almost exclusively inhabited by Africans and are closely associated with the former homelands, which were deprived of basic resources during apartheid and were the product of the Bantustan policies of the National Party. These areas continue to lag behind the rest of the country due to a weak infrastructure (*Emerging Voices*, 2005). In the view of Boyce (1978) the establishment of the Bantustans was ideologically aimed at Africans developing themselves in their own land, excluded from the prime areas of the country which they only entered as migrant labourers. This created immense hardship for rural communities because their interests and aspirations were not attended to; due to the fact that more funds looked after whites' interest which led to poverty and marginalisation which continues up to the present.

The result was the geographical isolation of deep rural areas with limited access to basic social amenities and facilities, a low range of employment possibilities and also communities that are traditionally administered and resistant to change leaving communities economically, politically, socially and intellectually marginalized (Hartshorne, 1992). Under apartheid the government is said to have paid more

attention to urban than rural areas to avoid confrontation with urban Africans who were likely to fight government over their socio-economic and political rights (Hartshorne, 1992).

The understanding of a deep rural setting cannot be complete without understanding the educational context within it. Educationally, deep rural areas, as explained by Asmal and James (2007) have a large concentration of under qualified teachers. Learners, if and when they arrive at school, are likely to find school buildings that are in poor condition, without access to clean water to quench their thirst. Lastly they say that even rural teachers find it hard to teach without proper learning material. This is supported by *Emerging Voices* (2005) which argues that besides the shortage of qualified teachers, learners in rural areas have to travel long distances from home to school. This might also have a huge impact on their performance as compared to learners in urban schools. In this context parents will frequently take extreme measures, such as hawking products and selling precious livestock, to ensure education for their children. In terms of education, these areas are deprived in many cases as the infrastructure and the people were the poor, dispossessed and the politically and economically neglected (Hartshorne, 1992).

The focus, after explaining deep rural settings related to the apartheid era, will now shift to the actual location where my research study will be located, namely the deep rural setting of Mtubatuba (*Nkomo kayixoshwa*) in KwaZulu-Natal. This area is situated 320 km north from the city of Durban and 25km west of Lake St Lucia. During personal communication with a traditional healer Josiah Mkhwanazi (Personal Communication, 24 May 2011) I learnt that Mtubatuba is named after its great Inkosi Mtubatuba Mkhwanazi. This fact in itself helps to explain the immense continued power of traditional leaders in this area. The history of the Mkhwanazi royal homestead starts with Veyane, Manyanda, Somkhele, Mtubatuba and Mgwazeni. Inkosi Mtubatuba was probably born in the year 1864 at the Nomathiya royal homestead. He was the son of Somkhele and Magumede and he passed away on the 3rd December 1954 at the age of 90 years. He had begun his reign at the age of 43 and reigned for 47 years as the *Inkosi* of Kwa-Mpukunyoni. The people of Mtubatuba are required to respect *Inkosi Mkhwanazi*, and this might even translate to parents' influence, which might pass on this respect for *Inkosi* to their children.

*Inkosi* Mtubatuba Mkhwanazi is said to have had large herds of cattle. Chief Mkhwanazi is famous for his wish of purchasing a train for himself but this request was refused by white officials on the grounds that he had no railway line, but in consolation he was offered a day ride that is claimed to have excited and amused him. It is claimed that Mkhwanazi wanted to buy a train to show that he was in control of the area. Under apartheid this area fell under the KwaZulu homeland. The administration of Mtubatuba was under the control of the *inkosi* and his *izindunas* and ordinary people were expected to pay homage to him (Boyce, 1978). The specific area in which my study was located area is called *Nkomokayixosha* which is a euphemism (*hlonipha*) meaning you cannot chase away the cattle even if they are grazing in your backyard as Chief Mtubatuba's command to his people. This is an indication that traditional leadership in Mtubatuba occupies a central role in deciding the cultural beliefs of the people.

More recently, after the end of apartheid, the area suffered a history of political violence in the 1990s between the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the African National Congress (ANC). Both the IFP and the ANC wanted to exert their influence politically in the area which led to the rise of famous warlords such as Bhiva Nkwanyana and Bheki Msane both of the IFP who are now associated with the perpetrators of violence in the area.

In terms of the bigger picture, the area of Mtubatuba has 134 rural schools of which 97 are primary schools, 32 are high schools and five are peri-urban schools. These statistics were acquired during a telephone conversation on 21 May 2011 by Msawenkosi Mngomezulu, a departmental official for education who holds the position of Senior Educational Manager in the area. The population of Mtubatuba is estimated at around +270000 people as stated by Nkosinathi Mhlongo during our telephonic conversation on 22 May 2011. Mhlongo works for the Africa Centre in Mtubatuba as an anti-retroviral treatment checker.

### **1.3 Rationale and motivation for the study**

Brynard and Hanekom (1997) suggested that a research topic can be selected because of practical educational problems experienced. The reasons which motivated me to conduct this research study are multifarious. Firstly, in my personal

experience as a history teacher who taught for 18 years – most of them in a deep rural context. During my teaching I observed that the number of learners registering for history in the matriculation examination has been declining yearly. Even learners in grade 9 planning to take history for grade 10 are decreasing in numbers. This decrease is supported by statistics provided by means of personal communication by a history subject advisor (Personal Communication Gengs Pillay, on 11 February 2011) who is also a chief examiner for *Umalusi*. The National Matric enrolment statistics likewise confirm the decrease in learners taking history. On closer examination the National Senior Certificate (NSC) Report from the Department of Basic Education (2010) suggests a decline of learners choosing history. In 2008 the number of learners who enrolled for the history matriculation examination were 91 000 in total but in 2009 these figures declined to 88 000 and in 2010 a further decline took place to 81 000, which provided a sound rationale for this study.

The above trend has left me with a deep concern about losing my profession as a history teacher as well as my fear of losing this valuable subject, which I consider to be a vehicle for societal values, skills and acknowledgement of one's roots and origins as a person in a specific country. I therefore want to discover, why learners in grade 9 were not choosing history for grade 10- a phenomenon which led to the declining numbers in grades 10, 11 and 12.

Moreover, my experience as a learner in grade 10 was that one day the principal announced that the only option we had was to choose geography because history would no longer be offered. These two sets of experiences - both as a teacher and as a learner - moved me to try and find out how and why learners do not choose history as a subject in deep rural KwaZulu-Natal.

Conceptually I wanted to develop a thorough understanding of the phenomenon of why learners in rural areas do not choose history as their subject, as well as the part that is played by the school community or parents. Exploring this will help me to understand the decline of learner numbers in history in a balanced well informed manner.

Finally, I was also motivated to conduct this study by the emerging field of study in rural education which is situated at the University of KwaZulu-Natal where “The John Langalibalele Dube Chair in Rural Education” was launched. This gave me impetus to discover what is really happening in terms of history education in a deep rural setting and how learners choose their subjects. In the process I hope to understand how a rural setting influences learners’ choices of their subjects.

#### **1.4 The focus and purpose of the study**

The focus of this study is therefore to understand why in these deprived, isolated and neglected communities history is not chosen considering the aspirations, views, experiences and opinions of the learners. The focus will highlight the reasons given by rural learners to choose or not to choose history and I will then attempt to explain the influences of rurality in the choosing or not choosing of history as a subject.

The purpose of undertaking this research is to highlight the effects that rurality has on the choices made by rural learners. Furthermore the purpose of my study is to look for gaps if any, and weaknesses and strengths in the literature. By answering two key research questions I aimed at giving a voice to rural learners and the choices they make about history in grade 9. Consequently the purpose of my research is to try to give rural communities an opportunity which they have been denied in the past to have their voices heard. This will be possible if the views of rural learners are obtained and analysed as to why they choose or not choose history as their subject.

In the process I set out to ask and answer the following research questions:

- (1) How do rural learners choose their subjects?
- (2) What drives rural learners to make the kind of choices they make about history?

#### **1.5 Overview of the Research Methodology**

The purpose of this introductory section was to briefly describe the research design, the methodology, and the methods employed to address the research questions listed above and a more detailed explanation as well as a link between the methods used and research findings is provided in chapters 3, 4 and 5 respectively.

This research project was approached from a qualitative perspective. The study thus generated and interpreted qualitative data, using interpretivism as a guiding paradigm and a case study research design. The qualitative design was centred on in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon (Henning, 2004). This made it suitable and effective for this study because it gave a deep understanding of my participant's verbal data and their views and perceptions about choosing or not choosing history as their subject in a rural context.

The methodology adopted for this study was qualitative methodology which was adopted because it allowed me as the researcher to have an in depth understanding of my participants' verbal responses and their views about phenomena. The methods employed were verification methods such as triangulation of results and these methods involved written task questionnaires, focus group interviews and one on one semi-structured interviews. The data produced was analysed inductively rather than using a priori categories. The reporting of the data findings is through the eyes of participants through themes. This together with the sampling of schools in rural Kwazulu-Natal for this study is discussed in full in chapter three.

## **1.6 Route map of the study**

### **Chapter 1**

This chapter has laid the foundations of the study and, highlighted the background information and it has also explained how the study has been framed and rooted. In this chapter I have set out to explain the rationale and motivation, purpose, focus and research questions to be answered. The issue of why rural learners choose or not choose history has been briefly explained and framed in terms of where the topic fits into the NCS, CAPS and history textbooks. This chapter sets the scene and explains how the rest of the dissertation will unfold.

### **Chapter 2**

Chapter 2 of this dissertation is a literature review. The focus of this chapter was to provide a solid basis with which to understand the current nature of the intended curriculum on history textbooks to eventually evaluate why history in grade 9 is

chosen or not chosen by rural learners. Similarly key theories, concepts and ideas related in the literature review are also found in chapter 2. The literature on the views of learners about choosing or not choosing history forms part of the theoretical framework by Glasser (1983) who explained the choices made by rural learners on choosing or not choosing history in a rural context. The theoretical framework concludes chapter 2.

### **Chapter 3**

The research design and research methodology used to provide answers to the research questions are fully explained in this chapter. The important features related to methodology include the research design the paradigm which is qualitative, interpretivist and nature-case study, sampling. The methods of data collection are verification methods used for triangulation. This includes the following methods: written task questionnaires, focus group interviews and one-on-one semi-structured interviews. The data is analysed inductively rather than using a priori categories. The methods discussed include the data analysis methods, data generation methods, data collection, sampling, and their respective strengths and limitations. Features such as validity or trustworthiness, reliability and ethical considerations are also reflected on, ensuring that the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology, and methods are thoroughly interrogated.

### **Chapters 4 and 5**

These chapters analysed the research findings collected from the data of views of rural learners. The research design and research methodology which informed the research instrument (discussed in chapter 3) is enlivened in chapter 4 and chapter 5 as the generated data was discussed and explored. Each of the findings has been dealt with respectively in terms of the analysis tool designed in chapter 3. The findings of each section were thoroughly discussed before a comparative analysis was conducted to elicit similarities in narrative of the views of rural learners in choosing and not choosing history as a subject. The findings from chapter 4 and chapter 5 were linked back to the literature from chapter 2 in order to determine which findings were expected and which appeared to be new knowledge. As a result of these findings, answers were offered to the two key research questions.



## **Chapter 6**

In this chapter I have discussed the findings and concluded the study. The findings have been reached as to why rural learners do not choose or choose history as their subject.

### **1.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I foregrounded the context under which this study is undertaken. Chapter 1 also outlined the purpose, scope, rationale and methodology of the research study. In chapter 1, I concluded with an overview of the research study by providing a preview of the chapters to follow. In the next chapter, a detailed review of literature on why do rural learners choose or not choose history as a subject and history books was embarked on to find out why the subject is chosen or not chosen in rural KwaZulu-Natal schools. As a result this chapter served as a route map to my study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Chapter two deals with a literature review under four sub-headings. The introduction will explain what a literature review is, the purpose of a literature review in the study, and how this literature review will be done. I will also discuss whether learners choose to study history or not in post-1994 South Africa, their choice of subjects, choosing in a rural context of education and finally the conclusion.

#### **2.2 What is a literature review?**

The literature review is explained by Hart (2009) as a selection of available documents both published and unpublished on the topic of research which contain information, ideas, data and evidence written from a particular standpoint to fulfil certain aims or to express certain views on the nature of the research topic. Furthermore, it explains how the topic is to be investigated and effectively evaluated in relation to the research being proposed. The literature review, according to Whistler (2005), is the vehicle for identifying relevant readings and the use of other authors' arguments, key theorists' work and their interpretations that guide the researcher's focus and the analysis of his/her research. This is supported by Brynard and Hanekom (1997) who state that a literature review means the interrogation of sources that are consulted in order for the researcher to understand the research problem. In addition, by reviewing literature the researcher is able to observe what other scholars have achieved under investigation.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) in turn claim that a literature review establishes important links between existing knowledge, including substantive findings, as well as theoretical and methodological contributions to a particular topic and research problem, while it provides helpful information about methodology and conceptual understanding. Hunt (2005) argues that a literature review is the selection of what is available where the researcher is trying to represent all the literature he/she might find to be related to his/her topic. Furthermore, the researcher is trying to craft a

stand that leads to a specific project he/she is focused on by balancing his/her ideas with other researchers' ideas. This thinking is supported by Naoum (2007) who explains that a literature review attempts to integrate what others have said and done about the subject under investigation and to criticize previous scholarly works, and in so doing to build bridges between related topics and to identify the central issues and debates about a topic. Above all it is to find out the political standpoints, the key theories, concepts and ideas and the main questions and problems that have been addressed to date, and how knowledge on the topic has been structured and organized. A literature review also looks at existing research that is significant to the work in which a researcher is engaged. From the above explanations a literature review normally comprises an overview of current, older relevant research and possible contributions that might be made by a current study.

After identifying the nature of a literature review the next step will be to review the purpose of a literature review in my study.

### **2.3 What is the purpose of a literature review?**

The purpose of the literature review in my study is to examine the identified problems as to, why learners choose or do not choose history in a deep rural setting. The aim of identifying this problem was to determine its causal factors as established by both theoretical and empirical research. A literature review helped me to find out what already exists in the area of research before doing the research itself. Furthermore, it will help me to know about the contributions others have made to the knowledge pool relevant to my topic. It will also help me to avoid duplicates of what already has been done; acquire an understanding of my topic, how the research has been done methodologically speaking and what the key issues were according to Hart (2009). This thinking is supported by Andresen (1997) who states that a literature review helps the researcher to familiarise him/herself with a conversation in the subject area of interest. In the case of my study the literature review will help to explain choices made by South African learners about history as a subject in a deep rural setting in the South African context. In this regard it will help me to identify appropriate research questions by ascertaining the nature of previous research findings and evidence in the academic discourse as well as to establish the need for the proposed research.

By reviewing literature the researcher is able to acknowledge what other writers have written about his/her research, to find out the strengths, weaknesses, gaps and silences. If there are weaknesses the research will strive to strengthen them, if there are gaps the researcher will work towards closing them and if there are silences it will help the researcher to amplify these. This thinking is supported by Maree (2009) who stated that a literature review helps to describe gaps between what has and has not been written on the topic, to define an area that has received less attention, helps to formulate research questions based on gaps and to identify flaws in methodological and contextual understanding. The next step will be to explain how I will do my literature review.

#### **2.4 How I will conduct the literature review**

I will present my literature review according to themes. My thinking is supported by the *Learning Guide Reader* (2005) which states that a literature review might be presented thematically in a way that traces the issues involved and connections between issues and the gaps in the literature that have not been covered by previous research. Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2009) concur with this and state that a literature review can be arranged thematically with the review being structured around different themes, or perspectives in the literature. Lunenburg and Irby (2008) support this and state that literature reviews identify themes in a group of studies. They also claim that by reviewing the literature a group of studies that employ a similar theme is established and used to arrange a literature review thematically. Consequently my literature review will be a subdivided into five themes.

#### **2.5 Choosing or not choosing history after 1994 to 2013**

The history of South African history education post-1994 up to 2013, which is provided under Outcomes Based Education (*OBE*), Revised National Curriculum Statement (*RNCS*), National Curriculum Statement (*NCS*) and National Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (*CAPS*), might help to explain the impact government policies brought about in history education. This might contribute towards conceptualising why learners in a deep rural setting choose or do not choose history as their subject.

History pre-1994 was required to further the ideology of apartheid, but from 1994 to 2013 it is required to represent the ideology of the African National Congress and in the process to neglect whites' aspirations. This has an effect on history being chosen or not by certain sections of the South African population. Pre-1994 history education was being used to legitimise apartheid. According to Weldon (2003), during South Africa's first democratic election, the education system was divisive, unequal and fragmented. Additionally, she said history under apartheid was an uncontested body of knowledge resulting in some learners being loathe choosing it. History in 1994-2013 is aiming to give voice to the ANC rather than equal narration of both whites' and blacks' histories. After 1994, new myths and new silences were re-instated to ensure dominant black voices as history is now used as a tool to counter the apartheid stereotypes.

After 1994 academics and historians were puzzled when history which they had hoped will continue as a subject was side-lined under the new curriculum. It was diminished due to dilution into a sub-section of the social sciences. With the introduction of OBE history became marginalised because OBE excluded any reference to a subject or discipline. Engelbrecht (2008) stated that by 1994 the new ANC sentiments were that they thought it was better not to have history at all than to have a painful past history. Engelbrecht (2008) also explains how he was worried to see history diminishing when he said history which to him represents a multi-perspective and is one of the non-negotiable pillars of post-modern historiography could become disregarded in 1994, in a country that was attempting to write a sound report of its past. This is further supported by Polokow-Suransky (2002) who stated that in South Africa there was a paradoxical situation where a society that was experiencing a very public ritual about confronting the past was simultaneously abolishing history instruction in its classroom. This confirms that in 1994 history in schools was in a state of flux as explained by Stolten (2007).

Siebörger (1994) stated that the antithesis of what had been expected from outcomes-based curriculum occurred which excluded any reference to subjects or disciplines and disallowed any systematic study of the past. South African history according to Kapp (1998) was now being marginalised unlike in European countries where history occupies a prominent role in history teaching. He said the more

modernised countries all seem to indicate a convincing preference for the study of contemporary history and that countries with a long history of domination and instability like Lithuania, Ukraine, Russia, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey and Portugal view history as an important manifestation of their identity. Furthermore he stated that European countries prefer studying older periods that reflect the glory of their respective countries.

Schoeman (2006) explains that since 1994 history was marginalised further by curriculum planners as history pedagogy also suffered from the corrosive effects of rationalisation and teacher redeployment. When difficult decisions were to be made under the imperative of economic austerity, mathematics and the natural sciences were given protective priority and humanities subjects such as history were marginalised. Mackie (2007) concurs that history may well be one of the casualties of the new curriculum.

However, Siebörger (1994) stated that under the new South Africa Curriculum 2005 there was separation between history and geography. Once history was reinstated as a subject, it was expected to fulfil the rainbow nation dream of Nelson Mandela and other South African icons. This is supported by Pretorius (2006) who stated that there was a need for a new interpretation of the past which highlighted the experiences of the different groups which he feels was to be more or less affirmative action in history writing. Furthermore, he warned that in lieu of reconciliation, the pendulum should not swing to the other side meaning a reversal of atrocities that were established by the apartheid government through CNE. Furthermore, history was to be inclusive of deeds of all South Africans this is affirmed by the then minister of education Kader Asmal (2004, p.2) who stated that “in our inclusive memory of the South African past, the legacy of leaders such as Paul Kruger or Anton Lembede, belong to all of us. They cannot be owned by any exclusive or sectional interests in our society. They cannot be used to divide us”. Kader Asmal was acknowledging the role of history post 1994 in South Africa. The government of national unity had establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to help deal with the consequences of apartheid, and in the same vein, started to manipulate history for the promotion of national unity and reconciliation under the Reconciliation Act, no.34 of 1995. Fiske (2004) when explaining South African history post 1994 said the

fundamental tenet of outcomes based education and curriculum 2005 was that schools would have the same goals and expectations for all learners and was seen as a way to level the playing field that had been so tilted under apartheid.

There was a cleansing of the curriculum of its racist and sexist elements in the immediate aftermath of the election. Chisholm (2003) and Dean (1995) supported the idea of change under the new South Africa when they said there was a need for structural changes in redressing the wrongs of the past within a democratic framework of justice, civic responsibility, equality of opportunity, tolerance and stability meaning history started to assume a somewhat unbiased position. Kros (2000) explains changes that took place in the new dispensation about history when she said that the idea of how South African history was to be repaired provided a dilemma to curriculum designers of new history as to what to exclude, or add from each group. This led to further history marginalisation because it was difficult satisfy all parties.

Furthermore, Kros (2000, p. 2) stated that history teaching in the new dispensation is again marginalised when he said events moved so fast and unpredictably that several individuals who had started with the idea of formulating a philosophical position to combat the old apartheid ideologies and igniting a wider process of curriculum development, found themselves in a position of power which they did not solicit. History provided a dilemma for curriculum planners because they did not know what to discard or to include. New history is not about facts as they were but to fulfil re-conciliation and as a result, OBE provisions failed to satisfy all parties. In addition, as from 1994 school history is losing capable teachers through rationalisation and teachers deployment because currently the government's emphasis is placed on science and commercial subjects. Therefore from 1994 to 2013 history education is influenced by some factors committed by government or influential businesses as mentioned below:

History pedagogy post-1994 under outcomes based education, the revised national curriculum statement and the national curriculum statement assumed a different perspective. In 1994 history was required to reflect ANC ideology which stemmed from the people's history commission which had been set up by the national

education crisis committee during apartheid as an alternative to the official history syllabus (Mackie, 2007). This is confirmed by the speech of the then minister of education Kader Asmal (2004, p. 2) who stated that South African history was on a new path. He described apartheid history as a history written by the hunter referring to the apartheid government official history. He now announced the change that it was time for South Africans to hear the history of the lion which was the ANC when he said:

We have always hoped will one day have its day, the lion will one day rise up and write, the history of Africa. We know, very well, the kinds of histories that have been written by the hunter. Those books only serve the hunters interests. We now want to hear the lion's story.

The above words are supported by Wilson (2007) who explained that after 1994 with the fall of the apartheid regime, educational institutions were required to re-examine, re-negotiate and re-validate their continued existence where they were now required to further ANC ideology of inclusive history.

Engelbrecht (2008) also felt that the focus during the past 10-12 years in South African historiography was now the reversal of the colonial portrayal of Africans by the apartheid government and this has resulted in his commenting that the de-mystification of Euro-centrism in textbooks. New myths and new silences were re-instated and ensured that again only one voice became dominant, the voice of the black South African. Pretorius (2007) felt that history in the new dispensation failed because to him it was a reversal of apartheid policies of bias. He said Afrikaner history does not feature in the new history books on South African history, except as the scapegoat and the villain. While he agrees that one-sided national Afrikaner viewpoints characterised school textbooks in the era of apartheid, he wishes history in the new dispensation should be balanced. Wassermann (2007) agrees that in 1994 Afrikaners started to experience the reversal of their previous position of dominance and power, and found themselves on the fringes of history where their accomplishments are no longer mentioned and instead only black achievements are remembered.



Dean (1995) stated that history in the new dispensation is aiming to establish common heritage when he said history is now redressing the shortcomings of the past by establishing black heroes in opposition to the white leaders who have hitherto occupied the pedestals of the historical pantheon. He said new history now includes the struggle for land in pre-colonial societies in South Africa which are now studied in secondary schools. In addition, apartheid together with resistance against it has been introduced in history teaching in South African history.

According to Stolten (2007) South African history needs to build an inclusive history and an inclusive memory where the heroes and heroines of the past belong not only to certain sectors, but to all, thus creating a common identity. Morrow (2000) on the other hand is of the belief that history should fulfil reconciliation among South African race groups when he said the anti or at least non historical impulse of forgive and forget should be encapsulated in school history teaching, meaning the present teaching of history embraces reconciliation. Finally Schoeman (2006) gives advice to historians that to address abnormalities of apartheid legacy South Africans need to explore the past in order to identify things that need to change, see what sort of redress might be required, and know where they have been mistakes.

## **2.6 Learners choosing subjects and choosing history**

In the literature reviewed above, it has been highlighted that learners are entitled by government provision under curriculum development to make their own choices about subjects they can learn. Nevertheless, literature does acknowledge that learners do make choices about their subjects under the influence of outside factors. A number of factors that might impact on learner's choice about subject will be highlighted – factors such as career pursuits, free independent will, financial aid implications, government preferences of subjects, business sector preferences, parental influence and teacher capabilities to teach a particular subject.

According to Olivier (1956) learners make choices of their own free will Learners are entitled to choose their subjects of their own free will but historians do mention the existence of outside influences in influencing them to choose or not choose.

The influence on learners' choice is brought about by the government policy of single minded career pursuit of preferences of commerce and science. Learners are usually concerned with fitting into the job market and they perceive that history leads to fewer work opportunities. Dryden (1999) stated that learners are influenced by outside factors especially economic and market forces. The belief that the choices that learners make at school are influenced by a number of factors is supported by Polokow-Suransky (2000, p. 4). She quoted Kader Asmal who claimed that, "In a single minded career pursuit of, say commerce or mathematics, history is muscled aside as something superfluous". This explains that the choices made by learners are not their free will but as a means to fit in the job market. Furthermore, a similar view of career orientation is given by Nuttal and Wright (2000) when they argue that history courses are traditionally perceived as not leading to avenues of employment in the labour market. As a result learners opt for subjects which offer technocratic and applied skills as a necessity to secure a future job. This mind-set might influence learners' choices.

The issue of job opportunities for learners is further supported by Nuttal (2000) who stated that learners do not choose history because of a career pursuit. This is also confirmed by Brooks (1993) who said that career pursuit has a tremendous impact on learners' choices when he said history is often seen as a subject with very limited aims, usually the main one being the acquisition of knowledge and information about ages remote from learners' own. Furthermore the issue of career pursuit is supported by Nuttal (2000) who commented about choices made by learners that learners and students alike are signalling strongly that they favour career-orientated education in the South African harsh economic climate rather than the broad general education that is long associated with humanities.

In some schools it is evident that learners are forced by circumstances to choose whatever is offered to them by their school curriculum. Learners avoid choosing history because of history marginalisation in the school curriculum. This statement of free will is further supported by Van Densberg (1983) who suggested that learners choose from their own free will. Nevertheless, he stated that subject choice at schools is often constructed in such a way that history is difficult to combine with the more popular subjects. Thus learners will have no choice but to avoid history or

choose it because of the lack of alternative streams. Furthermore Van Densberg (1983) argues that in many schools history is offered as an alternative to maths, while in other schools it may compete with geography. The marginal position history is placed in the national curriculum is also a factor. This is supported by Seetal (2005) when he stated that curriculum 2005 virtually excluded history from school syllabi of the new outcomes-based education policy with history being replaced by integrated studies which leave learners no choice but to exclude history in their package of choice.

Schoeman (2006) concludes that history is presently being given scant attention in schools' curricula and he further said learners are thus being prevented from gaining a critical historical awareness of themselves and their societies. Furthermore to highlight marginalisation of history in schools' curricula he warned that if the formal study of history is ignored people are in danger of robbing the future generations of the essential knowledge and skills to contribute to sustaining an open, equitable and tolerant society.

Shortages of capable teachers also lead to choosing or not choosing the subject. But even if the teachers are available, according to Brooks (1993) the way a teacher, teaches history might influence learners to choose or not choose the subject. Brooks (1993) has mentioned the contribution of capable teachers to choices made by learners as valid when he said the preferences of individual learners may be determined in whole or part by the collective feeling about the teacher rather than about the subject itself. To him, the more capable the teacher of history, the better the chances of learners choosing history.

The nature of school history can have an impact on learners' choices. Brooks (1993) says that some history teaching is restricted to dictated notes, copying from textbooks and rote learning. Learners may be afraid of history because they are sometimes required to assimilate facts through memorisation. Historians also mention some problems in the learning of history such as language barriers as alluded to by Nuttal (1995) who conducted a survey in his history class in 1993 where he found that learners struggled with summarisation. This language barrier was especially prevalent among black learners. Olivier (1956) obtained statements

from teachers who complained about the disservice the examination seems to do to the history subject where he pointed to the producing of unrelated facts that must be assimilated unquestionably from the textbooks. In addition, he said history teaching is supported by lessons which he claimed must be ruled by strict demands of the examination syllabus. Therefore he is of the belief that most learners fearing examination questions of history might not choose history.

Furthermore Polokow-Suransky (2002) stated that sometimes when learners are choosing they are influenced by the negative legacy attached to history for supporting the apartheid government. She said during the pre-1994 period the apartheid government was using history as a propaganda tool which she states might lead to many learners disliking the subject. Furthermore, she stated that learners are of the belief that it is better not to have history at all than to have a kind of history they claim represents a painful past.

Challenges of acquiring financial aid for their studies is another factor in learners' choice as supported by Nuttal and Wright (2000). Powerful businesses have an influence over the choices they make and subsequently complain about overproduction of BA graduates. Nuttal (2000) stated that the general pattern is that to him history which traditionally has been a core undergraduate subject for humanities' students is now being pushed to the margins of student preference. In addition to business, government actions to give financial aid to the science and commerce fields has furthermore legitimised the commerce and science streams and marginalised the humanities' stream (Nuttal & Wright, 2000). They further state that government has provided double the subsidy to science students that it allocates for humanities' students. The position of government is further supported by Maylam (1995), who said that state policy makers, the business sector, and educationalists are constantly complaining about over production of B.A. graduates. He further states that institutions of higher learning are seen to place a greater emphasis on increasing the quota of science students over that of students of the humanities. This action of government and business is likely to have a negative bearing on choices made by learners.

This issue of government preference and financial aid is acknowledged by Seetal (2005) who stated that in 1997, when the new post-provisioning norms began to be applied, difficult decisions were made by delegates. He said under the imperative of economic austerity mathematics and sciences were given protective priority and humanities' subjects such as history were elbowed aside which might influence learners to dismiss history as their choice.

The choices learners make about subjects might be influenced by other factors such as parental influence. This is supported by Brooks (1993) who stated that the 1988 Education Reform Act and earlier legislation had entirely altered the political context in which history teaching operates. Parents are now full shareholders, who are no longer limited to voting by proxy through giving their children advice about subject choices. This is further confirmed by Schoeman (2003) who said that there is an influential perception amongst parents that studying history is not relevant for securing the future careers of their children. He compared history with mathematics and accounting as subjects that they would like to see their children studying. Seetal (2005) adds that they motivate their children to choose commerce or mathematics. This is further supported by Lombard (1998) who stated that the perception of parents about the subject history is negative in connection with the provision of careers' opportunities. Therefore learners are likely to choose what their parents prefer and discard history. This is supported by Dryden (1999, p. 97) who was told by a grade 9 learner: "I can't take history next year because it won't help me get a job, my parents said so."

In reviewing the above literature I have attempted to explain why learners in general do not choose history. The broader implications of my findings is shedding light on explanation as to why rural learners choose and not choose history. This will give a new dimension as to why rural contexts provide different contexts to cities where learners do not face the same pressures in their choices of subjects. In view of choices made by learners about history the next theme is to look at how a rural setting might impact on choices made by learners about history.

## **2.7 Choosing subjects in deep rural settings and rural education**

In deep rural settings, the choosing of subjects is influenced by social, economic and political challenges. Rural education also provides some answers to the actions of learners who choose or do not choose history. Understanding their problems and shortcomings in their education leads to a better understanding of their decisions. The reason for discussing a deep rural setting and rural education is that their influence impacts on learners' perception about history, because their influence sways learners' minds as they cannot be separated. This is stated by Mbokazi and Bhengu (2008) who claim that the discourses on school community relations have been underpinned by the acceptance of the fact that a school is not isolated or independent but it operates in a social context such as a local community. Therefore the effects of a deep rural setting and rural education provide the answer to why rural learners choose or do not choose history.

It will be proper to first understand and conceptualise the explanation of rurality as given by academics. This implies that there needs to be a thorough understanding of the challenges that impact on rural communities such as social, economic and political factors which in the end influence choices of history by rural learners.

Deep rural settings in the context of South Africa are explained by *Emerging Voices* (2005) as areas of poverty, erosion and degradation of the land that has played its part in South Africans' particular development trajectory. Nelson Mandela (2005, p. vii) explains deep rural settings when he said, "these areas systematically and intentionally deprived of the most basic resources under apartheid, continue to lag behind the rest of the country in the post-apartheid era". *Emerging Voices* (2005) explain deep rural settings through explanations given by the people where they highlighted isolation, vulnerability, lack of opportunities, the need for self-reliance a sense of community and a commitment to traditional values.

Rural areas are explained by *Emerging Voices* (2005) as places that are located far outside of town, where there is limited transport and infrastructure such as bridges. Furthermore these places are far from tarred and gravelled roads, where there are no buses to town, no street names and where the police do not follow cases. They say this isolation means vulnerability of the rural community to diseases, and there is no help for the disabled. Further explanation of the South African rural setting

context as explained by *Emerging Voices* (2005) is that in these areas they said you can find traditional leadership of 'Amakhosi' and 'Izinduna'. These areas are sometimes called in isiZulu 'Emaphandleni' which simply means dust and deprivation. Another isiZulu name for these places is *Kwanjayiphume* which literally means to chase the dog out of the house, which suggests that there is a scarcity of food that is there is not enough to share with a dog or animal because people themselves have insufficient to eat.

There are some differences in the conditions between deep rural and rural settings as explained above, but the rural setting is explained by Fao and Unesco (2003) as a space where human settlement and infra-structure occupy only a small share of the landscape, where the natural environment is dominated by pastures, forests, mountains and deserts, settlement of low density, places where most people work on farms and the availability of land is at a relatively low cost. Furthermore the rural setting is, a place where activities are affected by a high transaction cost, associated with long distance from cities. Fao (2003) describes rural settings as areas that are generally open areas with low settled population densities and a high proportion of the unsettled land area and lands are used for primary production such as mining, agriculture, livestock, forestry and fisheries. In addition the residents are largely dependent, either directly or indirectly on farming.

Rural areas in South Africa attained their present state mainly after the implementation of segregation policies of apartheid as explained by Weldon (2003) who stated that the implementation of the apartheid policies tore families apart as the people were forcibly removed and resettled which in some rural areas led to deep seated poverty and widespread malnutrition among communities. This is further confirmed by *Emerging Voices* (2005) when they stated that rural areas developed out of the policy of land dispossession pursued by white South African governments. Furthermore they said unequal land ownership patterns were instituted through successive land acts in 1913, 1936 and consolidated in the Bantustan system. Women in these areas led the large majority of households, and there was high child malnutrition and food insecurity which plagued families in provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape.

The separation for settlement between blacks and whites increased according to Weldon (2003) because Afrikaner leaders were of the belief that separation was allowed by God who has willed separate nations and peoples and that he has given each separate nation and peoples its particular vocation, task and gifts to exercise in their separate locations. This led to the establishment of Bantustans for the black people.

From 1948 when apartheid was instituted, rural areas started to deteriorate as blacks were forced to reduce their livestock, plots, yards and fields. Furthermore, Boers wanted to take their land and chiefs were forced to accept white rule. In 1948 the reserve system was formalised into political entities, known as Bantustans or homelands (*Emerging Voices*, 2005). This is further confirmed by Boyce (1978) who stated that after the establishment of separate residential areas where tribal authority consisted of the chief, headman and number of tribal councillors, the chief was to advise the government on social welfare and the development of Bantu land. *Emerging Voices* (2005) stated that rural areas were to be run by chiefs authorised by the apartheid state. Above all, educational development within the framework of apartheid was to occur in these areas rather than in urban areas. These areas comprised former homelands which were reservoirs of unskilled labour and then dumping grounds for the unemployed.

Wilson (1974) states, that most communities in rural areas earn their living through scarce employment opportunities. This is significant because he said the majority of the people in South African are rural dwellers who derived their livelihood from agriculture and related occupations. This is further supported by Eggleston (1980) who stated that indigenous minorities in rural areas have largely been overlooked as an area of concern both by policy makers and social scientists. He adds that the rural world is also seen as slow-moving out of touch with progressive social movements, idyllic perhaps, but dull.

Rural areas are not uniform. The rural settings of some European countries are perceived to be different from those in South African. Singleton (1973) stated that it was evident that rural areas of the developing world constituted a clear case of what current jargon would rate as multiple deprivations. He also said in rural areas there is



little that education in itself can provide whether of the conventional in school variety or of the less usual out of school sort can achieve. This is supported by Molasses (1976) who stated that rural populations of some European countries are larger than the agricultural population living in the countryside which include not only farmers but merchants, craftsmen, sometimes factory workers and employees of private and public services which provide a different context of rurality as compared to South Africa's rurality.

In rural areas land and livestock are viewed as a means of survival and a form of insurance against misfortune. The dependence of people is linked to the high levels of unemployment. Poverty and unemployment are said to be starkly present in the everyday realities, speech and activities of people living in rural areas. Moreover, it is said that people in rural areas do not always derive their income from farming yet it is clear that cultivation of land and livestock are still central to the lives of these people. Finally ownership of land and livestock provide the basis for marriage and citizenship for life (*Emerging Voices*, 2005). Furthermore unemployed parents did odd jobs such as cattle-herding, digging toilets for neighbours to make money to pay for their children's school fees. The infrastructure of rural areas also hampers the provision of service deliveries which is confirmed by *Emerging Voices* (2005) when they said that poor roads also make other services such as nursing, clinics, police and taxis difficult to access.

Rural areas are areas where poverty and problems were highlighted by Nelson Mandela (2005) when he said that it was critically important to engage with and listen to the voices of poor rural communities to better understand their experiences. He also reminded business representatives on numerous occasions that if a person was in a rural area he can smell poverty if he/she visits many parts of rural South Africa. Mandela was trying to highlight the plight and hardship of rural communities who he felt were isolated and neglected. *Emerging Voices* (2005) alluded to these unsatisfactory social and economic aspects when they said in rural areas there are bad roads, lack of water, flooding, hungry learners, unemployed parents and lack of parental involvement in education of their children.

Women suffer the brunt of rural problems. The effects of social and economic challenges faced by rural mothers is explained by their action when they slaughter or sell livestock (such as pigs) to raise money to send their children to school. They might also sell maize meant for domestic consumption to buy school uniforms and shoes.

*Emerging Voices* (2005) stated that economic problems are a hindrance to the development of rural areas when they said that the bulk of secure income is a common problem of rural life for the majority of people. Paine (2000) stated that in rural areas the rate of poverty is officially defined as income that is less than half of the national average earnings with the exception of young people furthermore, there is a degree of resignation about the continuing existence of hardship in rural areas. Due to such hardships experienced in rural areas learners and parents decide to migrate to the cities and towns, because they feel living conditions there might be better there than in rural areas (*Emerging Voices*, 2005). Rural areas are viewed by *Emerging Voices* (2005) as essential because the labour of their people is said to contribute to the development of the country's economy by supplying a labour force.

Nelson Mandela (2005) referred to rural areas as filled with people with immense untapped potential who he felt policy makers were to try to take the lead in shaping a better future for them. Life in the rural areas can be extremely difficult if the areas are afflicted by other problems. This is explained in *Emerging Voices* (2005) regarding areas which lack rainfall, and suffer from disastrous floods. In such a situation, subsistence farming becomes no longer a possibility in the current rurality.

The understanding of challenges of rurality to rural communities will not be complete without understanding rural education since their conceptualization might help to explain why rural learners choose or do not choose history. The understanding of push and pull factors to learners and parents' perceptions might help to explain choices made by rural learners. Molasses (1976) argues against the notion of transforming the country dweller into a city dweller who is more amenable to the process of education, and economic development to reduce the number of illiteracies. To him that belief is not valid as the number of country dwellers is constantly growing. Therefore, to him rural education and rural settings need to be

developed. Wilson (1974) stated that it would be proper to develop rural education by looking at the aspirations and wants of present generations because to him education which has been introduced and fostered over the past decades has very limited relevance to their situation, problems and immediate needs.

The presence of poverty in rural education is mentioned by the former minister of education for South Africa Kader Asmal (2007) when he said that when rural children arrive at school, it is likely they will find a building that is in poor repair, probably not have access to clean water to quench their thirst and as a result they will probably find it hard to concentrate on account of poor nutrition. It is said that in rural areas there are no taps either in the school or the community and that people drink water from dams in the company of pigs. Furthermore, they will have little protection from harsh weather while the teacher may be struggling to teach children of different grades in one class without proper learning material. By these statements he was trying to highlight the adverse effects of poverty in rural education.

Nelson Mandela (2005) highlighted the need for rural education development in the new South Africa when he said education planners should elicit the voices of rural communities to access their knowledge, experience, their understanding of schooling and relationship between schooling, rural life and poverty. Furthermore, he advised that policy planners should ensure that policies undertaken to improve the quality of rural education are informed by the powerful insights of the people in those communities. This is also confirmed by Asmal and James (2007) when they said in rural areas that obtaining a proper education is a struggle for the poor and therefore it is important to understand the magnitude of the challenge by examining schooling in rural South Africa which to them is a world of hidden misery and poverty.

Understanding rural education might help to uncover mysteries of these hidden and isolated areas as stated by Nautiyal (1989) that education has been deemed as the basic input to development of the individual as well as society. This idea has been embodied both in ancient and modern literature. Furthermore he said that education was important for any community because to him education helps to bridge the chasm of disparities between people, socio-economic groups and regions and thereby reduces disintegrative tensions. Rao (1985) believes that education for rural

communities is an invaluable tool to future success. He said that if rural education was improved for rural communities it would help them in securing employment, which will further empower them in their struggle for existence. The necessity of rural education is supported by *Emerging Voices* (2005) when they said South Africans living in rural areas believe in education and they want more of it. In addition, to them, education might be good in itself and a precondition for, though it may not be a guarantee of wider economic and social development. Lastly, to the rural dwellers rural education needs an intervention unlike in urban areas where people are more organized and vocal. This idea means that communities need outside intervention for rural development.

Rural education is neglected and it needs special attention from policy planners to design an education that will answer the needs of rural people. According to *Emerging Voices* (2005) education that is offered in rural areas is based on theory as there are no practical examples for learning. Furthermore, rural communities are dissatisfied when comparing their education to that of their urban counterparts in the same grade. They found that those learners in urban areas are more informed than those in rural areas. *Emerging Voices* (2005) stated that education for rural communities does not answer their demands. In fact, integrated rural development policies are in place but do not make any reference to education for rural communities. In addition, some rural areas have not been touched by policies in any substantial way. Large numbers of children, especially girls, do not attend school regularly. This is further confirmed by Rao (1985) who stated that rural education mainly does not provide for girls to be educated at all because in the view of rural communities literacy and schooling are irrelevant to a girl's future role as a wife and a mother, particularly if she continues to live in the rural areas.

Much has been said by academics, politicians and historians about the need for rural education. However without understanding the origins of rural education it might be hard to conceptualize social, economic and political factors that might impact on rural learners choosing or not choosing history as their subject. In 1948 when the national party came into power with their apartheid policy of separate development they introduced a separate education system. This education was to be made possible by the contributions of whites where the white South Africans' duty to the natives was to

Christianize them and help them culturally. Native education was to be based on the principles of trusteeship. Non-equality and segregation of whites and blacks education was to inculcate the white man's way of life, especially that of the Boer Afrikaner nation who were the senior trustees. Furthermore, native rural education was not to be financed at the expense of the whites' education (Weldon, 2003).

Rural education in South Africa today owes much to the education policy of the apartheid government where blacks in the past were to be retribalized and concentrated in homelands that were established on an ethnic basis. The process of rural education was set up in motion by the Bantu education Act of 1954 which removed the bulk of Africans schools to the Bantustans. In 1950 rural schools were taken over by the department of Bantu education, and with the formation of the homelands these schools were handed over to their respective ethnic governments. After the introduction of rural education for Africans education brought social, economic and political problems for rural communities educationally. Rural education as it is claimed by academics fails to satisfy learners and parents' occupational aspirations as parents want their children to choose subjects that will bring prestige and high socio-economic ranking. Furthermore, parents encourage their children to be employed in government jobs, because they have the security of permanence and a regular cash income as well as a pension upon retirement, but rural education is unable to equip such learners for better jobs (Rao, 1985). This is concurred by *Emerging Voices* (2005) when they said that in practice, urban and rural schools' curricula were similar, but the range of subjects in rural schools tended to be narrower. This disadvantaged rural learners look for working conditions, wages and personal satisfaction when selecting careers which are missing in rural employment opportunities. Therefore, because of the lack of careers, rural learners will need to leave their communities to fulfil their occupational aspirations in urban areas. Above all, rural communities are continually required to export their brightest and most capable youth to urban cities due to the lack of job opportunities (McCracken and Barcinas, 1991).

Rural communities want their education to focus on science, technology and provide modern facilities and resources. Furthermore rural learners want technical skills which are lacking in their rural education because of the narrow career choice.

Learners would also prefer the most popular school subjects which are English, mathematics and science which they feel might help them in their future work and to escape rural areas and migrate to the cities (*Emerging Voices*, 2005). Rural education according to the learners is unable to satisfy their quest for job opportunities. They say that in the rural areas they are forced to learn subjects which do not help them when they advance to tertiary level. Moreover, they said their fellow students from urban schools are given bursaries because they think their subjects are valued more highly by bursary companies than theirs (*Emerging Voices*, 2005).

Rural education is also neglected even in developed countries. This is supported by Beason and Strange (2000) when they said that in America that more children are attending schools in rural areas but when listening to education policy debates of the government there is little heard about rural education. The issue of neglect of rural education is further supported by Khattri-Riley and Kane (1997) who said rural education is neglected based on the shortage of resources and that rural students are at risk of educational failure due to the lower levels of educational resources in rural schools such as fewer course offerings. The issue of neglect is confirmed by *Emerging Voices* (2005) when they listened to the views of learners who believe that different things were taught in rural and urban schools. Fiske (2004) felt that rural education is neglected by government curriculum designers when he said the curriculum needed to reflect the emphasis in the new constitution on equity and human rights and above all to foster universal access and common expectations for all learners. Nevertheless he felt the curriculum for rural schools does not answer the demands of the community. Finally *Emerging Voices* (2005) stated that childhood education and adult basic education programs in rural schools have suffered the same neglect as all other aspects of general and further education.

Distance to rural schools that learners on foot or other available modes of transport have to travel is one of the social constraints experienced by rural learners. Beason and Strange (2000) stated that in rural schools learners experience long bus rides which reduces children's time for their studies, play and family. Furthermore, this is exacerbated by high transportation costs which are supported by *Emerging Voices* (2005) when they said that learners in rural areas start their day by going out to sell wood so that they can acquire money with which they can buy a bus coupon

because there are no local high schools. These long distances to school might increase the chance of road accidents and the threat from criminals who, in some areas, have been known to rob or rape learners going to school. The issue of long distances to schools is further supported by *Emerging Voices* (2005) when they said children wend their way to school across hills and through valleys, fields and dongas, rivers and streams, over potholes or muddy rural roads and they pass bushes and forests to reach school.

Poverty has been mentioned by academics as one of the social challenges facing rural education. Asmal and James (2007) said that when explaining rural poverty that learners and parents remain illiterate, poor and powerless. As a result, parents are unable to give practical and intellectual support to the educational aspirations of their children because, they are financially poor. This statement is supported by *Emerging Voices* (2005) when they said that in rural areas rural poverty is integral to any broader considerations of education. They argue that rural education in particular, lags behind educational development in other parts of the country and due to financial constraints of parents very few learners in rural areas are likely to proceed with education beyond secondary school. Lastly Beason and Strange (2000) mentioned poverty as a common phenomenon to all rural areas when they said in rural America rural areas are far poorer than metropolitan areas as a whole, and nearly as poor as central cities.

Rural education is furthermore hampered by the absence of decent jobs. Rural areas are said to be integrally linked to inadequate employment, infrastructure, nutrition and health, exercise and entertainment (*Emerging Voices*, 2005). In addition, there is a lack of educational opportunities outside schools or offered through schools for adults and out of school youth education. This then forms a wider picture of educational deprivation and lack of job opportunities.

Rural education is also challenged by the presence of traditional leaders who have a direct bearing on functioning of the school in different ways. The presence of chiefs will somehow limit the powers of school governing bodies and principals of schools in decision making. *Emerging Voices* (2005) stated that rural schools still show too many traces of the authoritarianism of the past. They furthermore said there is too

little respect and recognition of schooling and above all there are too few possibilities for real and autonomous learning and creative action.

Finally rural education is also influenced by the presence of poorly trained teachers. This is mentioned by Asmal and James (2007) when they said in rural education under qualified teachers are concentrated in precisely those regions that given their educational performance can least afford to have them. Furthermore, *Emerging Voices* (2005) stated that in rural areas there are many poorly trained teachers with few incentives to live in the areas where they teach, as well as startlingly limited facilities and resources to assist in their task of compromising the rights of children within education.

In rural education the presence of parental involvement is mentioned, where their influence might impact on choices made by learners about their subjects. The study undertaken by *Emerging Voices* (2005) showed in contrast that parents whose children attended rural schools had indeed significantly higher involvement in their child's education to pursue jobs that will take them out of rural areas to the cities where they will work and bring money to feed their parents. This is further confirmed by McCracken (1991) who stated that in their findings they discovered that most students also perceived that their parents, teachers and councillors were all encouraging college attendance after graduation of their children from high school. The students perceived this as parental commitment to the education.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

Chapter two began with an explanation of what a literature review is, followed by the purpose of a literature review in a study. I then explained how this literature review has been done in the study. My focus was on literature that is related to rural learners choosing history or not in post-1994 South Africa. The emphasis is to find out how this choosing process has been influenced. In this literature review, it has appeared that in some instances learners make free will subject choices, but sometimes learners choose because of outside influence. The reasons were then highlighted why learners choose or do not choose history. I finally focused on choosing in a rural context of education where it has been mentioned that in the rural context choosing in education is influenced by socio-economic and political influences. These ideas



from the literature enabled me to continue with my study as will be explained in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter the discussion was focussed on the literature review. Chapter 3 will be a discussion about the methodology of the study which has been approached through a qualitative perspective. This chapter includes the research design which is essentially a plan of how the researcher intends to answer the key research questions. In other words a research design is a blueprint of how the study is to be conducted in order for the research questions to be answered. In this chapter I discuss three categories namely, qualitative research design; interpretive research design and a case-study research design.

The research methodology aims to find methods or tools and procedures to collect and analyse the data needed to answer the research questions. There are three methods of data collection for my studies namely, focus group interviews; written task questionnaires and semi-structured one-on-one interviews. The methodology of the research will help to outline the route map of how data was generated, collected and analysed. Further methods involve sampling which includes selected rural schools in Kwazulu-Natal. Data collected by various tools was analysed inductively. The methodology I selected fits in my study for the collection of verbal responses from my participants and tells us how to analyse their data.

#### **3.2 The research design – a case study**

Cohen, et al (2007) are of the belief that research design helps the researcher to ensure the presence of coherence which means that the researcher is striving to ensure coherence between the approach, paradigm, and research methods. Coherence in every study is important because it enables the researcher to remain focused on the research aim.

For any study, the research design occupies a central role as stated by Wiersma (1991) who argues that the research design is a plan or strategy for conducting the

research. As a result, it focuses on a variety of issues which include the selection of participants to establish the type of data that the researcher should collect in order to answer research questions and the how part of collecting that data. Furthermore, it provides the methods that will be employed in the collection of such data and lastly to answer the questions as to what the researcher will do with the data once collected. Creswell (2010) stated that the research design is not related to any particular type of data. Research design to him refers to the structure of an enquiry and is a logical task undertaken to ensure that the evidence collected enables us to answer questions or to test theories as unambiguously as possible. A research design helps to identify the type of evidence required to answer the research questions in a convincing way. Research needs to be structured in such a way that the evidence also bears alternative rival explanations and enables us to identify which of the competing explanations is most compelling empirically.

The importance of the research design is supported by Huysmans (as cited in Fouche and De Vos, 2005) who stated that the research design is like a blueprint or detailed plan which offers the framework as to how data is to be collected to investigate the research hypothesis. This is further stated by Mouton and Marais (1996) who view the research design as a set of guidelines and instructions to be followed in addressing the research project in such a manner that the eventual validity of the research findings is maximised.

The appropriate research design for this study is a case study of three purposively selected schools in a deep rural setting of Kwazulu-Natal. Case study in this research means an in-depth study of a particular case. The population of KwaZulu-Natal schools is represented by a selected sample of schools which are easy to handle. It aims to describe what it is like to be in a particular situation. In the case of this study, the researcher will be aiming to capture the reality and thoughts about a particular situation as stated by Cohen, et al (2000). The strength of the case study is in its uniqueness which cannot be generalised.

The case study helped me to select a manageable sample to understand the rural setting and the choices made by learners and provide researchers with a particular unit to study which can be clearly delineated and distinguished from other units.

Furthermore, the case study is an outstanding example of research that can help the researcher to experience the lives of participants and thus develop inside knowledge of participants. Furthermore, Mouton (2006) recommends a case study because it allows researchers to select an example that is familiar to them and to which they have access. In addition, a case study provides rich insights into particular situations, events, organisations, classrooms or even persons and it is singular and distinct. The selection of a few schools helped to reduce expenses and time and assist in focusing on a few school for intensive exploration (Mouton, 2006).

According to Cohen, et al (2011) the case study helps to portray what it is like to be in a particular situation, to catch the close-up reality and thick description of participants' lived experiences of, thoughts about and feelings for a situation. As a result I chose the case study because it would help during my interviewing session with my participants and to describe participants' lived experiences. This is also supported by Creswell (2008) who stated that a case study involves in-depth exploration of a bounded system, for example the activity, events, processes or individuals based on extensive data collection. My case study was selected with the hope that it might provide in-depth exploration of my participants' choices on history in a deep rural setting.

The selection of case- study research design was also based on support given to it by Jahoda (1958) who states the advantages of a case study as a valuable tool which might help to collect necessary evidence to make a decision between alternative answers to questions and is collected systematically rather than by chance. The evidence is collected so as to provide answers which are relevant, unbiased and economic to obtain.

The choices I made in terms of research design are also influenced by my views on epistemology. The epistemology that informed the study is pragmatic and it fosters dialogue between the researcher and the respondent. The interpretations are based in a particular moment; choices made by learners in grade nine for grade ten. Interpretations of responses are open to re-interpretations and negotiation and the source of knowledge is through conversation. Conflicting interpretations are

negotiated among members of a community who in my case are parents and school principals.

Lastly ontological claims are created as an investigation proceeds and findings emerge through dialogue. Ontology in this study rests upon idealism that the world is the creation of the mind furthermore, that the world is interpreted through the mind. Finally evidence is corroborated to be accepted through the nature of reality which is learners' opinions, beliefs, points of view and their values. Therefore my ontology is that reality is constructed through the eyes of the researcher and the participants.

### **3.3 Interpretive research paradigm**

The paradigm is the broadest unit of consensus within a science and it serves to differentiate one scientific community or sub community from another (Ritzier, 1975). The research paradigm of my study is the interpretive paradigm because the research work attempts to interpret learners' choices about history. The paradigm also helped me to understand the participants' behaviour, attitudes, opinions, experiences, beliefs and their views. Cohen (2007) states that the interpretive paradigm helps the researcher to examine and make sense of the situation from the view point of participants in the research. The use of the interpretive paradigm is furthermore, supported by Maree (2008) who specified that researchers in the social sciences use this paradigm to research participants' behaviours, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions which cannot be measured. As a result this paradigm is helpful in explaining and describing learners' views about choosing or not choosing history in a deep rural setting.

The research paradigm in this study forms the basis of my methodology as stated by Ritzier (1975) that a paradigm in the research serves to explain what should be studied, and what questions should follow on interpreting the answers obtained in the research. The use of the interpretive paradigm is supported by Arksey and Knight (1999) who explained that one of the advantages of the interpretive paradigm is the formation of a study that is not restricted by the physical limitations of the natural sciences, but one in which a rich and detailed theory related to the individual perception of social issues may emerge. As a result for my study this paradigm might

help to uncover and interpret learners' perceptions and views about choosing or not choosing history in deep rural settings.

Fouche and Delport (2002) are of the belief that the interpretive paradigm might help the researcher to experience how people make sense of the contexts in which they are making a living. Furthermore, the interpretive paradigm is likely to allow the researcher to understand that sometimes participants' behaviours might be a response to external stimuli, which might be determined by their previous experiences and by the context in which they live. As a result this might be applicable in my research to find how rurality might influence choices made by learners in rural areas about their subjects.

Cohen, et al (2000) believe that the interpretive paradigm is likely to ensure an adequate dialogue between the researcher and those with whom they interact in order to collaboratively construct a meaningful reality. Travis (1999) said the interpretive paradigm's credibility is the degree of correspondence between the realities of the research domain and the participants and how closely the researcher interprets their intentions and realities and how closely the researcher is representative of those participants. This means that this paradigm allows me as the researcher to interpret the in-depth interpretations and realities of learners choosing or not choosing in the context of their situation. Furthermore, Ponterotto (2005) concurs that the interpretive reality is socially constructed and, therefore, the dynamic interaction between researcher and participants is central to capturing and describing the lived experiences of the participants who are learners who choose or do not choose history in a deep rural setting.

The interpretive paradigm, according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), is characterised by a concern for the individual which is meant to help understand the subjective world of human experience. To attain integrity of the phenomenon being investigated, efforts are made to get inside the person and to understand from within. According to Rubin (2010) the interpretive researcher attempts to help readers of their reports to sense what it is like to walk in the shoes of the small number of participants they study. In addition, interpretive researchers believe that the best way to learn about participants is to be flexible and subjective in one's approach so that

the subjects' world can be seen through the subjects' own eyes, which, in this study, are the eyes of learners who choose or do not choose history in deep rural schools. Furthermore, the author suggests that the researcher be aware of the meanings and social contexts of an individual's words or deeds which need to be examined in more depth. During my field work this has helped me search for in-depth opinions, views and perceptions of learners who choose or do not choose history in the deep rural areas of Ndombeni, Manzamnandi and Inkundusi in Matubatuba.

Rubin and Rubin (1995) said the interpretive paradigm in research work is important because the approach emphasises the importance of understanding the overall texts of a conversation and, more broadly, the importance of seeing meanings in context. This might only be possible through conducting various types of data collection in order to penetrate the real world of participants who possess the knowledge of reality necessary for the study. The use of a research paradigm which involves interpretations of participants' lived experiences, opinions, views and beliefs is not possible to accomplish on a huge population as result the trimming down of a population to a manageable sample is only possible through the use of case study research design which is smaller in numbers and is consequently manageable.

### **3.4 Research methodology**

Research methodology is an explanation of how research should proceed. Bassett (2004) stated that research methodology involves the analyses of the principles and procedures in a particular field of inquiry and in turn it governs the use of particular methods. Furthermore, he said the study of methodology includes topics in philosophy of social science and philosophical anthropology. As such this helped to provide an outline of methodology to investigate why learners choose or do not choose history in deep rural settings.

Mouton (2006) argues that research methodology occupies a central role in any research because it is concerned with the questions of how the researcher conducted his work to obtain data and how the researcher might ensure that what he has researched and obtained reached the goals of research. Furthermore, he noted that research methodology involve the application of a variety of standardised methods and techniques in the pursuit of solid knowledge. He compared this to

scientists who aim to generate truthful knowledge through proven experiments. Additionally, he said they are committed to the use of methods and procedures that might increase the likelihood of attaining validity. Instead methods are regarded as scientific when they enable decisions on whether certain data or methods can solve the problem. This is supported by Ponterotto (2005) who stated that good research methodology refers to the process and procedures of the research.

Qualitative research methodology was used for my study. The methodology was chosen because it involves working with verbal and written data. According to McRoy (in Fouche & Delport, 2005) qualitative research aims mainly to understand social life meanings that participants attach to everyday life and as such it produces descriptive data in the participants own written or spoken words. Working with descriptive data is also propounded by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2008) who stated that qualitative methodology involves participants who are providing evidence of their experiences, opinions and choices. In research the qualitative methodology helped me to uncover views, opinions and perceptions of learners about choosing or not choosing history in a deep rural setting. This is supported by Dawson (2002) who stated that qualitative research assists in exploring attitudes, behaviours, views and experiences of participants. Furthermore, he declares this might be accomplished through such methods as interviews, written task surveys and focus group interviews which elicit an in-depth opinion from participants.

In addition, McRoy (in Fouche & Delport, 2005) understands qualitative research as involving identifying the participants' beliefs and values that underline the phenomena. In this case it helped to explain why learners choose or do not choose history in deep rural settings. Further on, the writer states that the qualitative approach originates from the interpretive paradigm; which he said is more holistic in nature. Qualitative research methodology, as stated by Mouton (2002), enables the researcher to share in the understanding and perceptions of others (in this regard learners' views about history) and to explore how learners structure and relate to their daily lives, with regard to their choices of subjects in schools. Furthermore, Bassett (2004) stresses the socially constructed nature of reality or ontology where the intimate relationship between researcher and what is studied is identified. He states that qualitative research is aimed at understanding human nature.



Moreover, the use of qualitative methodology is supported by Delvin, Hansen and Selai (2008) who specified that it is a more valid and reliable way of obtaining first hand data, directly from the participants. Creswell (2002) in turn is of the opinion that qualitative research methodology uses verification methods to support their conclusions such as triangulation of results through information from different measures in the study. My study triangulation methods will be to gather information from learners, parents and principals of schools using different data collection methods including written task assessments and semi-structured interviews.

The indispensability of the qualitative research methodology is supported by Creswell (2008) who stated that it is a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants where the researcher might ask broad, general questions and collects data consisting largely of words from participants which in the end the researcher can describe and analyse for his/her themes. Furthermore, qualitative research tends to address research problems requiring an exploration in which little is known about the problem (Creswell, 2008). This is relevant to my research because there is little or no work on why learners choose or do not choose history in deep rural areas.

Furthermore, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), argued that the validity of qualitative research relies on the fact that its data is analysed inductively rather than using a priori categories and also that data is presented in terms of the respondents rather than the researcher and above all seeing and reporting the situation is through the eyes of participants. Bassett (2004) further says this approach is associated with inductive forms of reasoning in an attempt to generate theory. As a result the qualitative research methodology is appropriate for my study because there is a need to have an in-depth understanding of issues regarding choosing or not choosing history in deep rural settings.

This research methodology is supported by Travis (1999) whereby individual constructions are solicited and refined hermeneutically. In addition, these interpretations are compared and constructed dialectically, with the aim of generating social constructions and shared understandings which are generally a result of

consensus. Therefore, the views of learners, history teachers and principals of my case study schools will be compared to identify overarching themes. Similarly, Barbour (2009) and Ruben (2010) argue that qualitative research is intended to approach the world not in specialised research settings such as laboratories, but to understand, describe and sometimes explain social phenomena from the inside in a number of different ways by analysing experiences of the individuals or groups. The advantage of using qualitative research is that it is interested in accessing experiences, interactions and documents in their natural context in a way that gives room to the particularities of them and the materials in which they are studied.

In the view of Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) and Moch and Gates (2000) the qualitative research methodology seeks to understand the experiences of people living, working and going to school in their natural living environments, as well as to understand the experience of the professionals working with those people. In my research study it might help to unpack learners' opinions and views about choosing or not choosing history in deep rural areas.

### **3.5 Sampling**

The population of my study was all rural schools in KwaZulu-Natal offering history as a school subject and particularly all learners who choose or do not choose history, and all history teachers of rural schools. The use of purposive sampling has been supported by Ruben (2010) who stated that a sample is based on the researchers' own judgement about which units, or schools are most representative or useful. Purposive sampling of my participants was done as supported by Rule and John (2011) who said participants are deliberately chosen because of their suitability in advancing the purpose of the research.

Purposive sampling was applied to select three case study schools, three principals, a focus group and history teachers. This is supported by Cohen, et al (2011) who said purposive sampling can be used in order to access knowledgeable participants i.e. those who have an in-depth knowledge about particular issues, maybe by virtue of their professional roles, power, access to networks, expertise or experiences. School A (Red High School) is situated in the predominantly *IFP* stronghold in the *Mtubatuba* area of *Emanzamnandi*. School B (Yellow High School) which is situated

in the *Mtubatuba* area of *Enkundusi* which is predominantly *ANC*, and School C (Blue High School) which is comprised of both *ANC* and *IFP*. The presence of political affiliation has been pronounced by teachers as valid and who advised me not to mention any word that will depict political support.

I found these schools to be convenient because they are close to each other and therefore ensuring the research is less costly. A group of thirty learners from each school was selected purposively to write a written task questionnaire to write whatever they thought of choosing history in deep rural schools of Kwazulu-Natal. Initially the agreed plan was to request a life orientation teacher to help me choose learners who were willing to write the written task because the teacher might not be biased in selection and above all she/he must not have a vested interest in the choices of subjects. But on my arrival the school management team refused; instead they offered me the deputy principal to help in selecting learners.

The thirty learners were given a written task to tabulate reasons as to why they did not choose history. This I did with the hope of choosing a manageable size to fit in focus groups of 12 learners. This sampling was purposively done where there was representation from both genders. From a group of thirty, learners were selected into a focus group of six girls and six boys and I based the selection on the highest response they gave which to me was interpreted as willingness to talk.

Three history teachers and principals of my case study schools were selected based on their legitimacy to be history teachers and principals of selected schools. Purposive sampling is the researcher's judgement as typicality or interest. A sample is built up which enables the researcher to satisfy her or his specific needs in a project which is to find out why learners choose or do not choose history (Robson, 2002; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). This is furthermore supported by Bertram (2004) who stated that the researcher makes specific choices about which participants to include in the sample based on the demands of the research study, and is done by convenience meaning choosing a sample that might be easy for the researcher to reach.

### **3.6 Research methods**

I personally visited the case study schools to collect data through written task surveys, and focus group and semi-structured one-on-one interviews. The rationale for the use of such a variety of methods is supported by Rubin (2010) who stated that triangulation is important because it involves using several alternative strategies and seeing if they tend to produce the same findings or how they cumulatively complement each other. Furthermore, Creswell (2008) recommends triangulation for optimum validity when he said qualitative inquirers triangulate among different data sources to enhance the accuracy of a study. This is done to corroborate the evidence from different participants who, in my case, are learners, history teachers and principals of schools. This helped ensure that the study was trustworthy because the information was drawn from multiple sources of information, individuals or processes and it helps the researcher to develop a rapport that is both accurate and credible.

### **3.6.1 Written task surveys**

Surveys in the form of written tasks were my first method. Learners choosing or not choosing history as their subject were given a task that required them to give their reasons for their choices. Robson (2002) states that surveys are used, amongst other things, to test political party voters' views about their policies and on how such views are related to age, gender, income and region of the country. Therefore, I used surveys, but in this case made them open-ended to reveal views of learners in order to select those I feel who are willing to say more about the topic under discussion, mostly regarding views about history as a subject. Jahoda (1958) states that surveys are designed to permit a free response from the participants which is what I hoped to find.

Learners in these surveys were free to write whatever they felt was relevant to my research study according to their understanding. Furthermore, participants in the surveys were given an opportunity to make a follow up on the questions. The surveys, according to Jahoda (1958), are preferable because they might place less pressure on the participants for an immediate response. He further states that there is little basis for knowing either what questions asked are clear or how to formulate them but during my field work the richest data I obtained was through written surveys where learners were free to write because they believed that there was to be no

prejudice from teachers for any response they were to provide. Lastly Jahoda (1958) stated that the advantage of surveys is that they are less expensive to run as compared to the interview. Furthermore, they can be administered to a large number of participants simultaneously as happened during my field work where I was able to conduct it among 30 learners in one setting.

### **3.6.2 Focus group interviews**

Focus group interviews were also used as a data collection method. Focus groups are useful in bringing together a group of participants, in this case who have experienced the same problem of not choosing or choosing history. The purpose of focus groups is to obtain in depth and detailed accounts of individuals. Focus groups are useful because they might motivate interviewees to spark off ideas from one another. Taylor-Powell (2002) and Kvale and Brinkman (2009) state that this might help respondents to suggest dimensions and nuances of the original problem that any individual might not have considered. Focus groups were used to interview all learners on choosing history or not choosing history.

Focus groups in my study were also used from recommendations made by Barbour (2009) who stated that they are an appropriate method in case studies. Focus groups may encourage greater candour and may be more acceptable to participants reluctant to take part in one-on-one interviews. I experienced this during my fieldwork where all learners were excited and prepared to participate. Furthermore, focus groups were useful in assessing the hard to reach truth and the potentially reticent. They also illuminated the concerns of those whose values are otherwise muted, as learners who were shy ended up contributing an enormous volume of information.

Morgan (1998) stated that the strength of focus groups comes from the opportunity to collect data from group interaction. He said focus groups can bring forth material that would not be revealed in either the participants' own casual conversations or in response to the researchers' pre-conceived questions. This occurred during my fieldwork where learners alluded to information that was valuable to my study but did not form part of the questions. Moreover, Morgan (1998) argued that focus groups are fruitful because they can produce useful data with relatively little direct input from the researcher. This might only happen intuitively through conversations among

participants when arguing among themselves and this is what happened during my field work giving me a wealth of data without in depth probing among learners.

### **3.6.3 Semi-structured individual interviews**

The rationale for the use of semi-structured one-on-one interviews in qualitative research is supported by Cohen, et al (2007) who stated that semi-structured interviews give participants the opportunity to discuss or to air their views about the world in which they live and operate. In addition, the participants are able to express their individual and collective situations from both a collective and individual perspective. The use of semi-structured individual interviews is supported by Creswell (2008) who stated that semi-structured interviews are designed to explore the extent, nature, and quality of the participants' thoughts and feelings about a range of personal, interpersonal, and historical phenomena. As a result they might be useful to elicit participants' views, opinions and thoughts about choosing or not choosing history. Furthermore, Jahoda (1958) recommended interviews when he stated that a skilled investigator has a flexible opportunity to elicit information through questions and probes for better clarity. Furthermore, he has the opportunity both to observe the participant as he responds to questions and to observe the total situation to which the participants are responding.

Rubin and Rubin (1995) recommended semi-structured individual interviews since they are more useful in the understanding, knowledge and insights of the interviewees than in categorising participants or events in terms of academic theories. Furthermore, Johnson (2012) stated that during the interview the interviewee should listen carefully and be the repository of detailed information. The interviewer should also be armed with probes or prompts to use when greater clarity or depth is needed from the person being interviewed. This recommendation helped me during my field work to probe for in-depth answers from my participants to obtain rich data. I also audio-taped the interviews so that when analysing the data collected, I would be able to refer back to the taped interviews so as to maximize my understanding and enhance clarity on ambiguous terms.

## **3.7 Data analysis**

Data analysis is the final stage whereby I subjected the information collected from the field for critical analysis (Ruben & Ruben, 1995). Data was transcribed verbatim to make it ready for coding. Written task data by learners was organised to facilitate analysis as long as it answered the research question. Data from the respondents (learners, principals, school governing bodies and subject advisor) was played on the tape and replayed several times to ensure clarity. Thereafter the data was organised to be ready for analysis. Data of learners who chose history was separated from data of learners who did not choose history to prepare it for coding. Thereafter written task data was subjected to open coding. The data was coded under similar themes. This was done to establish the respondent's' concepts, phrases and themes that coincide. Data was then synthesised to eliminate errors and to add data that has not been coded (Robson, 2002).

At the end of the analysis, I was aiming to be able to answer the key research questions namely:

- (1) How do rural learners choose their subjects?
- (2) What drives rural learners to make the kind of choices they make about history?

### **3.8 Ethical considerations**

The study involved human beings and as such the adherence to the ethical standards were a major concern for this research. Ethical clearance was obtained from the College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal and from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education before commencement of the study (See Appendix A). Informed consent was given by heads of schools to be used, parents, SGBs and participants themselves; who were also given a declaration to sign.

Parental consent forms were given to parents to fill, and participants were also given consent forms to complete. To ensure that the rights and dignity of the participants are protected, identities were kept anonymous. Cohen, et al (1995, p. 366) state that "the essence of anonymity is that, information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity." Participants were informed of their rights to refuse to participate in the research at any time, any period, and at any stage they felt their rights were threatened or infringed. Participants were told that participation was voluntary and they had to agree to the use of equipment such as an audio-tape

recorder and camera before they were used. The photographs were taken with the full consent, knowledge, and approval of the participants and they were told that their photographs would be used solely for research purposes. Each school principal was given an official letter requesting permission to pursue the research at their schools.

### **3.9 Limitations of the research methodology**

The major limitation I encountered during my first fieldwork was time constraints. Participants had a limited number of hours per day to spend at school as they were busy with their lessons during these periods. To address the limitation of time, I requested special permission from parents and heads of schools involved to make participants available after school hours so as to provide enough time for full participation on several occasions during my fieldwork. I hired a car that could transport me to the nearest road because there was no transport after school.

The teachers were suspicious of my presence in their schools because on the first school day I, coincidentally, arrived with the Provincial Intervention Team, which is based in the Howard Department of Education in Durban. The teachers then thought I was an agent of MEC in disguise which restricted my accessibility to schools. However, the excitement of the learners made it possible for me to obtain rich data even though the teachers themselves were unhappy. To show their unhappiness, teachers refused to give me grade 9 or grade 10 learners and instead they said they were prepared to offer me other classes. In School A they offered me grade 12 learners, in School B they offered me grade 11 and in school C they also offered me grade 11. I appreciate the fact that all these learners wrote sufficient data and during focus group interviews they were adequately cooperative.

Generalising my research findings to a larger group was a major limitation since I focused only on the three selected schools. However this was a case study, so the need to generalise did not have to be my aim. Against this background, my study was structured to rather provide insight that may also be of value in exploring other similar situations. Focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews were hampered by the language barrier, as some learners, teachers and principals preferred IsiZulu rather than English because they said they wanted to express themselves fluently as English second language speakers. In view of the fact that I



anticipated a language barrier I had earlier agreed that if I encountered such a problem I was at liberty to apply code switching something which later solved the language dilemma.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter, I have outlined and explained the research design, and research methodology used in this study. Qualitative research approaches were chosen for this study and phenomenological research was also employed as the study of phenomenon and was ever present in this study. Phenomenology was underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm which was best suited to this research. In the chapters that follow (chapter 4 and chapter 5), the research findings and analysis will be explained.

These findings intend to answer two of the key research questions of this study. I have also recognised the limitation of this study as well as any criticisms of the research approach and paradigm. Ethical issues, issues of validity or trustworthiness have been ensured by triangulation. Sampling of this study is purposive and is concerned with the detailed analysis and focuses on small samples as the data collected is rich. While this type of sampling seeks in-depth data from a small selected group, purposive sampling cannot represent the wider population and is thus deliberately and unashamedly selective and biased.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **ANALYSIS OF DATA – WHY DID RURAL LEARNERS NOT CHOOSE HISTORY?**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The main focus of chapter 4 is the analysis of data which I have collected through various research collection methods. These three methods included written task questionnaires, focus group interviews and semi-structured one-on-one interviews. The purpose was to fulfil triangulation, which helped me to check responses given by my participants during data collection. Triangulation further helped me in my research to obtain various views of my research participants and to check whether there is an agreement or differences in their views. Triangulation helped me to check whether different participants can give the same findings in roughly similar situations. It has also been applied in my research design where my populations were all schools in deep rural KwaZulu-Natal who are offering history as a subject.

The data collected enabled me to answer the key research questions of my research project which are: How do rural learners choose their subjects? What drives rural learners to make the kind of choices they make about history? Before the final data analysis the data was separated between those participants who did not choose and those who chose history as a subject. The data collected has been subjected to open coding where I read my data several times. After reading the data I firstly identified main themes and I returned to my data to read it again so I could develop sub-themes.

After initiating sub-themes I then drew up a rough draft which I had submitted to my supervisors to peruse and to make suggestions. After discussing the rough draft with my supervisors, we developed themes and further sub-themes – this being in line with using open coding as a means of analysis – namely keeping on working with the data until a saturation point in terms of the themes and sub-themes was reached.

The presentation of data analysis is divided into two parts: section one is in chapter 4 which deals with views of rural learners who did not choose history; and chapter 5 which is section two will be the data analysis of rural learners who chose history as their subject. In this chapter, I will present the data of learners who decided against choosing history shedding light on the reasons they gave for their choices. I found their views interesting to listen to because this issue, according to research records, has had little or no attention by researchers. The data in this chapter will be divided into four which are: The nature of history and historical content as a factor in not choosing the subject, being influenced by others not to take history as a subject; finding employment and taking history as a subject in a rural context and the teaching and learning of history as a factor in not choosing the subject.

#### **4.2 The nature of history and historical content as a factor**

The nature of the historical content they are studying, according to some of the rural learners who participated in this study, are a reason for not choosing history as a subject. The rural learners highlighted that they are not happy to learn about apartheid because it brought bad memories which they feel will not help them in any way. The historical content they have to study which is loaded with painful apartheid acts is mentioned by rural learners as a reason for not choosing history. According to most of the learners hearing about the painful acts of apartheid could disturb the unity between whites and blacks. This was supported by a learner who said, "I hate history because it tells about killings of black heroes by apartheid government." Another learner echoed this sentiment, "If you learn history you learn about painful acts of apartheid government". The presence of the apartheid regime's violent practices towards blacks in the curriculum is therefore sighted by rural learners as a reason for them not choosing history.

Learners claimed that the apartheid related content kept on reminding them of a bad past which they claim might lead to the development of hatred towards whites. This is supported by a learner who stated, "History always reminded me of bad acts that were committed to our forefathers by apartheid National Party government." Furthermore, they claimed that the historical content related to the apartheid past has no bearing anymore on their progress in life. One learner put this succinctly, "In history I hate to hear about apartheid".

The idea of a “Painful/Bad Past” was mentioned by a number of rural learners during the research process as the reason for them not choosing history. In the view of many of the participants the study of the past was a source of pain and remorse amongst blacks. Rural learners therefore felt that if they studied history it might always remind them of the painful past and the bad treatment that was directed at the black community. This notion was supported by a learner who stated, “History is not good because it teaches about the painful past that showed how blacks were treated by apartheid national party government.” Another learner supported the issue of a painful past, by saying, “In my school learners say history is bad because it reminds us of the painful past”. This was elaborated on by learners who expressed their feelings as follows, “I hate learning about painful past which leaves me in tears when I learn it” and “History sometimes reminds me of the painful past of our forefathers under apartheid.”

The bad and painful past and the acts aimed under apartheid at the rural learners’ ancestors was thus a clear reason advanced by the many which prevented them from choosing history. This sentiment was expressed as follows, “I hate hearing about apartheid because it reminds me of the sufferings of our black heroes like Nelson Mandela in the hands of the apartheid government” and “I hated learning about apartheid national party brutality against blacks because it touched my feelings about what happened to my forefathers”. Even an apartheid related film such as *Sarafina* was criticised by a learners who watched it on television, “When I watched *Sarafina* movie on television I started hating whites for the bad acts they committed on blacks during apartheid era.”

Along with the ideas related to a painful and bad past, the content related to apartheid deterred many rural learners from choosing history as they viewed it as sowing seeds of hatred between whites and blacks. This thinking was supported by a learner who stated: “If I do history it will always remind me of the painful past and the bad treatment that was directed on the black community by [white] apartheid government.” One learner made it clear that history was not chosen as a subject because, “I hate history teaching because it can teach you to hate whites minority National Party for their past atrocities acts on blacks”. Another along the same line

argued, “I feel history will revive hatred among various race groups about the past.” One learner even went as far as asking, “How can racism come to an end while people are still talking about it in South African history books?” Rural learners who participated in this study thus do not seem to want to study anything that will lead to the development of hatred between the various race groups in South Africa and the fear was expressed that history could change your attitude from a peaceful person to an aggressive person.

The issue of race and racial tension as it related to apartheid and the potential it held to disrupt harmonious interaction between whites and blacks was a strong recurring theme for not choosing history. The overarching sentiment was clear that revenge between whites and blacks therefore was not what they as a younger generation wanted. History was thus viewed as separating rather than cementing relationships between whites and blacks. This strong sentiment was articulated as follows by a participant, “I feel racism in history learning can develop revenge between whites and blacks ... I feel blacks and whites need one another.” What was therefore mooted as an alternative was history that was good for reconciliation, an all-inclusive history of the population which would unlike the NCS not foreground National Party acts of violence against blacks. These sections in the curriculum were interpreted by rural learners as a source of development of hatred among whites and blacks which they feel might end up leaving a lasting impression. Hence some of the respondents suggested the exclusion of content related to the 16 June 1976 Soweto uprising where unarmed learners were shot by police.

A different perspective in this regard was provided by some of the rural respondents who felt that school history was biased against whites for they are collectively labelled as if they all hated blacks. Hence learners felt that they were confronted with an undisputed history which did not differentiate between whites who discriminated against blacks and those who did not but instead collectively referred to whites as if they all discriminated against blacks. As a result one learner stated, “I feel history is bias because to me not all Afrikaners discriminated against blacks only the few.” Consequently the participants claimed that they were puzzled to learn that some whites struggled for the liberation of blacks which lead them to believe that history as

a body of knowledge cannot tell them the real truth and has as its aims “to separate blacks from whites”.

Apart from the content of the history curriculum as it relates to apartheid other content related issues were also foregrounded as reasons for electing not to pursue the subject in Grade 10. Since the research was undertaken in rural Kwazulu-Natal schools where participants are situated and are more inclined towards Zulu society learners consequently complained about the insufficient inclusion of Zulus in the content. However, the views on this were somewhat divergent and some learners emphasised that they did not want to learn about the founder-king of the Zulus, Shaka and thought nobody was interested in Zulu history anymore. The argument was that studying about Shaka cannot in their current context be used to transmit any lesson and he cannot be a role model on whom they can base their decisions as to how to conquer the challenges they might encounter in life. This point of view was articulated as follows, “I hate learning about King Shaka wars which do not give any lesson to me in the present” and “It does not help me to know when Shaka died and who killed him”.

A feeling also existed that the content as embodied in the textbooks was dominated by the African National Congress and Xhosas. To some, the exclusion of the Inkatha Freedom Party which they associate with Zulus, convinced them to avoid history for by doing that they argued they would not be furthering the aspirations of the ANC and Xhosas. The views expressed by two learners in this regard would suffice: “In history we always learn about ANC and Xhosas” and “In the study of history at school there is disregard of Zulus leaders.” In the light of this it was easy for a learner to claim that “I feel history favours ANC and all the roads are named after their leaders.”

Apart from the content, some rural learners also argued that the nature of history as a subject discouraged them from taking it as a subject. Ideas proposed in this regard were that the history in the textbooks used “were sounding like fairy tales” and were “fabricated” and “hard to believe”. This abstract nature of the subject was thus proposed as one of the reasons why rural learners felt it to be irrelevant for the present. In addition it was argued that past events have no contemporary relevance

as they are rooted as a field in the remote past. As one learner put it, “History events are hard to believe and they are out of picture” while another indicated “I don’t like to learn about events that I will not see with my eyes” or have “experiments by which I can check how much I know”. Simultaneously history was rejected by some because it was deemed impractical which cannot be seen and touched unlike “subjects like science and commerce” because “it is practical and you can see money even your business”.

After the analysis of rural learners’ views on the nature of historical content as one of the reasons for them not to choose history the focus now turns to teaching and learning. In the nature of historical content there is a part of history which rural learners feel should be included but it is not, and also part of history which they feel should be excluded because they feel it does not fulfil their aspirations which they say is progress to the future. From the narration given by rural learners about the reasons why they do not choose history it seems that learners are not happy about the choice of content they are being taught in history and as a result they end up not choosing history. In concluding this theme of the nature of history and historical content as a factor in not choosing history has revealed that due to the expectations which are not met and disappointments of rural learners as what history is unable to fulfil that their wish of having certain part of content excluded is not met. These issues end up marginalising the choosing of history among rural learners.

#### **4.3 The teaching and learning of history as a factor in not choosing the subject**

Rural learners mentioned various reasons why they are unhappy about the teaching and learning of the subject. Firstly rural learners indicated during the research process that they rejected history because of the physical abuse that they experience in their classes during teaching. They revealed that when they failed their tests some teachers would beat them up. One rural learner made the claim that “Our teachers in grade 8 and 9 were beating us up” while others claimed that they were in fear of being man handled. This claim was supported by a learner who stated, “Most history teachers like beating up learners when they fail”. Apart from the physical abuse, research participants complained that during their grade 8 and 9, some history teachers shouted a lot and one rural learner stated that in the mentioned

grades "... our history teacher was always shouting at us". They said that it had a negative impact on their concentration in class.

Apart from the physical and verbal abuse the rural learners also claimed that they did not select history because they felt that they were disliked and hence victimised by their teachers. Some participants mentioned that in their Social Science classes they were punished differently for the same offence which they interpreted as favouritism shown by teachers to others. Consequently, one learner claimed, "My grade 8 and 9 Social Science teachers hated me".

Rural learners during their written task and focus group interviews highlighted other teaching and learning related reasons for not choosing history. One such reason was that their grade 8 and 9 teachers were unskilled and had little subject knowledge. The knock-on effect was that this uncertainty had resulted in their losing hope of passing the subject. Similarly, learners explained, "In grade 9 our social science teacher was not clear to us when teaching" and "We have scarcity of history teachers who can teach history effectively" and "In learning history there are teachers who are unable to teach us effectively during history classes".

Another reason for not pursuing the subject directly related to the learning of history concerned the ability to write profusely whether it be extended writing, to synthesize information and to construct an original argument, or to take down notes in class after reading a great deal of material. Hence one learner claimed "I was afraid of extended writing when choosing history". Some participants consequently stated that they got bored and tired of taking down the notes. The volume of writing was claimed to have a negative impact on their performance and one learner maintained, "History has a lot of writing which I feel is too much because we have other five subjects to study". The skills related to extended writing expected in history also emerged as a burden during the examinations and a participant pointed out that "When writing history during examinations we end up failing because we lack writing skills". To this was added the idea of the issue of history being hard and one learner had to confess, "I did not choose history because I failed it in grade 8 and 9". Others echoed this sentiment with claims such as "Most learners told me that history is hard to understand."



Apart from the various forms of writing in history, reading was also proposed as a reason why history was avoided. One learner put it simply, "History books are all big then I opted for commercial subjects". The issue of copious reading was supported by a learner who stated, "In history there is a lot of reading more than you can afford". The large volume of reading was invariably linked to "rote learning" with no understanding which they claimed their teachers expected. In this regard it was explained that, "History is full of years which need to be memorized". As a result history was not chosen because much work of a certain nature was expected which was interpreted as boring which made learners fall asleep.

Furthermore rural learners who did not choose history felt history needs someone who can synthesise ideas which, to them, is difficult to do. Hence it was argued that "success in history depends on how open you are in conveying your thoughts to others". This means, to be successful in history you need a special skill of being good in narration and language for historical language was equated to the language used on the radio during court proceedings which is difficult to understand. Hence the outcry from one respondent - "I hate [the] difficult terminology used in a history class".

Along with the ability to read, write and memorise the ability to talk by means of debating as a skill required in history education was mentioned as a reason why the subject was not chosen. It seems that rural learners avoided history because of the perception that much talking, possibly in English was a requirement, since it was mentioned by a respondent that, "A good historian requires learners who are prepared to talk and to argue".

After looking at the teaching and learning of history as a factor in not choosing the subject my attention will be a conclusion for this theme where learners indicated a number of reasons for rejecting history as a subject choice. These learners have mentioned that they are lacking certain basic skills which form an integral part of history teaching and learning and they also stated that the teaching in history does not interest them. In this regard they alluded to victimisation by teachers as another deterrent from choosing history. Therefore the teaching and learning of history is

working towards keeping history as a subject on the periphery because eventually learners abandon history and choose other subjects.

#### **4.4 Being influenced by others not to take history as a subject**

From the research conducted it is clear that learners did not choose history only based on their own experiences but also on the influence of their parents, teachers, relatives and peers. The point is that learners' rejection of the subject is also based on external influences they receive from various people. This is evident in their views when they say they had been told by others or had heard from others during the questions that I posed to them.

The first group to exercise an influence on learners' subject choice is parents. This was supported by a learner who stated, "I chose science because my parents did not want me to choose history". In the interviews I conducted with history teachers and principals of rural schools they do confirm that through the observation they have had over the years that, "Most parents want their children to study science or commerce." Simultaneously the teachers admitted that "Few learners do tell us about parental influence in their choosing of history." The bottom-line is that the parents of the rural learners surveyed have an influence on their subject choice and one of the principals interviewed declared that, 'Parents do influence their children to choose their stream'. This was confirmed by a learner who explained, "I did not choose history because I felt my parents were going to be hurt". How crucial this subject choice is in a rural area is confirmed by a learner who said, "In my home my parents rely on my education that, when I work I will get a decent job as a result I chose science".

Other family members also exercised an influence on the subject choice of the rural learners. This is confirmed by a learner who said "I was influenced by my elder brother not to choose history, if I wanted to have a decent job in the future". Such influence was confirmed by a history teacher who stated that according to their experiences and observations they had discovered that, "Some learners they are being influenced at home by their brothers and sisters not to choose history". One explanation given for this was by a learner who claimed that sponsors do not fund history learners since his "sister who passed history failed to get a bursary to study

at university” – a sentiment expressed by numerous learners who participated in the study. Consequently it was easy for learners to admit to family influence with comments such as “In my family everyone criticizes history and refers to it as a useless subject”, and “I has been told that history is not valuable if you want to be something in the future”.

Apart from family members the rural learners surveyed are also influenced in their decisions related to history by friends and teachers. This is borne out by the following claim, “Through advice of my friends and my teachers I did not choose history”. A history teacher and a principal interviewed thus had to admit the impact of peer influence on subject choices. Connected with peer pressure came the stigma that history is chosen by people with limited capabilities. As a result one learner admitted, “In my school history learners are looked down upon by other learners”. Such peer pressure was telling and another rural learner acknowledged, “I do not want to be undermined by other learners that is why I cannot choose history”. Not choosing history was therefore done so as to avoid a case such as the following, “In my school, if you study history you are always a laughing stock.” Even more harshly the learners who did not choose history explained that, “History in my school is classified as a subject for underachievers” and “I did not choose history because in my school history class is known as underachiever’s class”. Even more crudely the label of stupidity as a form of stereotyping was attached to learners doing history – a rejection of the subject as some participants admitted by explaining that, “Other learners at school take you as stupid when you choose history” and, “People were always telling me that a learner doing history is stupid”.

Peers are quick to suggest an alternative subject to history. One participant explained that, “At a younger age I wanted to study history but my friends advised me not to choose it then I chose science”. Sometimes such advice came even from learners with a history background such as the case whereby a grade 9 learner “was advised by a previous history matriculant not to choose history”. This advice was echoed by “Previous history matriculants [who] told us that if we choose history we will be destroying our bright futures”.

In the dynamics of choosing or not choosing history as a subject in grade 9, it was revealed that teachers also play a significant role. Evidence for this is provided by a learner who explained that, “I did not choose history because I was afraid to oppose my class teacher who told me not to choose history”. Even more direct influencing also took place and it was also claimed that, “Most of us in our school were not given the opportunity to choose but we were told what to choose”. Apart from discouraging some learners from choosing history, teachers were also accused of channelling certain learners to taking history in grade 10, “Teachers in my school themselves channel all poor performers to history”. It is thus not surprising that one learner explained that, “In my school failures choose history”. The opposite was then also offered as posited in one instance, “In my school, teachers always say if we want bright future we should not choose history”.

However, during their focus group interviews the learners failed to provide convincing reasons about stereotypes they held about history learners. Therefore, it seems learners, due to the influence of stereotyping, finally conclude that they would not be able to pass history, and as a result they decide not to choose history. During the focus group interviews on the issue of history being a subject of underachievers and slow learners the rural learners failed to provide concrete reasons as to why they believe that as true instead they explained that they were told so by their friends, parents and teachers. How powerful such influence can be was confirmed by a learner who proposed without any cogent reasons that, “I think when you do history your mind becomes very slow and you can’t think technology”. Scant wonder that one participant exclaimed, “I would like to see teachers and parents not interfering with learner’s right of choosing”.

The views of rural learners that they did not choose history because of what they have been told or heard what might be accepted is partly true. At the same time they did not question the validity of the views expressed by other people but their actions of not choosing history shows that they accept those stories as true and valid.

In view of the above factors, there are indications that people closest to the learners have a strong influence and this has a huge bearing on the choosing of history by learners. After hearing these influences and stereotypes from parents, teachers and

peers, the learners decide not to choose history. This is an indication that they believe these influences and stereotypes, with the consequence that history is negatively stigmatised and not chosen by rural learners. This theme on external influence is related to the next theme which is on the relationship between taking history in a rural context and finding employment.

#### **4.5 Finding employment and taking history as a subject in a rural context**

The last theme to emerge from the data analysis on why rural learners did not choose history relates to securing a job and studying. Rural learners mentioned a number of reasons why they felt that choosing history cannot provide them with the jobs they wanted. This is linked to why the rural learners feel studying history in a rural context might be irrelevant as it might not help them to escape rurality to “better places” such as cities where they could further their studies.

The views of rural learners about their future occupy a central role in deciding which subjects to choose. In their view the choosing of their subjects seems to be a guide for their future expectations. What they emphasised throughout was securing a job and that choosing history might not provide them with lucrative employment in the city. Evidence for this point of view was overwhelming; “I did not choose history because it cannot provide me with a suitable job” and “If you choose history there is scarcity of jobs like being a lawyer, policemen and a nurse” were but two such comments. Furthermore, choosing history was seen as being tied to the rural areas forever and the limited employment opportunities they offered, “If I choose history it is likely that I won’t be able to leave for the cities to get a job” while another commented, “There is a likelihood of no job prospects after passing history in rural areas”. This was further supported by another learner who stated, “I feel if I choose history I will be adding numbers on the unemployed South Africans as a result I chose commerce”. The only job to be secured with history in a rural area was that of “ordinary clerks” or “gardening, sugar plantation and babysitting”. The logic of these arguments was frequently based on the following, “The financial standings of my family is appalling as a result I cannot choose history because it won’t change my family financial standing”. The recurring theme of poverty and deprivation was thus a big factor in not choosing history as was explained by the following, “Poverty in rural areas makes us choose science and commerce because we are looking for

bursaries that will help us in our future careers". History was thus not seen as a subject for the poor.

The learners therefore did not see a bright future if they chose history and they said that if they choose history they feel that they are likely to be jobless. They confirmed this view when they claimed that most learners they know who have completed matric in their rural area with history as their choice were not working, "There is no one whom I know who did history and is doing decent job". The decent jobs involving clerical work, working with computers or becoming bank tellers were viewed to be for learners with commercial subjects rather than history because the knowledge history offered was viewed as irrelevant. The learners explained that the present required knowledge of science and commerce because "If you speak of global warming, natural disasters and diseases you seek help from scientists" for "In these days technology and science are corner stones of life".

The alternative that existed and which was to provide a solution was clear - for jobs in the cities the demand for commerce and science is high. In a world of poverty it was highlighted that commercial subjects could offer other ways of escape apart from employment and one respondent claimed, "I feel if I choose commercial subjects I am likely to be exposed to business ventures which might help me to start my own business" and, "My aim is to start my own business to make a living without queuing for the job from private sector". In simple terms the argument was that if they choose commerce rather than history their future is going to be bright and they could somehow escape rurality, "If I do commerce I feel after completing matric I can get a casual employment until I can secure money to go to the university or technikon".

So the idea from the views of rural learners who did not choose history persists that history to them is incompatible with the job market and business. Rural learners repeatedly mentioned the scarcity of jobs in rural areas that they felt if they chose history they might not secure a job in their areas. On the other hand it was argued that some of the jobs that history could bring in the rural areas were dangerous and if they chose history they are likely to be involved in politics which might result in quick termination of their life span due to political party inter-wars which are prevalent in

the rural areas. Support for this came in the form of the following statements, “If I choose history I’m likely to be a politician a job that might endanger my safety during political parties’ inter-wars” as well as, “I did not choose history because I was afraid of contested nature of rural politics”. These comments by rural learners are very interesting and underline the fact that serious pull factors forced them into directions away from history.

Apart from limited careers learners also argued that choosing history will not help them secure financial aid because they believe that for history there are no bursaries or loans. This is supported by a learner who said, “We choose subjects that are known to be financed by companies and institutions of higher education”. This was supported by learners who stated, “If you do history you do not get sponsors to further your studies” and, “I did not choose history because there are no bursaries”. The shortage of bursaries in the study of history is thus viewed by some rural learners as a barrier to their future aspirations and therefore they end up not choosing history. On the other hand the observations and experiences of the learners was that all financial institutions are prepared to offer financial aid to science and commerce studies at university. In creating this idea the media and television played its part in the rural areas as a learner explained, “In all media adverts they advertise about sponsors for science and commerce”.

Insight into the factors outlined in this section was supported by the history teachers and principals whom I interviewed who stated, “Learners choices are influenced by socio-economic and political influences”. The sponsoring of science learners in rural areas with the exclusion of history learners was also confirmed as true by history teachers and principals who said, “In our rural areas history learners are not sponsored”. This was further supported by another history teacher who explained, “The non-governmental organization in our areas like African Centre for HIV/Aids only offers help to science learners and we feel it demotivates history learners”.

The participants also argued strongly that in their context, history, a subject which had a political purpose during apartheid, no longer existed and that simple economic factors were now more important. “History has lost its value because we now have freedom and we are all united, black and white and above all our main aim now is to

secure a job to feed our family as there is poverty in rural areas". The point that was frequently made was simply that in their context, "History means nothing to us in rural areas and our future plans to assist us to move out of rurality". The point here is that within their struggles to move out of the rural situation history will be a hindrance and the rural learners provided much evidence for this: "I did not choose history because it was not going to trap me in rurality and not to help me escape rural life to the cities"; "I chose science with the hope that I will be able to go to better places like Durban" and, "I want to leave this area which is full of dust while others are said to be enjoying in cities".

The views expressed by the learners were supported by the history teachers interviewed and one said, "Learners do not choose history because they feel it won't provide them with opportunities to work in the cities". In the words of another history teacher, "There is beauty that learners want to see out of *Nkundusi*". As a result history was, in the view of some respondents, not for rural learners who must choose subjects that might bring "bursaries" and money. The argument by the rural learners was thus that, "Urban parents are not desperate for money like rural parents". This is further supported by a learner who stated, "Learners' parents in cities are not poor maybe they can choose history because they do not need money from sponsors as we do in rural areas". Furthermore, rural learners felt that history to them is irrelevant because they feel in rural areas there are no research opportunities as in the cities. The argument was thus simple, "History is for learners who stay in cities where there are research opportunities". Not only was history dismissed by some of the rural learners as a subject for urban learners and not for them since their parents are unemployed and poor, it was also radicalised by the claim that "whites, coloureds and Indians can study history because they do not need bursaries after matric" because their parents have money. It is important to note from the comments made by rural learners that they feel history might be appropriate for urbanites and minorities. This they claim is as it should be because they feel choosing history is related to money affordability to proceed to higher institutions which might be impossible for rural learners because of financial constraints.

What the learners made clear was that in the deprived rural context they need money to survive for their daily needs and this history would not provide. Commercial



subjects were especially viewed as having the ability to do that which is why the learners talked about bursaries and jobs. This is supported by a learner who said, “By studying accounting I thought I could end up being rich”. Another explained, “I’m coming from poor family therefore, I chose subjects that will draw me closer to money”. The views of rural learners who did not choose history reveal that they made their choices because they are more concerned with leaving the harsh reality of rural life. In their assessment they believe that if they choose commerce and science they are likely to escape to big cities where it seems they would have a more secure future.

Most of the learners seem to be more interested in the business sector knowledge particularly how to run a business, therefore choosing history, they feel will render no value to their job aspirations. Consequently history does not interest them. This was supported by a learner who said, “I did not study history because my interest is in commercial subjects”. This is further supported by another learner who said, “I’m interested in my country’s economy that is why I studied commerce”. Learners indicated that their career pursuits do not require them to include history in their options. Due to the adverse conditions of rural areas, areas which are full of deprivation, dust and poverty learners decided not to choose history because their aim is to escape these areas which they feel are harsh. The views of rural learners who did not choose history about relevancy and the value of history are diverse and multifarious. Learners do acknowledge the value of history in general terms for the transmission of national values although they could not choose history. The reason they indicated is the technological demands coupled with subject choices for a specific field of study they are pursuing. In the present circumstances they said that history might not be relevant for them because their career pursuits do not need study of past events and global knowledge about events because they claimed it would be futile for them to possess knowledge of the past while they neglect their careers’ obligation which does not oblige them to choose history. Seemingly rural learners do not see history in helping them make the transition from rural to urban areas.

From the findings, I came to the conclusion that this is the main theme of chapter 4’s analysis of the views of rural learners who did not choose history. Among four

themes it is the only theme that touches on the future careers of learners if they were to choose history. When learners pass grade 9 it is a requirement that they have to choose subjects that will prepare them for careers to which they aspire. In this theme they have indicated that the reason they did not choose history was because they have been told or heard there is scarcity of jobs if they were to choose history. They also feel it will not equip them for better jobs that are available in cities. Therefore learners are rejecting history because it will not help them to find jobs in urban areas and to escape rurality. The conclusion from which I deduce this theme is that history is not chosen because of various reasons, not that it is valueless but because careers that learners want to choose do not involve the choosing of history. The focus of my discussion is going to look at the conclusion as to what rural learners who did not choose history have indicated as the overall cause that deters them from choosing history

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

The presentation of the views of rural learners who did not choose history has highlighted a number of diverse reasons for them which prevent them from choosing history. Learners have indicated unhappiness about the nature of historical content where they do not want to study the past, particularly apartheid. In the teaching and learning learners have indicated that the way history is taught and learnt is the cause for them not to choose history. Being influenced by other people has also influenced some learners into deciding not to choose history especially if people they trust told them negative things about history. Finally rural learners mentioned that they do not choose history because they feel that after passing history they might not be able to secure decent jobs to which they aspire. These learners have mentioned those four factors which they say deter them from choosing history. However, learners' views indicate that they respect and love history as a subject. This is authenticated by their views when they say that they are aware that history might be valuable in helping to transmit morals and values.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **ANALYSIS OF THE DATA – WHY DID RURAL LEARNERS CHOOSE HISTORY AS A SUBJECT?**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Chapter 5 is dealing with data of learners who are different from those in the previous chapter (which dealt with learners who did not choose history). These learners have chosen history and their views differ from their counterparts in chapter 4. They are curious to know historical content. An analysis of these learners' views shows that their aim is to understand and conceptualise the content learnt in history. They share the same views as the learners who did not choose history that the content learnt in history is full of apartheid and its painful acts. However, their deep wish is to understand why painful acts were committed upon blacks, how apartheid was implemented and whether it was justified to introduce apartheid and lastly to understand what was entailed in apartheid. Not surprisingly, they claimed that they want to be future historians and history teachers in their rural areas.

The analysis of views of rural learners who chose history is arranged into the following themes: nature of history; content knowledge as a factor in choosing history; knowledge to be passed on and required; choosing in a rural context and finding employment. The discussion of chapter 5 will begin with the theme on the discussion of the nature of history.

#### **5.2 Nature of history**

Learners' views indicated that they choose history to understand the past and that this would enable them to avoid the repetition of past mistakes. This view is supported by a learner who said, "History helps in comparing the past experiences with the present to avoid repetition in the future". Another learner equally claimed, "History informs you of the past events and how to rectify them in the future". Therefore their views indicate that their main aim in choosing history is to understand the past in detail so as to engage with the present. Along these lines a learner argued, "History has opened my eyes to view the past critically so as to understand

the present". The conceptual understanding of the nature of history in terms of the past as a factor in choosing the subject is explained as "History teaches us about the change and that in the past we were segregated but now we are united".

Learners' views highlight that they do feel that the understanding of history regarding what happened during the apartheid period might be instrumental to guide the new generation from repeating those mistakes in the post-apartheid period. This is supported by learners who said, "History teaches us about peace and ending of discrimination among Africans" and, "History tells us about the National Party government's bad deeds and this might give a lesson to African National Congress government to guard against such favouritism which was previously enjoyed by whites, something which is not good for others". This is supported by a learner who stated, "I want to know why there was apartheid in South Africa".

The rural learners also linked the study of history to rurality and specifically breaking the monotony of rural living. Hence it was hoped that, "The study of history might help to expose our rural areas which are claimed to be isolated and unknown to the world" while also acting as a source of information, "because in rural areas it is the only source of information because there is no television". The information brought by choosing history was viewed as having the possibility to achieve other aims such as "cohesion among South Africans because we share same destiny". Therefore the participants argued that history has a useful nature for learners in the rural areas.

### **5.3 Content knowledge as a factor in choosing history**

Rural learners who chose history indicated that they were excited to study history in order to acquire the content knowledge of the subject. They want to have a deep conceptual understanding of apartheid, their forefathers, heroes or respected men, citizenship knowledge involving national events, world history, current affairs, social history and how people lived in the past. Along with wanting to gain knowledge, learners indicated that they chose history because they are curious about knowing what happened in the past. Learners wanted to know how events in the past had unfolded and viewed the subject as having the ability to, "teach you everything that happened in your country something which makes you to be well informed".

More specifically learners indicated that they are very concerned with the way apartheid was introduced by the National Party government. They wanted to understand the implementation process so they could have knowledge of it and whether there was any justification for discrimination. This was explained as such, “I wanted to know how apartheid started”. This is further supported by another learner who stated, “I chose history because I wanted to know about the apartheid government as it is claimed that it discriminated against blacks and how it was introduced in 1948”. The rural learners clearly chose the subject to understand other issues related to apartheid beside the implementation as explained by a learner who said, “History explains how apartheid was introduced in 1948 by the National Party and effects thereof on black community”. The aim of rural learners in this regard is to understand the functioning of apartheid; for example why the pass laws were introduced. But the bigger picture related to apartheid was also seen as important and accessible by studying history and an understanding will be gained. In this regard, one learner said, “By learning history I will know more about the apartheid period”. Looking at the views of learners it seems they have developed a particular curiosity to know why discrimination amongst races was introduced and they want to know what this discrimination entailed. As a result comments such as, “I want to learn more about the apartheid government and how it affected the blacks” and, “I can know more about the gruesome atrocities of the apartheid government against blacks” was put forward. In this the, “Studying of history reminds me of the hardships blacks experienced under the apartheid government”.

Learners who are choosing history believe that learning history can unpack the resistance to apartheid as it, “explains the fighting between whites and blacks during apartheid era, however it was for freedom and not hatred”. In this the learners also indicated that they chose history for understanding the past of their heroes, “If there was no history we would not have known anything about our fallen black and white heroes during apartheid” and they would not have known why people like Nelson Mandela, Steve Biko, Bram Fischer and Monty Naicker were detained by the apartheid government. Looking at the views of rural learners it seems they are not concerned about who was wrong or right but their focal point is knowledge acquisition and to have an understanding of the apartheid period. They even wish to understand painful issues such as to, “learn about the origins of the apartheid terms,

like Boss (*Baas*) and Madam to white ladies only and not to blacks". From the comments of rural learners who chose history it can be concluded that they choose history to satisfy a deep curiosity of apartheid specifically.

But some learners choose history out of a deep love of knowing historical facts, events and deeds of the past generations – in other words out of a deep love of the kind of knowledge that makes up the subject. As a result as explained by two learners, "In grade 8 and 9 my teacher told me to choose maths but out of love I chose history" and, "I chose history out of pure love although I had an option to choose science". During the focus group interviews when I asked them what they meant when they said they were choosing history just because of love the answer was their facial expressions, because they just responded by displaying a broad smile which had no substantiated explanation as what was the meaning of just pure love. Verbal explanations offered were that despite pressure from peers and teachers they, "chose history out of love and even refused when my friends advised me to choose science".

The conceptual understanding of apartheid as the broader phenomenon is another dimension that appears in learners' views as to what entails apartheid entails and what were the characteristics of apartheid. Above all they want to understand this "monster" which they feel is based on allegations that have been taught, "History teaches me about the separation of education along racial lines. This gives me an understanding of the apartheid education upon blacks". This is supported by another learner who said, "At home they used to talk about apartheid so I then ended up wanting to know more about this monster as they called it." This is further supported by a learner who said that, "I studied history to know more about the National Party government apartheid policy".

It seems as if the rural learners were told by people who influenced them in their childhood that in the past there was apartheid, and this might have been a driving force behind their curiosity to knowing what lies within the term discrimination. The main aim of learners is not to see the wrong doings of apartheid but to see how it was carried out. This is supported by a learner who said, "I love history although sometimes it brings pain as to how our forefathers were ill-treated by the apartheid

system". This is further supported by another learner who stated, "I study history to understand the apartheid system of National Party's discrimination towards blacks". A similar view about the existence of apartheid is justified by another learner who stated, "History teaches us about the hardships that were experienced by our forefathers during the apartheid period". What is strange about the views of learners who chose history is the absence of negative emotional feeling about whites' actions, instead they want answers as to how apartheid unfolded even in their own rural context as explained by the following claims: "By looking at rural areas you can see the traces and imprints of the apartheid" and, "By looking at rural areas you can get an understanding of how it happened that they are backwards from urban areas as it is claimed".

The views of learners who have chosen history are somehow unique because it seems that all of them are more concerned about information enquiry about the past and how it was lived by past generations for they want, "To learn more about the past events and how they affected our forefathers". Learners claim that as children they had been told by people around them that their forefathers were subjected to discrimination by the National Party government therefore it is as if when they got an opportunity to choose their subjects they wanted to choose history so as to have an in-depth understanding as to why and how discrimination happened. This is supported by a learner who said, "When I discovered that blacks were treated like animals by the apartheid government I wanted to find out what justified such an allegation by people and above all I was more concerned to find out what is there in history that can qualify that".

The understanding of the experiences of people who lived in the past and how they conquered the hardships that they might have encountered provides a spark to the learners to delve deeper in the experiences of their forefathers to share their thoughts and how they managed to survive any form of challenges they might have come across. This is supported by a learner who said, "I chose history because I wanted to learn how our forefathers managed to survive in the past without education". This is further supported by another learner who stated that studying the past to her was to acquire an understanding of past experiences of people who lived previously when she said, "If you study history it takes you to the past experiences of

the past generations". The views of rural learners indicate that they might wish to study history to understand the social living of their forefathers during the apartheid period. This is supported by a learner who stated, "I wanted to know why Afrikaners were aggressive towards blacks in the past".

Views of learners indicate that they are curious to study the apartheid era to have a sense of their heroes' deeds and contributions to laying the foundation for the present. Learners referred here to people who did extra-ordinary contributions to oppose and dismantle apartheid. Hence it was claimed that, "When I study history it reminds me of the freedom fighters who fought with the apartheid government for the liberation of South Africans" and "Through the study of history to know how Steve Biko was killed by the apartheid government". In short learners wanted, by studying history, to learn more about "our heroes like Steve Biko, Martin Luther, and Helen Joseph, Lillian Ngoyi, Yusuf Dadoo and others who contributed to the liberation struggle and who are called our icons".

The wish of rural learners whom I have interviewed is to learn much about their black heroes who they claim they need to be appreciated and be kept alive in their thinking for the contribution they claim they contributed to their liberation from the National Party apartheid government. This is supported by a learner who said, "Through history we understand better the lives of our heroes like Martin Luther, Nelson Mandela and Ruth First". This is further reinforced by another learner who stated, "By studying history we will not forget our black heroes who struggled for us".

The learners also claim they do not want to forget because without the contribution of the mentioned heroes and others they could not have been exposed to a democratically elected government. This is supported by a view of a learner who stated that the important contributions made by heroes in the liberation of South Africa in 1994 need to be kept alive among new generations. This is supported by another learner who said, "To understand how our black heroes like Mandela, Biko, and Sisulu fought for our freedom we need to understand their contributions in the struggle against apartheid". This is further supported by another learner who stated, "History teaches us about the deeds of the fallen heroes, their actions and contributions to freedom". Thus learners who have chosen history show a strong



indication that they have a curiosity and a sense of pride in understanding their origins and those who made it possible that they are part of that what they call their heroes. This is supported by a learner who said, “I chose history because it might help me to know my roots”. The love and curiosity of knowing who you are is supported by another learner who said, “If I can be given an opportunity I would like to tell those who did not know the importance of history in making you well informed about your origins”. This is further supported by another learner who said, “History teaches you about your origins and your nation’s values

The rural learners who have chosen history also indicate a deep curiosity to explore and to uncover the world beyond apartheid history. Learners wanted to explore and conceptualise world history. Two issues emerged in this regard. They are tired of being isolated and not exposed to the ways of life of people in other parts of the world. As such, learners are interested in world history, to learn about other peoples’ cultures and how these cultures might be useful to influence the situations of rurality, in which they grew up. The views of learners indicate that by learning about other peoples’ experiences who once suffered the same deprivation, isolation and backwardness they feel might help them to conquer the adverse effects of rurality, which has been in existence long before and even during their fathers’ periods. These learners do not view South Africa as an isolated entity which is devoid of the cultures of the world, but they claim that South Africa also occupies a pivotal role in the joint co-operation of the whole world. As such they choose history to acquire knowledge about global trends. This is supported by claims such as, “I chose history because I wanted to know more about the history of Russia and the United States of America and why they are called Superpowers” and, “History also tells us about countries like Germany, United States of America and others”.

World history according to the views of rural learners who chose history, also constituted what is new about globalization and culture symbiosis. They feel there is an exchange of knowledge in history which brings understanding to their environments. This is underpinned by statements such as, “History informs you about other countries’ issues without spending money by visiting them” and, “History is good in informing you about world events. That is why people who did history are well informed”.

Views of learners in their written task questionnaires and focus group interviews have indicated that they are choosing history because the subject is valuable in informing them about national events, the national anthem and the flag. The rural learners also believe that it helps them to understand current events in South Africa such as that, "History teaches us that freedom charter says all people have equal rights in democratic South Africa and this is possible if you are a history learner" and that history, "tells us of our human rights which might help me to transmit them to younger generations if I become a qualified teacher". This view is echoed by a learner who explained the vital role that might be played by history learning when he said, "If we choose history it keeps us informed of our country events of the day".

The issue of studying the past in order to have an understanding of their present is confirmed by views of learners who chose history when they said, "History reminds us of horrific events like Sharpeville Massacre of 1960 and Soweto uprising of 1976 so that those who are in political positions can always strive to avoid actions that might lead to its repetitions". But apart from the reminding of these events the subject was also viewed as having the ability to enable learners to live together with respect. Support for this came via statements such as "History teaches me about other people and how to live with others" and, "History teaches you how to interact with other people". The issue of having a mutual spirit with other people is also highlighted in the views of rural learners when they said, "Historians will treat the exiled as people because they were once also exiled to other countries and above they know the experience of others might also help them to solve similar problems". In short learners feel the study of history might be helpful morally and socially because to them history might be instrumental in developing neighbourly relations.

The content knowledge of history as found in the NCS/CAPS-History might not satisfy the quest of learners to learn a particular content they hope is included in the history curriculum. Some learners expressed the wish to study the history of Kwazulu-Natal so as to be well informed about its history of while another wanted "to learn more about the Zulu nation and history of King Shaka" and, "I chose history because I feel it can help me to understand our values as Zulus." Similar views about studying ethnic history do appear several times among rural learners who appear to

be interested in their ethnic history. In an extreme view a learner explained, “I chose history to learn more about Zulu culture not Xhosa”.

A strong sentiment expressed was that, “black learners are failing at schools because they have left their cultures and followed European traditions”. However during interviews learners were unable to support this allegation. This is further supported by another learner who said, “I hope by studying history in future blacks will start to appreciate their culture and blend it with European cultures to supplement its shortfalls.” Clearly the learners felt that history must serve a certain Africanist agenda.

From the views that have been highlighted above, it seems that rural learners who have chosen history hold diverse and multifarious views about content knowledge in history. These learners feel that in the study of history there is a history they hope for which is not provided but that does not diminish their love for the subject. These learners appear to have a deep seated love for history content; as a result they seem to enjoy the study of history. Above all in their study of content knowledge they want to know more about apartheid, their forefathers, heroes, world history, citizenship knowledge, current knowledge, social history and Zulu culture. The learners believe that the content is knowledge worthy to be passed on and acquired as discussed under the next theme.

#### **5.4 Knowledge to be passed on and acquired**

The views expressed by rural learners about the acquisition of knowledge with an aim to pass it on seem to be occupying a central role in the thinking of rural learners who chose history. These learners seem to want to follow in the steps of their grandparents who were teaching them about historical events during their younger years. According to the rural learners this motivated them to choose history. Therefore they are choosing history in order to conceptualise and understand it then to pass it on to the next generation either as history teachers or through the kind of narration which they experienced via their own grandparents.

The rural learners who chose history have indicated that they want to conceptualise and internalise history content knowledge with the principal aim of passing it on to

the next generations. Therefore they aim to teach others after its acquisition in formal and informal settings. When the learners grew up it seemed they were influenced into appreciating the past and subsequently started to convince themselves to study the past so that they can be custodians of the past information and to pass it on to others. This thinking is supported by learners who explained, “By studying history I will be able to pass information to the younger generations as to what life in South Africa in the past looked like” and, ‘History teaches us about the past which we can pass on to the next generations’.

Learners in some instances indicated that they chose history because they have been positively influenced by their parents. This is supported by a learner who said, “I chose history because I was motivated by my parents into choosing it because of high marks I obtained in grade 8 and 9”. They have also chosen the subject because of some influence that comes from their relatives or people close to them with discernable views. This is supported by a learner who said, “My uncle advised me to choose history if I wanted to be up to date with current events”. It must be pointed out that these positive encouragements in favour of history were few and far between as explained by one learner, “In my school most learners are not doing history because most of teachers say history is a useless subject”. Further evidence in this regard is provided by a similar statement, “Even teachers in our school criticise history but I know that out of history I will learn more about our black values and way of life”. Similar comments came from their peers, “I chose history although my friends were saying it was for stupid learners.” The learners’ views do indicate that they are unconcerned about negative comments or disregarded them when it came to history because what they might want is content which they claim they will pass on to others.

But choosing history clearly also meant acquiring other skills and abilities specifically related to English – a very powerful factor in their future. A view existed amongst those who participated in this research that the command of English by learners who have chosen history has in the past proven to be beneficial because of the debates and extended writing that the subject demands. It was stated that history empowers them to be able to narrate what they intend to say in a most appropriate manner without misleading their audience by their lack of relevant terminology. In short they

argued, "With history a person can be a good narrator of events as they occurred". Their belief in this was based on their having witnessed it happening to former history learners who are now politicians of reputable status who have shown fluency in their speech deliveries. Learners felt if former history learners became fluent in English through history the subject could do the same for them. One of the participants put it simply, "I chose history because all senior learners who did history are good in English". To the rural learners who chose history a very clear relationship with the English language existed via the subject and that motivated them to take the subject.

The views of rural learners indicated that they feel that in history they might acquire certain skills which they hope might help them in the future. They feel that if they want to be teachers or people who are responsible for passing on the history content to others these skills are necessary. These learners therefore selected history because they feel it will provide them with these skills. These learners highlighted the acquisition of debating skills with which they feel history might be able to provide them. This is supported by a learner who said that by studying history as learners we are hoping to acquire debating skills and said, "I chose history because I saw previous matriculants being good in debating". The next theme to be presented is on choosing history in a rural context and finding employment.

### **5.5 Choosing history in a rural context and finding employment**

The views of rural learners who have chosen history when compared to those who did not choose history hardly differ when it comes to job opportunities. The scarcity of jobs is supported by a learner who said, "Most learners in rural schools do not choose history because they say that there are few job opportunities". However, learners who have chosen history indicate that they feel there is an abundance of specific job opportunities they could access because they had chosen history. The reasoning advanced is that history can help them to develop special basic skills such as eloquence, and argumentative skills which would equip them to occupy high political positions. They explained this during focus group interviews when it was said, "By studying history I can be a future president of South Africa" and, "I chose history to learn more and maybe I can contribute to political changes in South Africa". Other possible occupations they could engage in because of the skills

identified above were, according to the learners, the following: magistrate, lawyer, journalist, historian or history teacher or “explaining history to tourists”.

However, the overwhelming view of rural learners about choosing history appears to be embedded in the pure love for the subject and simultaneously it seems that history learners are not overly worried about jobs emanating from their subject. Their love for and interest in the subject carried more weight. One learner explained this very well, “Although history has scarce job opportunities I chose it out of pure love”. Therefore the learners make links between history and job opportunities, but for different reasons.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

The views of rural learners who have chosen history as their subject have indicated diverse reasons for their choice. In conclusion themes on the views of learners who chose history were presented under the following themes: Nature of history, content knowledge as a factor in choosing history, knowledge to be passed on and required and choosing history in a rural context and finding employment. Learners have indicated that their choosing has been because of the above factors otherwise they would not have chosen history. It has been learnt that rural learners chose history to gain a conceptual understanding of the nature of history as to how history in the past has been used and manipulated. Learners also want to conceptualize the content knowledge of history where they want to interrogate a specific historical event as it occurred in the past with an aim to ask why, where and how questions, in order to grasp history content. These learners mentioned that they chose history content knowledge with an aim to pass it on to the next generations. The learners who chose history are aware of atrocities that were committed by the apartheid Afrikaner National Party government upon their forefathers but surprisingly that does not build any hatred towards whites. Instead it creates a deep sense of conceptualising and understanding the apartheid implementation process, how it functioned and what it entailed.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 is divided into two parts, part 1 and 2. In part 1 the discussion will relate to the findings of the study and part 2 will be the conclusion of the entire dissertation. The discussion will consist of a deeper interpretation and explanation of the findings explained in the previous two chapters. The conclusion will finalise the whole research process and show the significance and implication of this study.

The major pattern in the data of my study is that there is correlation in the views of rural learners for choosing or not choosing history. In other words, the reasons given by rural learners for choosing and not choosing are inter-related. The reasons given by the learners who did not choose were on the other hand the main reasons given by those who chose it. Both groups also did not really have strong negative feelings for the subject, but their perceptions were mainly shaped by external factors.

The new development is that previous studies barely looked at the rural context. The only work that touches on rural learners is on the work on *Emerging Voices* (2005) which explain rural areas as places of deprivation, isolation and places full of dust. Their emphasis was on city learners and the significance is that we now have knowledge as to what reasons are mentioned by rural learners to choose or not choose history as their subject and if there is any difference between findings of city learners with previous work that I consulted in the literature review.

#### 6.2 Discussion of Findings

There were a number of reasons that were indicated by learners for not choosing or choosing history as a subject and these are: historical factors for not choosing history, being influenced by others not to choose the subject, the teaching and learning of history, and finding employment and taking history in the rural context. For those who chose the subject, the main themes were: the nature of history

content, content knowledge as a factor in choosing history, knowledge to be passed on, and choosing history in a rural context and finding employment.

One finding was that the learners did not choose history because of the nature of the subject and its content. It seems that those learners are unhappy about the choice of content they are being taught in history and as a result they end up not choosing history. The content does not meet their expectations and leaves them disappointed. Some of the content that they did not like is apartheid because it reminded them of the painful past and creates hatred between the different races in South Africa. The views of those who did not choose history are in agreement with the literature. According to Wassermann (2007) some Afrikaner learners are losing interest in history because of the way it deals with apartheid. Wassermann (2007) says the learners believe the past is dead and gone; instead they want to learn about adventure and fantasy and above all learners want to learn about morals and how they live and not to delve in the dead past. Learners sometimes prefer religion issues, freedom of speech matters and peace and environmental preservation to be included so as to make history appealing to them. He further said that learners place more emphasis on church sites, parks of birds that are threatened and finally genealogical formations rather than on history (Wassermann, 2007). However, the learners in the literature are generally urban learners while the learners in this study are rural learners.

The learners in this study want to avoid the apartheid content because they feel it leads to disunity, development of hatred and it keeps on reminding them of the painful past. Dryden (1999) is of the opinion that city learners reject history as a subject as they believe that it would be better to forget history and to think instead of the present and the future.

According to Mackie (2007), learners may seem to feel that they are being punished for the legacy of the past which was not of their creation, so they would rather forget about it. The issue of learners who wanted to forget about the past is supported by the *Financial Mail* (2000) which stated that young people of all races were immersed in history in pre-liberation South Africa, because it was a terrain of the struggle, but today learners are now less interested in history but are more



concerned with the present and the future. The findings in chapter 4 support the fact that learners are interested in the present and the future. This is stated by Nuttal (2000) who said the negative attitude to history to many students and learners, and for many people in South Africa today both whites and blacks alike, is potentially a source of discomfort and embarrassment and as a result learners feel history is a painful subject which is capable of reviving a painful past. This is further confirmed by Mackie (2007) who stated that learners believe history is a source of oppression which they feel had caused their parents and families much hardships and to them they feel it has resulted in pain. The issue of embarrassment and remembrance of a painful past could explain why some rural learners decided not to choose history. Those who saw history as painful are not concerned about embarrassment, but feel that history makes them angry and that it made them want to fight and think of revenge on whites.

Those learners who choose history did so because of their interest in content such as apartheid. This means that the same historical content made some learners not like the subject while others liked it for precisely the same content. In fact, some wanted to know more about apartheid than what is in the curriculum. Literature also contains the same arguments as the learners. Dryden (1999) stated that learners want to know about Mandela. She said teachers even confirm that every year learners keep on asking when are they going to learn about Mandela, new South Africa and above all they want to hear about Mandela and apartheid. In addition, the rural learners have other content they expect to learn about such as Zulu and world history.

Learners who did not choose history in this study dislike content in school history that is dominated by the ANC and Xhosas with the exclusion of the IFP which they associate with Zulus. This shows how the learners are loyal to their ethnic identities, which is one of the characteristics of rurality. It also shows how the history of the country has left some rural areas polarised according to political party loyalty. Generally some of the learners do not like the history of Nelson Mandela with his African National Congress. This view concurs with the learners who did not choose history in rural areas but there is a great disagreement between learners who

choose history. To them the content is what they want to explore, to know the past much better as to why and how it happened.

What is therefore evident is that both groups of learners who chose history and those who did not are unhappy about the content that is in the curriculum. The only difference is that the latter still chose the subject in spite of them being unhappy with some of the content because of their love for it. Wassermann (2007) stated that selection criteria in history leaves out interest and the aspiration of learners.

The teaching and learning of history findings suggest that rural learners are unhappy about the way history is taught by some teachers and the way it is learnt. Although they sometimes confused cases of teacher abuse (such as corporal punishment) with the teaching of history, they were of the view that the teaching of history left much to be desired. Literature explains the relationship between the teaching of history and the creation of attitudes for or against the subject. Cole (2005) says that the wrong approach of teaching is taken by learners as another problem they encounter in the teaching of history. He gives examples of countries such as Bosnia and Rwanda where history has been suspended partly or wholly in public schools because of the unwillingness to devise approaches that will be accepted by pupils at schools. Bad teaching of history can have a negative effect in both rural and urban areas. However, the complaints of the rural learners in this study makes sense if they are understood on the basis of rural areas in South Africa failing to attract qualified teachers. Van Densberg (1983) mentioned that poor teaching methods, such as the memorisation technique are caused by principals of schools who entrust non-specialists with the task of teaching the subject on the assumption that any person can teach history.

Another finding which was related to both the issue of the nature of history and that of teaching approaches is the assertion by the learners that they do not like having to work with too much information such as dates. This issue is also related to the history curriculum. Van Densberg (1983) said that learners mentioned memorisation as a stumbling block in history teaching which deters them because they almost forget all facts before they could be tested. This is further confirmed by Barnovic (2007) when he said that the history syllabus is so overburdened that there is not

enough time to even teach the recent events which learners might want to learn. The fear of learning too much in a short time leads to learner fatigue. This is especially so if the way the subject of history is taught is predominantly teacher centred in which pupils are the passive recipients of a growing body of facts that are provided orally by the teacher and reinforced by notes (Van Densberg, 1983). Yilmaz (2009) concurs when he says learners complain about the burden of history when they are required to understand for example history of the Ottoman history of some 623 years, within one term. This is further stated by Van Densberg (1983) that history content has excessive content in grade10. Schoeman (2006) argues that history teaching today follows the pattern of the past with rote learning, lack of imagination, lack of excitement and ultimately a lack of interest among learners still being prevalent. This could explain the findings in chapter 4.

The issue of teachers swamping learners with information is not only explained by the lack of qualified teachers, but also by poor teacher training since qualified teachers are also guilty of encouraging memorisation only. Van Densberg (1983) said teacher training must also share some of the blame for teaching teachers to make learners memorise and regurgitate information something he said learners fear in history learning. Yilmaz (2009) also mentions incompetent teachers as a cause of learners not to choose history. He provided example of teachers who openly agreed that they were given history to teach but they have limited teaching methods. Yilmaz, feels this will lead to memorisation and finally result in learners not choosing history. The views of literature concur with rural learners who did not choose history. However it seemed those who choose history are not concerned by the issue of incompetent teachers since they never complained about them. To them they enjoy those teachers as well as the history subject. It is possible their confessed love for the subject compensates for teacher incompetency or that they realised that corporal punishment should not be associated with the subject but the whole school system.

Learners have indicated different difficulties during teaching .This is validated by the views of rural learners during focus group interviews and written task questionnaires where they indicated that they were rejecting history because of the physical abuse that was occurring in their classes during teaching. They revealed that some

teachers beat them when they failed. This point is generalizing because it can happen with other learning areas not only in history as a subject and this view is in agreement with the literature review. It is possible that learners feared corporal punishment in history classes because that is one of the subjects they found difficult and thus had more chances of failing hence the corporal punishment.

The issue of history being difficult was validated by the learners who confessed that they found the subject so and some of them even failed it in grade 8 and 9. This shows that some learners make choices depending on what subjects they have already passed with better marks. The difficult aspects include reading which was invariably linked to rote learning without understanding. This could be explained by the view of Van Densberg (1983) that learners in South Africa struggle in history because they are being taught history in a language other than their mother tongue. According to Van Densburg (1983) to them this complicates the difficulties posed by limited reading skills. This view of rural learners who did not choose history is echoed by the views of literature, but this view is not supported by the learners who choose history. To them reading is what they believe will lead them to the acquisition of immersed information about why or how past events happened.

Some learners just do not have an interest in history. The rural learners feel they have nothing to gain from history and therefore they have no interest. Their lack of interest is also compounded by the nature of the historical content and the teaching approaches discussed above. This is supported by Van Densberg (1983) during his conversation with learners when he said that it is generally admitted that interest in history as a school subject is waning. He claims that it is largely as a result of the poor return in examination success coupled with the demands of rote learning which alienate learners from choosing history. This issue is further supported by Schoeman (2003) who conducted a survey on learners in the city and discovered that history has had a continuous battle in schools to ensure its place not only as a separate subject in the curriculum but also for a place in the minds and interests of the youth who do not happen to be less interested in history teachings. This is further concurred by Van Densberg (1983) when he said those who do not share the political ideology of the present government view history as being used in

schools for political purposes. This argument is directly linked to the findings from IFP dominated schools where learners felt that there was too much ANC history.

The lack of interest is also linked to the past role of history in South Africa, where it was used for excessive indoctrination (Wasserman, 2007; Van Eeden, 1997). In relation to this, The *Financial Mail* (2000) stated that after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 interest in history waned as there were no longer any answers that were explained in history teaching about the end result of the Berlin wall to mankind. Brooks (1993) explains the views of learners as negative when he said that it is often seen as a subject with very limited aims. Dryden (1999) supports this by saying learners are of the belief that history is failing them because it does not help them understand the world around them; and concentrates usually on the acquisition of knowledge and information about ages remote from learners' own experiences. Similarly, Schoeman (2006) generally discovered that learners acknowledge that history is interesting or even important but to them history is also failing to bring a connection between various issues of life. He said moreover that they did not choose history because they perceive no connection between the history learned in schools and the significance of current affairs programs, contemporary political events or even news on the economy

Learners who have chosen history disagree, as they consider history is a valuable subject. They feel by studying history they will understand the past vividly and avoid the repetition of past mistake in the present and the future. These learners see history as a subject that does not only bring pain but also pride. As a result, the learners wanted to study history to learn more about their heroes such as Steve Biko, Martin Luther, Helen Joseph, Lillian Ngoyi, Yusuf Dadoo and Bram Fischer. They are mainly concerned with the acquisition of information to pass it on to the next generations as future history teachers. These learners seem to want to follow in the footsteps of their grandparents who were teaching them during their childhood and youth.

The views of learners indicate that history is not chosen only because of their own experiences but also because of the influence of their society including parents/families, teachers and peers/friends. The influence learners receive from

various people around them is evident in their views on history when they say they had been told or heard from others various views on the subject. Dryden (1999) also conducted interviews where the learners said the reason they were not doing history was because their parents told them they would not get a job. This is an indication that some of the learners' views about history are not theirs but parents' wishes. Some learners are forced to choose science or commerce subjects. The parental influence issue is supported by Nuttal (1995) who stated that the views of learners about history are shaped by a number of reasons. Therefore, learners bring a variety of ways of viewing the past influenced by their personal experiences, their family, social environments, and by what they read and see in the popular media.

The findings in chapter 5 showed that the learners who choose history do agree that they have also noticed how people have tried to persuade them not to take history. Nevertheless, they are adamant that they choose history against the wishes of their peers because they love history. These learners also talk about a positive influence when they explain how they hear about historical heroes and other issues from home and this increases their curiosity to know more about these issues and hence end up choosing history.

A major finding regarding the rural learners who did not choose history was because they felt it was a hindrance to their future career prospects. The learners highlighted the non-marketability of history. This is supported by Nuttal (2000) when he said that a tight labour market, together with changing students' perceptions of where jobs are to be found, is determining in ever more decisive ways how students select their courses. Furthermore, the issue of marketability is supported by Brooks (1993) when he said that learners feel it is vocationally disadvantageous to study history at school. This he said is mentioned by learners when they feel that choosing history at school is vocationally suicidal and even more so at university. Schoeman (2003) further mentions the marketability of history in a highly competitive curricular marketplace.

Howard (2004), states that learners said that it is a widespread belief that training in history leads to nowhere in the job market. A general perception is that history to

them is irrelevant to problems of the present and the future. Stolten (2007) concurs when he said that views of learners about history are negative, this being caused by the fact that present minded generations are interested mostly in the market and its utilitarian values of history. This leads learners to become impatient with history. This he said makes history peripheral to learners because it cannot guarantee job opportunities. Furthermore, this issue of marketability is supported by Mackie (2007) who said that learners' views about history are that they feel history as a subject is unhelpful in the job market. This means that there is agreement in the literature review with the findings of my research I conducted on rural learners who did not choose history. In contrast this view is opposed by rural learners who choose history because they feel history leads them to career opportunities they desire.

Career choice is another view which appears several times from learners who were interviewed, as to why they do not choose history. This is supported by Bundy (2007) when he said that by the 1990s history was failing to attract student teachers or inter-institutional resources and as a subject it was unexpectedly a major causality of curriculum and syllabus review. Furthermore, he said that in his findings it was not that learners see history as useless but they believe that history is failing to lead them to obvious employment opportunities. Maylam (1995) stated that history is viewed by learners as not leading to career prospects; he said that students themselves as well as learners are aware of the tight job market. This has confirmed that they should not choose history. This is further confirmed by Stolten (2007) when he said that history at a certain stage helped people in an instrumental way to meet most important needs, such as the eradication of apartheid. He said that this has changed today for learners and most people the main priority is to pursue an individual career in a free market, a demand for which learners feel history is failing them. Above all the career prospects' demand is mentioned in the *Financial Mail* (2000) when it said that in 1994 there was an emergence of a post-1994 generation of students who either want to forget the past, and who are so career orientated that they have no time for a general discipline, something applicable to both white and black learners.

It seems the issue of money and escaping rural despair are the main driving factors for rural learners not to choose history. They even believe that history is for those in the towns, especially the whites, coloureds and Indians. The mention of these racial groups can be understood on the basis that they relatively experienced a better life than blacks under apartheid. Therefore some rural learners feel that the only way they can advance is by doing subjects other than history because only then can they secure good jobs. However, the rural learners who choose history see the availability of jobs they envy in life such as being magistrates, lawyers or journalists as being possible. In fact, even those who did not choose history appreciate the subject's link to skills such as argumentation, expression, extensive reading and writing. The rural learners who choose history also say they want to develop the skill of good oratory by studying history. They therefore do not see history as a limitation to their future prospects. Some of them even feel that moving out of rural areas is a sign of being prosperous. This is evidenced by their desire to return and teach history in their home areas.

Findings indicate that rural learners who did not choose history might have been interested in choosing history but due to the reason that they felt they may end up choosing a political orientated job which to them is a dangerous choice. As a result they end up not choosing history because they feel choosing history could lead to pre-mature death. This is supported by the views of learners who did not choose history and the views of the literature review where there is a saying that politics is a dirty game. On the other hand it was argued that some of the jobs that history could bring in the rural areas were dangerous and if they chose history they are likely to be involved in politics which might result in quick termination of their life span due to political party inter-wars which are prevalent in the rural areas.

What can then be said about the findings of this study is that the rural context makes learners view history in similar ways, but results in different attitudes. On one hand, learners mentioned a number of reasons that make them not to choose history. They consider it as a subject they want to forget because it is painful, that is too difficult, and is taught by incompetent teachers. The selection of content does not interest learners and they think that the subject does not open up career opportunities. The major influences in the subject choices are people with whom the



learners interact. Literature concurs with the views of rural learners about teaching and learning of history.

On the other hand, the learners who chose to do history in a way confirm the problems identified by those who did not choose it. However, they do not see them as problems, but as factors that motivated them to choose the subject. Therefore they find history relevant to their lives, is interesting and a gateway to good careers while passing on their history to the next generation of South Africans.

### **6.3 Conclusions to be drawn from my study**

A strong point that has been exposed by my work is that there are gaps in the available literature covering rural education, particularly history education. The literature exposed that the rural context in the past has been marginalized by researchers as they paid more attention to urban areas. My research study has contributed in minimizing these gaps. Nelson Mandela in *Emerging Voices* (2005) lamented the fact that rural areas are isolated, unknown and unheard of by the South African communities. This dissertation can be taken as a response to Mandela's cry to expose the life of the former Bantustans' section of South African communities and to have a conceptual understanding of how the Afrikaner National Party silenced the voices of rural communities in the past which are still now lagging behind in development and social upliftment.

Another point emerging from this research is that the curriculum does not leave learners with a choice to choose other subject combinations provided or given by the curriculum. Some principals believe that history does not offer career opportunities. This can lead them to make arbitrary decisions such as eliminating it from the school curriculum without consulting with their stakeholders. This is what I experienced whilst I was a learner.

History is on the periphery of rural education because rural learners have been negatively motivated not to choose history because they felt in history there is a scarcity of job opportunities. The reasons given by rural learners who did not choose history is the outside influence either from parents, teachers, peers and relatives who are contributing a huge impact on their choosing or not choosing

history. They have been told that only commerce and science can provide easy escape to the cities and they have been told it is not possible with history as a subject choice.

Lastly the strongest point which has emerged was during the meeting between Professor Moletsane and me which was arranged by Professor Johan Wassermann and played an enormous contribution to my study. Previously we looked at rurality as a static entity but when I visited the sight of research it was revealed to me that rurality is not of that nature. This was emphasized by Professor Moletsane in that it is a changing entity which was also proved during my fieldwork because some of the rural areas now have electricity. Centrifugal and centripetal forces will be understood by the reader to have helped in giving explanations for the movement of rural learners to seek employment in cities. The centripetal force will be understood as to how it plays its part on rural learners who have escaped rurality to work in the cities and made enough savings to retire to the rural areas to make a living. The reader will understand my work as closing the gaps left by *Emerging Voices* (2005) in exposing the rural context

This research is aimed at enabling the reader to draw comparisons between the views of urban learners and rural learners about history and to understand the rural context and its adverse effects on rural learners in choosing or not choosing history. It also helps understand why the numbers of learners in history are in constant decline; and why history as a subject is on the periphery or is being marginalised as compared to other subjects. By doing so one can understand the effects of the rural context on the choosing or not choosing history as a subject.

The first key research question that I posed was how rural learners choose their subjects. The conclusion that I reached was that rural learners in grade 9, for grade 10 are free to choose subjects they want to as provided in the curriculum. However, the conclusion is that the views of rural learners in making their choices are sometimes not an independent initiative. Learners mentioned a number of factors that played a part during their choosing. Learners eluded to the fact that free will to choose is there but in most cases their choosing is because of outside influences they experience from their parents, teachers, peers and relatives. These people

sometimes tell learners that if they want bright futures they should not choose history.

The reasons rural learners mentioned are that according to their experiences history does not open up various career pursuits in life. As a result learners are influenced by these people to choose commerce or science. Commercial and science subjects are mentioned as key to better work in the cities and are an easy escape from rural areas to urban centres where learners are being told they can earn sufficient money to look after themselves and their families. Therefore choosing by rural learners takes into consideration what they want to attain in the future which will guarantee they and their families enjoy a better life.

The second question of my research work is what drives rural learners to make the kind of choices they make about history. Glaser (1986) with his choice theory explained that there are driving factors for rural learners to make the kind of choices about history. He mentioned some factors such as socio-economic and political factors which drive learners to make such choices about choosing or not choosing history. The effects of rurality are felt by rural learners who grew up experiencing financial constraints which are different from urban life. Rural learners have been influenced in one way or another by the context in which they grew up or by people around them due to the fact they grew up experiencing hardship in rural areas. They were advised that the choices they make should help them to escape the harsh conditions of a rural context which is associated socially with poverty, isolation and deprivation. These are the socio-economic factors that motivate subject choices in the rural areas.

The influence of the context was also evident in that rural learners who do not choose history are scared of being associated with a particular political organization. They feel that if they associate with any political party it can lead them to pre-mature death because of the faction fights among the political organization. They mentioned inter-political wars between the ANC and (IFP) and therefore rural learners are driven by the wish to escape these wars which are the political push factors.

I also reached a conclusion in carrying out this research that the reasons given by rural learners for not choosing history indicate some similarities with those of urban learners who do not choose history meaning there is an agreement in the literature review. The major difference stems from the fact that rural learners do not choose history because they are preparing themselves for a new life in urban areas, or a competitive life they are going to share with urban learners. What was noticeable is that learners who did not choose history give similar reasons but in a negative way.

What is significant from the findings is that as long as rurality is associated with problems such as poverty and unemployment, the learners might keep thinking that studying subjects such as history will tie them down to the dust forever. Therefore there is a need for a new conceptualisations of rurality coupled with efforts to eliminate poverty and unemployment. This means that some of the negativity that history attracts does not stem from the subject itself but from the context of rurality.

Learners complained about history content meaning that there is a need for content to be revised. Wassermann (2007) stated that learners' aspirations are not taken in to consideration when history content is chosen. This is confirmed by Howard (2004) when he suggested that historians should always ask themselves when designing content whom they wish to serve. He said national history is necessary. It must be inclusive of all layers of society, not just the national elite and above all, nationalism that has been indigenized, enriched, energized and enhanced to fit the minds of South Africans. Van Densberg (1983) gave the example of Britain as to how the selection of content has impacted on the selection of history subject content. He said that the history syllabus in Britain resulted in a significant shift in pupils' perceptions of the subject such that most pupils regarded the new history as more difficult than maths, a view which might also be common among South African learners.

The teaching approaches applied in history also need to be improved in order for the subject to reduce negative stereotypes meaning that more learner orientated teaching should take place. Learners and parents also need career guidance as it seems evident from the findings that they did not all grasp the career possibilities of

particular school subjects. This problem was exacerbated by some subjects being promoted at the cost of history.

#### **6.4 Shortcomings of my study**

Major methodological shortcomings I encountered during my first fieldwork was the time constraints as participants have a limited number of hours a day to spend at school as they were busy with their lessons during these periods. To address the shortcomings of time I requested special permission from parents and heads of schools involved to make participants available after school hours so as to provide enough time for full participation during my fieldwork. I hired a car that could transport me to the nearest road because after school when I saw learners there was no transport available.

Teachers themselves were suspicious of my presence in their schools because on the first school day coincidentally I arrived with a Provincial Intervention Team, which is based in Howard Department of Education in Durban. The teachers thought I was an agent of *MEC* in disguise which restricted my presence at schools. However, the resulting excitement made it possible for me to obtain rich data but the teachers themselves were unhappy and consequently displayed this by refusing to give me grade 9 or grade 10. Instead they said they were prepared to offer me other classes and in school A and they offered me grade12, in school B they offered me grade 11 and at the final school which is school C they also offered me grade 11. I appreciate the fact that all these learners wrote sufficient data and during focus group interviews they were most cooperative.

Focus group interview and semi-structured interviews were hampered by a language barrier, as some learners, teachers and principals preferred IsiZulu rather than English because they said they wanted to express themselves fluently as second language speakers. In view of this as anticipated by my supervisors we agreed that I was at liberty to apply code switching something which later ameliorated my language dilemma.

Generalising my research findings to a larger group will be a measure to some extent of the shortcomings of my study since I focused only on three selected

schools in a deep rural setting in KwaZulu-Natal Against this background my study has been structured to provide insight that may also be of value in exploring other similar situations.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

The focus of my study was on why rural learners choose or not choose history as a subject at the end of grade 9. The study has answered the key research questions in the following way. What has emerged from my study is a range of reasons why learners choose or not choose the subject. Learners did not choose history because they did not like how it was taught, the language associated with the subject and also the content – especially the negative aspects of apartheid in relation to black people, Other reasons for not choosing the subject were the influence and pressure from fellow learners, teachers, parents and society not to choose the subject. At times learners were intimidated and belittled if they wanted to do the subject and as a result many then opted not to do it. At the same time, in the difficult economic world of a rural area, many chose not to take history as it was argued that it would not give them a job or help them to get into university. That would then mean that they remain in the rural areas and remain poor. Many times all these factors worked together to prevent learners from choosing the subject.

Despite all the challenges some learners did choose the subject and those who did, did so because they liked the nature of the subject and the kind of knowledge it embraced. They were not deterred because of the suffering of their ancestors in history but wanted to know what things were like then and why they are living in a poor rural area. In simple terms they liked the nature of history and the things that they have learnt and thought it the kind of knowledge that must be passed on to other people. They also thought that history can prepare people for certain kinds of jobs.

The contribution of my study to the literature is that it provided some clear ideas on why history is chosen or not chosen as a subject. Although my study was conducted in a rural context and cannot necessarily be transferred to other contexts it can nevertheless help, teachers, parents and administrators, who are concerned about

the declining numbers of learners taking the subject, to understand why this is happening. If they wish they can then plan to change the situation.

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## APPENDIX A



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2 August 2011

Mr DM Mhlongo (210555587)  
School of Social Sciences Education  
Faculty of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Mhlongo

**PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/0670/011M**

**PROJECT TITLE: Why do learners choose or reject history? A case of rural schools in KwaZulu-Natal**

In response to your application dated 28 July 2011, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

  
.....  
**Professor Steven Collings (Chair)**  
**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

cc. Supervisor: Prof JM Wassermann

cc. Ms T Mnisi, Faculty Research Office, Faculty of Education, Edgewood Campus