DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my dear parents: My late father, Junius Madubula, and mother, Lulama Mabel Mashele, for the disciplined nurture and the education foundation offered I had. Especially to my mother, whose interest in and concern about this thesis were the stimulus for my investigations, and whose loving support was vital to the creation and completion of this volume.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- I wish to acknowledge and extend thanks to the school managers, educators and learners at the survey schools, as well as the Department of Education officials who kindly agreed to be interviewed.

- I am also very grateful to my supervisor for her supervision. Dr Marina van Loggerenberg, you were like a friend, a sister, a mother to me, but most of all a good leader and manager. May God bless you and enjoy the rest of your pension years.

- Special thanks to prof Tom Bisschoff for his hard work and encouragement. Be blessed.

- Special acknowledgements are extended to Mrs Susan Gouws, for the typing and editing of this thesis.

- Special thanks to my family, for their gentle loving support and constant encouragement through a long and sometimes arduous process. My children for always asking: When are you becoming a doctor, mommy? Your prayers have been answered.

- To my sister, Linda, and my brothers, Fumani and Andile, for their steadfast reassurances and for believing in me even when I didn’t believe in myself anymore.

- I would like to give special recognition to my mom who was very concerned about my studies. She would spend sleepless nights with me listening to transcriptions. I didn’t know it was her last support towards my studies. Thank you, Mom, for your endless support. May your soul rest in peace.

- I want to thank God, the Almighty for the strength, the courage and the wisdom He gave me throughout this research study.
• It is my hope that the thesis will be immediately helpful to many South Africans.
ABSTRACT

HIV/AIDS presents a major challenge in South Africa. HIV/AIDS was officially diagnosed as a disease in South Africa since the early 1980’s. Initially people did not want to acknowledge the existence of HIV/AIDS. In South Africa there are many people living with HIV and some are already dying of AIDS-related diseases. This study investigated the perceptions of learners, educators, and Department of Education officials on the influence of HIV/AIDS in schools in informal settlements. The aim of this study was firstly, to establish what the perceptions were of learners, educators and Departmental officials about the influence that HIV/AIDS has on the education sector; secondly, to describe how the research would be undertaken; thirdly, to establish ways how to integrate HIV/AIDS issues in the curriculum that will provide specific skills and information to help avoid risky and immoral sexual behaviour and to reduce the spread of HIV and other STI’s; and ultimately, to strive towards achieving a tendency to promote abstinence.

The naturalistic research design was used to establish what these perceptions were of the influence HIV/AIDS have on learners, educators, and Department of Education officials. Focus group interviews and discussions, observations and field notes were the data sources. The focus group discussions were tape-recorded for transcriptions. Transcriptions were studied and analysed; different colours were used for decoding and clustering of the findings, in order to identify themes and categories.

The findings of this study confirm that the respondents from the education sector, more specifically the learners, the educators, and the officials in service of the Department of Education, are aware of the enormous influence that HIV/AIDS have on education in general and schools more specifically. The findings also represent the daunting challenge that South Africa as a society has. The influence stemmed from different dimensions as represented in the categories and themes that were identified, but they are all interrelated.

The most serious challenge that South Africa faces in this era of HIV/AIDS however, is still poverty. South Africa is a country of widespread and persistent
poverty and therefore deep inequalities exist. Poverty and HIV/AIDS are interrelated. Poverty provides the context for AIDS and AIDS exacerbates poverty. Poor households are more likely to feel the impact of AIDS resulting in an increase in the extent of poverty. Poverty and the HIV/AIDS epidemic are two of the most devastating diseases ever to hit South Africa. The influence thereof is now beginning to sink in among most communities. Already the influence of living with HIV/AIDS in the midst of poverty is being felt in hundred of thousands of households across the country.

Education is a sector central to human development. Increasing evidence of HIV/AIDS will reduce the capacity of learners to attend school and to learn. Expansion of enrolments and improvement of teaching will be eroded by staff losses and reduced institutional efficiency. All this is experienced at the time when the Department of Education has rationalised teacher-training colleges and very few students register for a teaching degree at higher institutions of learning. Current shortages of educators in the schools as a result of HIV/AIDS compromise the quality of education in our country and undermine the fundamental objectives of ensuring that there are sufficient numbers of skilled people in the economy.

The significance of this study is situated in breaking the silence, making participants talk about the subject of HIV/AIDS openly. This in itself is a major breakthrough in any research that has thus far been undertaken, and the facts that were uncovered and discussed in the interviews contribute hugely to the body of scientific knowledge on this monstrous disease. The further contribution of this thesis is to be found in the written up findings, conclusions, recommendations and the suggestions provided in Chapter 5 that will inculcate abstinence and ultimately enforce disclosure of one’s status. It is the researchers’ belief that this study will further help to mitigate the influence of HIV/AIDS within the education sector and throughout the Republic of South Africa.
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Let’s not be ignorant in the era of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, for no person who dwells in ignorance will ever be free (Researcher)

Let’s act now, “the clock shows us the now, but no clock ever shows the future, or has ever shown the past.

(Martin Heidegger, *The concept of time*)