

**THE IMPACT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS ON LEARNERS'  
ACHIEVEMENT AT PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN NKANGALA DISTRICT  
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE**

**by**

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(ii)

## DECLARATION

I declare that **THE IMPACT OF SOCIO- ECONOMIC STATUS ON LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT AT PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN NKANGALADISTRICT MPUMALANGA PROVINCE** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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**SIGNATURE**

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**DATE:**

**(iii)**

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my mother, Mary Njea Tiko, for she provided me with an educational foundation and encouraged me to always hope for the best in life.

(iv)

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- God Almighty who created me, everyone and everything used in compiling this dissertation-His mercy endures forever.

(v)

## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>B R</b>	<b>Bill of Rights</b>
<b>CAPS</b>	<b>Curriculum assessment policy</b>
<b>CEO</b>	<b>Chief Executive Officer</b>
<b>CRC</b>	<b>Convention on the Right of the child</b>
<b>D.O</b>	<b>District officer</b>
<b>DoE</b>	<b>Department of Education</b>
<b>IES</b>	<b>Institute of Educational studies</b>
<b>LA</b>	<b>Learner achievement</b>
<b>LRC</b>	<b>Learner Representative Council</b>
<b>MDG</b>	<b>Millennium Development Goal</b>
<b>MP</b>	<b>Mpumalanga Province</b>
<b>NCS</b>	<b>National Curriculum Statement</b>
<b>NQF</b>	<b>National Qualification Frame Work</b>
<b>OBE</b>	<b>Outcomes Based Education</b>
<b>R</b>	<b>Researcher</b>
<b>SAIRR</b>	<b>South African Institute of Race Relation</b>
<b>SAPS</b>	<b>South African Police Service</b>
<b>SASA</b>	<b>South African Schools Act</b>
<b>SBST</b>	<b>School Based Support Team</b>

<b>SGB</b>	<b>School Governing Body</b>
<b>SMT</b>	<b>School Management Team</b>
<b>USA</b>	<b>United States of America</b>

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the socio-economic impact of learners' achievement at public schools in Nkangala District in the Mpumalanga Province. The benefits of the study were highlighted within the narrative of the study. The study was qualitative in nature and included a literature study, observations and semi structured interviews. It was discovered from the data that the socio- economic conditions in the district, the learners' home environment, the school environment and the Department of Education impacted on learners' achievement. Based on the findings, recommendations were made for improvements to assist in addressing the socio economic impact on learners' achievement.

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## **KEY WORDS**

Learner achievement, School Management Team, home environment, school environment, Mpumalanga Department of Education, District Officer.



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# CHAPTER 1

## ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

### 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Mpumalanga is one of the nine provinces in the Republic of South Africa. This province has 1834 public schools and 104 independent schools making up a total of 1938 (Mpumalanga Department of Education annual Report 2011:15). The public schools have an enrolment of 1014038 while the independent schools have an enrolment of 22394 bringing the total enrolment to 1036432 (Mpumalanga Department of Education annual report 2011:15). Mpumalanga is a rural province in South Africa. This means that 90% of the population lives in the countryside (Hornby 1985:748). As a result, the Mpumalanga province needs an effective, efficient and relevant public education system. The Bill of Rights Chapter 2 of the South African Constitution states that everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education, and further education. The Implications for learners' achievement in Mpumalanga public schools are therefore of paramount importance.

According to the South African Schools Act, Act No.84 of 1996 (SASA) section 2, every parent must make sure that every learner for whom he or she is responsible attends school. For the provincial department to achieve this goal it requires, among other things, knowledge of the implications and conditions for learners' achievement. This study was an attempt to investigate the impact of socio-economic status on learner achievement in the Nkangala District in Mpumalanga province. It is an important exercise considering the role of formal education in the nation's development. This pertains to schools imparting certain types of knowledge transmitted from one generation to the next and the accumulation of wisdom and knowledge of the society. This prepares the young people for their future membership of the society (Lindquist 1970:57). Christie (1992:33) also supports that schools teach learners a set of societal values and skills, and the behaviours expected of its members. This means that behaviour that is accepted is approved and that which is unaccepted is rejected.

## **1.1 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Parents and guardians of learners in the Nkangala District in Mpumalanga province relied on financial grants from the government. The majority of these parents do not live together with the learners because they work in distant places like Johannesburg, Witbank and Pretoria. These socio-economic conditions have impacted negatively on learners' achievement. The 2014 Annual National Assessment once again saw the Western Cape at the top and Mpumalanga province at the bottom end. In 2013, 91.1% of grade 9 mathematics learners did not achieve a pass according to the Annual National Assessment (ANA) report Nelspruit News. The research problem was an attempt to investigate the implications for learners' achievement in Nkangala District in Mpumalanga province.

## **1.2 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

Chronic decline in learners' achievement, high failure and dropout rates are detrimental to the economy and are not in line with the constitutional mandate of providing quality education to learners in the Nkangala District. Again government will not be able to collect revenue in the form of income tax and businesses would not be able to make profit because of the low purchasing power of consumers that are not employable. In order not to create a society that depends on the government it is imperative to come up with measures to foster learners' achievement in schools in the Nkangala District, hence the rationale for the study.

## **1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Teachers are constantly trying to understand educational processes and must make professional decisions (Macmillan & Schumacher 2010:3-4). This study was important in that it could assist teachers and stakeholders in the education department in Nkangala district in Mpumalanga to make informed decisions based on the findings of the study. This may enhance improvement in end of year results. According to the United Nations Educational and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)

EFA report of April 2013, education is a powerful driver of development and one of the strongest instruments for reducing poverty and boosting shared prosperity. When children go to school and learn, they create opportunities, transform and empower their lives and their communities. This study will empower stakeholders in education in the Nkangala district in the Mpumalanga province.

Non educational policy groups such as state and federal legislatures and courts have increasingly mandated changes in education (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:3). This is because they have a vested interest in education. To investigate the implications for learners' achievement in the District of Nkangala in the Mpumalanga Province in the Republic of South Africa is important. This is because it would provide them with information relevant to specific policy issues in education such as failure and dropout rates. Furthermore, findings would help parents to better understand the factors that interfered with the achievement of learners and prepare them psychologically to be able to cope with the crisis resulting from school and out of school problems and this may improve performance. There is therefore no significant improvement in learners' achievement that can occur without an effective study of the implication of learners' achievement in Nkangala district in the Mpumalanga province.

#### **1.4 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH**

**The aims of the research were to:**

- Determine the extent to which the socio- economic conditions in the Nkangala District impacted on learner performance.
- Determine the extent to which learners' home environment determined their academic performance.
- Determine the extent to which the schooling environment determined the learners' academic achievement.
- Determine the extent to which the education department influenced learners' academic achievement.

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION**

What are the socio economic impacts on learners' achievement at public schools in the Nkangala District in Mpumalanga Province?

## **1.6 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

The researcher employed two theoretical frameworks to support this research. Social Constructionism examined the development of jointly constructed understandings of the world. It assumes that understanding, significance and meaning were developed not separately within the individual, but in coordination with other human beings. This theory has been studied by various educational psychologists who were concerned with its implications for teaching and learning and how relevant it was for educational management. A Proponent of this theory was Ernst Von Glaserfeld.

The theoretical frame work also emanated from phenomenology. Phenomenology is an approach concerned primarily with how individuals view their own world (Mwamwenda 2004:495). Over the years, several writers have supported Mwamwenda's view on phenomenology as espoused by Msiak and Sexton (1968:417), Sonnekus and Ferreira (1979:167-172). An important requirement for successful learning is that the child must first have personal experience with the unknown material and the supportive teacher who can be a parent or a teacher. Concerns by these authors are understandable in that the child learns best through problem solving based on assignments taken from his or her immediate environment. The implications of these theories on learner achievement are therefore important to the educational management perspective. In this study an attempt was made to explore and describe the impact of socio economic status on learner achievement at public schools in the Nkangala District in Mpumalanga province.

### **1.7.1 Methodology**

According to De Vos and Strydom (2005:74) qualitative research is a multi-perspective approach that is used for different qualitative techniques and data collection methods. It is aimed at describing, making sense of, interpreting this interaction in terms of the meaning that the subject is attached to. Qualitative research is based on the notion of context sensitivity, which is the belief that the physical and social environments are a direct function of human behaviour. The researcher could therefore proceed from a holistic approach.

### **1.7.2 Exploratory**

Exploratory research is conducted in new areas of inquiry (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:52). The researcher could typically attempt to collect new data and develop new hypotheses to explain such data. In this study, it was specifically aimed at understanding how educational management could effectively tackle the implication for learners' achievement in Mpumalanga public schools.

### **1.7.3 Descriptive**

Mouton (2002:102) points out that descriptive statements make claims about how things were, what the actual state of affairs or fact of the matter was. According to McMillan (2010:59) descriptive research questions are specific. There are no comparisons or correlations, and often they are no independent variables. A descriptive study could provide a detailed description of the phenomenon at issue. In this study, principals, teachers, learners, and district managers described how they could effectively deal with the implications for learners' achievement.

De Vos et al. (2005:265) hold that it is important for a qualitative researcher to select a paradigm or a frame of reference that underpins and guides his study. The researcher selected the qualitative perspective for the following reasons.

- The researcher was concerned with understanding than explanation, naturalistic observation rather than controlled measurement, and the subjective exploration of reality from the perspective of an insider, as opposed to the outsider perspective that is predominant in the quantitative paradigm. As such, a qualitative study is concerned with non-statistical methods and small samples; often purposely selected (De Vos et al. 2005:74). This study sought to unearth how educational management can address the implications for learners' achievements in Mpumalanga public schools.
- The researcher sought to gain a first-hand, holistic understanding of phenomenon of interest by means of flexible strategy of problem formulation and data collection that could be shaped as the investigation proceeded.

#### **1.7.4 RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN**

Johnson and Christensen (2000:17-18) distinguish between qualitative research and quantitative research designs. Quantitative research relies primarily on the collection of numerical data while qualitative research designs rely on the collection of non-numerical data such as facts presented as words or pictures. This study was a qualitative research project because data collection was based on the following sections.

#### **1.7.5 Literature study**

The researcher conducted a study of relevant documents such as newspapers, articles, relevant books, formal policy statements, dissertations and journals which assisted in answering the research questions. Literature reviewed included many types of sources such as professional journals, reports, scholarly books and monographs, Government documents, dissertations and electronic resources. Electronic resources are literature published on the internet which is a global network of computer data bases. Some referred journals and conference proceedings were only published electronically. Literature may include empirical,



theoretical discussions and reviews of status of knowledge, philosophical and methodological treatises (McMillan & Schumacher 1993:108-109).

### **1.7.6 Interviews**

The researcher interviewed principals, teachers, district officials, parents and learners to determine their perceptions and attitudes towards learner achievement as they are regarded as key informants. They were interviewed because they have special knowledge and perceptions that are not available to the researcher. The interview also gave the researcher an opportunity to pose questions that could be rectified on the spot (Kruger & Deventer 2003:207).

### **1.7.7 Focus group interviews**

Gorman and Clayton (2005:49) contend that an interview is a structured process in which the researcher is able to ask questions about cannot be seen or observed. Using “who” “Where” “what” and “when” questions, the researcher is able to collect data about the past events. A focus group interview was considered a suitable instrument in this study because it allowed the researcher to collect in depth information from the participants who know a great deal about their personal perception of events, processes and the environment in which they live.

The focus group for teachers was made up of eight teachers between the ages of 28-55. The focus group of learners was made up of boys and girls between the ages of 14 and 18 years. The information from the focus group interviews was tape recorded and transcribe for analysis.

### **1.7.8 Research participants and sampling**

Gorman and Clayton (2005:84) state that it is essential that sampling be done in such a way that all types represented in the population are included. Nkangala District has 16 senior secondary schools .This served as a population of this study. I purposely selected four rural senior secondary schools as sampling schools for the study. Principals of four senior secondary schools were selected because they were information rich participants.

The researcher used purposive sampling. The reason for this was to get participants that could be able to supply rich and detailed information about the

impact of socio-economic status on learners' achievement in Nkangala district in Mpumalanga public schools.

### **1.7.9 Methodology**

A qualitative research method was followed by the researcher. Purposeful sampling was therefore used. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:138), in purposeful sampling the researcher identifies information-rich participants as they are possibly knowledgeable about the information under investigation. Four schools were selected for the purpose of this study.

### **1.7.10 Questionnaires**

The researcher used semi-structured and open ended phenomenological interviews with individual teachers, principals, district officials' parents and learners from the schools identified. The interviews were tape –recorded and then transcribed. In addition, a field journal was kept for recording observations. Relevant documents were also analysed.

### **1.8.1 Data analysis and interpretation**

Data analysis, according Bogdan and Biklen (1992:33) is a process of systematically searching and arranging data collected in one's study. Data analysis must provide retrospective accounts of how data were synthesised and identify the general analytical strategies used (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:337).

The data gathered by the use of interviews and questionnaires techniques were organised and analysed to check whether all interviews and questionnaires were properly implemented.

Alternatively, according to De Vos and Strydom (2005:333) data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to a mass of collected data. Qualitative data analysis was used in the study and in this regard Patton in De Vos and Strydom (2005:333) stated that qualitative analysis transforms data into findings. Data in qualitative research is usually in the form of textual narratives that is transcribed interviews, written descriptions of observation or field notes and the reflection of ideas. The researcher analysed data on a daily basis as he gathered and transcribed the recorded data. The researcher could read through the

questionnaires one by one, study them question by question and compile a summary (Bogdan & Biklen 1992:34). The raw data of the questionnaires were coded and percentages listed in each response category for each item. The researcher transcribed the interview and analysed the text derived from it by reading and rereading the transcripts and the responses to the open ended interviews and relationships were sought (Strauss 1987:28).

### **1.8.2 RELIABILITY**

Johnson and Christensen (2000: 100-122) state that reliability refers to consistency or stability of the responses obtained from data gathering procedures. Validity inquires whether the researcher has determined what was intended to be determined. According to Johnson and Christensen (2000:208), reliability in qualitative research is viewed as a fit between what was recorded as data and what actually occurred in the setting under study. To ensure such a fit, the researcher crosschecked the information and conclusions with actual participants and members of the participants' community for verification and insight. Furthermore, participants' feedback was accessed by contacting participants telephonically and using WhatsApp to obtain additional information or clarification.

### **1.8.3 VALIDITY**

McMillan and Schumacher (2005:134) define validity as the degree to which scientific explanations of phenomenon match reality. This refers to the truthfulness of findings and conclusions. Explanations about observed phenomenon approximated what is reality or truth, and the degree to which explanations are accurate is important. To achieve validity, the following guidelines were followed by the researcher.

### **1.8.4 Prolonged engagement**

To obtain sufficient information about a problem Schultze (2002:80) maintains that the researcher could establish positive rapport and spend reasonable time with participants speaking the language they prefer to solicit free and full participation.

The researcher was of the opinion that this would lead to the revelation of facts that could have remained undisclosed. In this study, the researcher spent two months at the schools where the interviews were conducted.

### **1.8.5 Reflexivity**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:332) reflexivity refers to vigorous self-scrutiny of the researcher throughout the entire process. The researcher could not be separated from the study as he was part of it. In order to minimise the influence of the researcher's feelings and experiences on the research, it was necessary to promote reflexivity. In this research, reflexivity was achieved by making use of a tape recorder as well as interview notes.

### **1.8.6 Authority of the researcher**

Besides being a qualified secondary school educator, the researcher had also studied research methodology in education at Bachelor and Honours degrees level. The researcher has 14 years of experience in teaching. During these years, the researcher's high sense of duty and commitment enabled him to put the reputation of his establishment at the apex.

### **1.8.7 Triangulation of findings**

Triangulation according to De Voss and Strydom (2005:3) is described as cross-checking and conclusions with multiple procedures or sources. Triangulation is used to designate a conscious combination of more than one method. When the different procedures are in agreement, a researcher has corroboration. To ensure validity, the researcher used semi structured and open ended interviews as well as literature review. The aim was to increase the validity of the study. In this study the researcher used face to face interviews as well as literature review. The main aim was to increase the reliability of data collected.

## **1.9 RESEARCH ETHICS**

Research ethics refer to a set of principles that guide and assist researchers in deciding which goals are most important and in reconciling conflicting values (Johnson & Christensen 2000:63). Ethics deals with the conduct of research with humans, which has the potential of creating a great deal of physical and psychological harm (Johnson & Christensen 2000:66). Researchers need to be sensitive to ethical principles because of their topic and face-to-face interactive data collection.

The following guidelines were followed to assure the ethical acceptability of this study (Johnson & Christensen 2000:69):

1. The researcher obtained the participants' informed consent.
2. No deception was justified by the study's scientific, educational or applied values.
3. The participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time.
4. The participants were protected from physical and mental discomfort, harm and danger that may have arisen from the research procedures.
5. The participants remained anonymous and the confidentiality of the participants was protected.

By adhering to the above, the researcher received co-operation, trust, openness and acceptance from the participants.

In addition, the participants selected a place that was convenient to them for the interviews.

The researcher sought informed consent during the interviews and assured privacy at all times. The aim of these procedures was to avoid manipulation of participants (McMillan & Schumacher 1997:420).

## **1.10 CLEARANCE PROCESS**

No research can be carried out without a clearance certification terms of Unisa ethics policy. The researcher applied to the management of the Mpumalanga Department of Education for permission to conduct the research.

### **1.10 1 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.**

McMillan and Schumacher (1993:23) state that knowledge acquired through research is limited by the nature of educational practice and research, methodological limitations and the complexity of educational practices. The following limitations and hindrances were encountered in this research. The research was limited to four schools that offer Grades one to 12 and where the medium of instruction is English. The researcher had decided to restrict the research to these schools for logical reasons. This was because the researcher was of the opinion that these schools were rich in information. The principal, the school governing body and members of the school management team have several years of experience in the field of education. The study was limited to a small sample typical of qualitative research and no attempts were made to generalise the findings. However, findings may contribute to the understanding of the implications of learners' achievement in rural schooling elsewhere. Access to schools where interviews were conducted was limited to one day per week as stipulated by the Department of Education.

### **1.11 DEFINITION OF TERMINOLOGY**

#### **Academic**

In the context of the study academic means all the subjects studied in senior and further education and training phases in South Africa.

#### **Factors**

In the study factors were used as elements that hinder academic achievement.

#### **Academic achievement**

This means academic attainment or ability to excel in subjects taught in schools.

### **Interview**

Regarded as questionnaires that were delivered verbally.

### **Learner**

In this study the term means a person at a primary or secondary school who is learning or being taught by a teacher or teachers.

### **Motivation**

Encouraging and enhancing the moral and output of learners generally and in specific instances.

### **Principal**

Also termed as headmaster. The head of a school.

### **Questionnaire**

A list of questions answered by participants to get facts or information for a survey or research.

### **School Governing Body (SGB)**

For this study a School Governing Body (SGB) was deemed as a body comprising of teachers, learners and parents.

### **School Management Team (STM)**

A school Management Team (SMT) is a team of professional specialists led by the school principal.

## **1.12 CHAPTER DIVISION (PROGRAMME OF THIS STUDY)**

In accordance with Mnyaka (2006:7) this section serves to indicate what the researcher intended to discuss in each of the chapters.

## **Chapter 1:**

### **Introduction and back ground to the study**

This is the opening chapter of the research study, which contains the following:

1. The research topic or title.
2. Introduction and background of the study.
3. The significance of the study.
4. Aims of the research.
5. Research methods and design.
6. Data analysis and interpretation.
7. Reliability and validity.
8. Research ethics.
9. Delimitation of the study.
10. Definition of terminology.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Intensive literature study on the factors that impact on learners' achievements**

This chapter gave a review of literature studies on the role of education management in effectively curbing the factors that affected learners' achievement.

It also provided a theoretical background for the investigation which the researcher intended to undertake. Similarly, it gave the views of other researchers about the topic under investigation (De Vos et al. 2005:206-207)

## **Chapter 3**

### **Research design and methodology**

This was a critical part of this research. It encompassed the research design and a brief explanation of the theory underpinning the methodology, as well as how the researcher carried out the research. Methodology is the data-collection plan, which



included the following elements: where, when, how and from whom was the data collected, as well as how data was analysed and explained.

#### **Chapter 4:**

##### **Data analysis and Discussion of research results**

The research results were presented .This chapter included a clear analysis of data collected, realisation of sample, discussion of results and field notes. Data was further analysed and interpreted in this chapter.

#### **Chapter 5:**

##### **Summary, limitations, conclusions and recommendations**

This concluding chapter reflected the following:

1. Summary of the research results.
2. Conclusions, limitations.
3. Conclusion.

### **1.13 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the introduction and background to the study were given. The problem was formulated in terms of a key research question and sub questions. The aims of the study were provided and a summary of the research methods and design were also submitted. The constraints and localisation of the study were also noted. The concept achievement and frequently used words which the researcher termed “definition of terminology” were clearly defined for the sake of understanding and insight. The theoretical perspective of the study was espoused and the rationale for the theoretical perspective was given. This chapter has been concluded with a brief outline of the study programme. The next chapter deals with the literature review for the research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATUREREVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter was an introduction that provided some background to the research problem. This chapter is devoted to the review of the literature that was related to the issue of academic achievement of learners in the four schools in Nkangala district in Mpumalanga province. A literature review was therefore of cardinal importance for the in-depth investigation of matters pertaining to learners' achievement and for the provision of insight to the background of the problem. The researcher also gained assistance from the literature review with regard to the planning of his study. As a result, the literature reviewed helped in scaffolding and supporting this research.

The main sources used in this research focused on learner achievement in both developed and less developed countries. Using sources from developing African countries was meant to give the researcher an insight into how learners' achievement occurred in countries similar to South Africa in terms of history and level of economic development. This gave the researcher some ideas relating to the main issues involved regarding the matter being studied. Sources from developed countries were additionally used in order to help establish universal trends related to learners achievement.

In the previous chapter (Section 1.1) the research problem was stated as an attempt to investigate the implications of learners' achievement in Nkangala district in Mpumalanga province. This chapter included conceptualisation of learners' achievement, existing body of literature on learners achievement and models of learners achievement as a theoretical frame work for the research.

#### **2.2 CONCEPTUALISATION OF LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENT**

The multiple perspectives that teachers, administrators, parents and even learners make of Learners' Achievement (LA), make LA rather difficult to define. Initially,

the researcher hoped to bring to light what learner achievement entails. From the beginning of the journey it was fraught with problems. Djamarah (1994:19) purports that achievement is the result of an activity that has been done, created both individually and in groups.

The Oxford Mini School Thesaurus (2007:7) sees learners' achievement as accomplishment, attainment of learners in an assessment. According to Lemmer (2000:53) achievement is where the values of hard work, punctuality, competition and capability of divorcing work from family ties lead to economic and technological development. This is supported by Mwamwenda (2004:479) who refers to achievement as the tendency to strive for success. It is a personality variable which differs from one individual to another, that is some individuals are highly achievement oriented while others are not. The evidence indicated that a learner with a positive self-concept stands a better chance of performing better than a learner with a negative self-concept (Mwamwenda 2004:309)

According to "The hand book for inspecting secondary schools", standard of achievement means the standards that learners reach when their capabilities and their progress have been taken into consideration. The standard of achievement is applied not only to curriculum subjects but also to the learners' attitudes to learning and aspects of development (Farrell 2005:9-10).

It is clear from these definitions that different writers accentuate different aspects of LA. This is because their perspectives are inclined by the context in which they live. The nature of and barriers to LA are context-based, hence the need for this research to assume context-based approaches in order to address context-based challenges of LA.

For the purpose of this study, a working definition of LA culled from the literature referred above regards academic achievement as the tendency to strive for success Mwamwenda (2004:479).

### **2.3 LEGAL PROVISIONS DEALING WITH LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENT**

The researcher discussed three legal provisions dealing with learners' achievement in South African schools. It was not within the scope of this

dissertation to document in detail all the legal provisions of the Acts. A glimpse into the important parts was presented.

### **The Right to education**

Illiteracy is among the greatest scourges afflicting humanity at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Illiteracy has left hundreds of millions of adults disadvantaged, vulnerable and impoverished. Each year, illiteracy claims millions of new victims from the ranks of the world's vulnerable citizens, its children. It is destroying human potential on a vast scale. Most of the victims are poor. The vast majority are young girls and women. The scourge in question is not a disease, but mass illiteracy caused by exclusion from opportunities. (Human Right Centre – University of Minnesota USA 1991).

Failure to address this scourge will carry a price. Universal primary education is an imperative for addressing the single greatest challenge facing humanity at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century namely the eradication of poverty. It is also a fundamental requirement for social justice. We are living in an age in which education is becoming an increasingly important determinant of one's standard of living. Countries and individuals without access to the skills and knowledge provided by education would fall further and further behind (Human Right Resource Centre – University of Minnesota USA 1991).

Education has been regarded, in all societies and throughout the world, both as an end in itself and as means for the individual and society to grow. Its recognition as a human right was derived from the indispensability of education to the preservation and enhancement of the inherent dignity of the human person (Human Right Resource Centre-University of Minnesota USA 1991).

In South Africa, Section 28(2) of the constitution unconditionally states that the child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child. Education therefore is of utmost importance hence the need for a study of learners' achievement in Mpumalanga public schools. In addition to its constitutional obligations, the South African government has voluntarily assumed international obligations through its ratification of the convention on the Rights of

the child (CRC), the African charter on the right and welfare of the child entered into force in 1999 as a signatory, and the Dakar Frame Work for Action.

The Bill Of Rights chapter two in the constitution of the Republic of South Africa states that: Everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education, and to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.

The National Qualification Frame Work (NQF) which is a comprehensive system approved by the Minister of Higher Education and Training for the classification , registration, publication and articulation of quality assured national qualifications also places emphasis on learners achievement. The objectives of the national qualification framework, which among others, was to create an integrated national frame work for learning achievement in order to contribute to the full personal development of each learner in South African schools. In addition, the preamble of the South African School Act No. 84 of 1996, states that:

South Africa requires a new national system for schools which will redress past injustices in educational provision, provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners and in so doing lay a strong foundation for the development of all our people's talents and capabilities. The South African School Act (SASA) also advances the democratic transformation of society, combat racism and sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance. In so doing, SASA is contributing to the eradication of poverty and the economic wellbeing of the society.

In spite of the existence of legal avenues for bringing teachers, School Management teams (SMT) and principals to promote learners achievement in the Nkangala district in Mpumalanga province, it must be made clear that the process is extremely complicated. The whole process is filled with bureaucratic hurdles and few principals and school management teams are willing to go through the lengthy process of assisting learners with learning barriers.

## **2.4 KNOWLEDGE OF INTERVENTION TECHNIQUES AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

Writing about the United States system Sherman (2008:347-360) maintains that teachers who demonstrate patience, knowledge of interventions techniques, ability to collaborate with an interdisciplinary team and a positive attitude towards children with special needs can have a positive impact on learners' success.

According to Dylan (2010:254-284) if what learners learned as a result of the instructional practices of teachers were predictable, then all forms of assessment would be unnecessary. The importance of assessment in learners' achievement is therefore important.

The same could be said of the South African School Act (SASA) No. 84 of 1996 that calls for education of progressively high quality for all learners and in so doing a strong foundation will be laid for the development of the country as a whole. Nasrin and Mohammad (2002), assert that portfolio assessment and teacher made tests can significantly improve learners' achievement. This was aptly and succinctly described by Harris and Goodall (2008:277-289), as a process that learners' achievement can attain if parents are involved in the education of their children. .

Recent trends in education show why most schools are involving parents in school based activities. Chindanya (2011:23) also contended that if teachers are perceived as caring about the welfare of children, communicate respect for parents, and establish effective ways of communicating with families, parents become more inclined to be involved in their children's schooling.

## **2.5 READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

To understand how to bring out the best in teachers Strebel (2009:175) holds the view that reading comprehension strategies can better prepare secondary school –aged learners' for the current information-dense, fast paced, fast changing global society and to improve the academic performance of struggling adolescent readers.

## **2.6 SELF-BELIEF AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

Pajares and Schunk (2002), Matheson (2004:86-87) affirm that teachers should pay regard to learners' self-belief as much as their achievement record, on the grounds that self-belief influences motivation and in turn, future academic attainment.

In a paper entitled teaching quality and learners' achievement in Africa, the case of Nigeria and Swaziland, Lockheed and Komenan (1989:93-113) maintained that a significant proportion of variance in learners achievement (24% in Nigeria and 16% in Swaziland) was attributable to between class room and school factors. In another article the effects on learners' achievement in Thailand and Malawi, Marlaine and Lockheed (1990) only analysed the effect of family background on students' achievement in third world countries. These studies were not comprehensive enough in analysing the vast nature of learners' achievement in the two countries.

From the forgoing discussion one could draw the conclusion that the process of learners' achievement is a multifaceted one. The result of Glewwe and Jacoby (1994:843-864) confirmed that repairing classrooms, a policy option ignored in most education function studies, was a cost effective investment in Ghana, relative to providing more instructional materials and improving teachers quality .

Referring to another research in South Africa by Howie and Sarah (2003) on language and other back ground factors affecting secondary school learners' performance in mathematics, it affirmed that the learners' proficiency of English was a strong predictor of their success in mathematics. The researcher believed that emphasis on language and one learning area, mathematics, was grossly insufficient in determining the achievement of learners in Nkangala district in Mpumalanga province.

## **2.7 CULTURAL FACTORS AND LEARNERS ACHIEVEMENT**

Ngorima' s (2001), study of cultural achievement of secondary school learners in the Chimanimani district in Zimbabwe shows that there was not only a correlation between cultural factors and academic achievement but also that those diverse age groups do not differ significantly in Mathematics and English.

Freeman and Yvonne (2002:162) documented how three teachers helped put theory into practice by closing the achievement gap. They held that if teachers organise curricular against theme, use predictable classroom routines and scaffold instruction in a variety of ways, learner achievement can be maximised.

## **2.8 LEARNING BY ROTE AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

To understand how to bring the best in learners' achievement Watkins and Astilla (1990), are of the opinion that Asian learners' apparent successful performance than their western peers' lies in rote learning (Ballard & Clancy 1994, Biggs 1989, 1990).

Academic achievement was also brought to the fore by Baltodano, Heather, Pamela, and Rutherford (2005:361-379). Their study explored the relationship of disability and ethnicity to academic achievement among youths in juvenile correctional facilities. The study revealed that academic achievement was mediated by factors such as race and disability.

## **2.9 INCREMENTAL REHEARSAL AND LEARNERS ACHIEVEMENT**

Burns and Mathew (2005) conducted research on incremental rehearsal to increase fluency of single –digit multiplication facts with learners identified as learning disabled in mathematics and computation. The research suggested that incremental rehearsal (IR) (Turker, 1989) led to better retention than other drill practice models. All the learners demonstrated 100% success rate. It was the view of the researcher that an increase in rehearsal in schools in the Nkangala district can go a long way to improve learners' achievement.

## **2.10 COMPLIANCE WITH ADULT INSTRUCTION AND LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENT**

Austin and Jennifer (2005) documented incidences on learners' achievement in the United States of America (USA). They discovered that compliance with adult instructions was crucial to learner academic and social success.

## **2.11 THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL**



Matshidiso (2012), clarifies that despite the fact South Africa has reached Millennium Development Goal (MDG2) and spends 18.5% on its annual budget on education, the education system remains largely in a poor state of affairs. In fact over the past five years the country has seen a doubling of the education budget to reverse unacceptably low examination results or to improve the standard of teaching. The quality of education remains very poor and the output rate has not improved. This position was supported by Nachamma, Jerome; Rotgans and Schmidt (2011). They presented a list of five problem characteristics on learners' achievement. Problem clarity led to more group discussion, identification of learners' goal, self-study than problem familiarity had a stronger and direct impact on learners' achievement. This value can be inculcated in South African schools to improve learners' academic achievement.

## **2.12 HIGH MOTIVATION AND SELF-DISCIPLINE**

Ergul (2004) discovered that high motivation levels and self-discipline are necessary for learners to be successful in electronic learning. He further advocated that it is extremely important to provide more extrinsic motivation and feedback, something that is more feasible with the increasing numbers of learners with access to the internet.

## **2.13 ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS AND LEARNERS ACHIEVEMENT**

Byamugisha (2011:4-30) drew the following conclusion from his study entitled "Examining the effect of school environmental factors on learners' achievement in Ugandan primary schools". It was an indisputable fact that learners' achievement in Uganda shows that for the home context factors, the age of the learner, size of household, sex of the learner and whether the learner speaks English at home are important factors in the prediction of achievement in Reading and Mathematics. He further stressed that the literacy of the mother and having electricity at home were important factors for the prediction of achievement in Reading and Mathematics at Grade six levels in Ugandan schools.

## **2.14 SKILLS OF LEARNING AND LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENT**

Carzinado (2009) attaches so much attention to learners' achievement that he concludes that learners who master the skills of learning will do better than their counterparts who fail to master learning skills.

He asserts that these learners would get smaller or even zero scores. It simply meant that each child has an estimate of his own abilities based on the mastery of the acquired skills and previous personal experience.

The range of individual differences originate because learners have different capacities, different learning experiences, and have been developed at different rates. This is a fact that every parent and teacher has to contend with, because there is no technique to eradicate these differences among children. This concept explains why learners differ in their achievement or performance, particularly in school setting. Hence, it is not a guarantee that a good teacher will produce good learners or ineffective teacher will produce poor learners in terms of academic achievement.

## **2.15 BIRTH ORDER AND LEARNERS ACHIEVEMENT**

Corazon (2013) cites in her article entitled "An overview of Birth Order Theory" that the order of birth is the child's position in the family in relation to his siblings. It is said that the position of the child in the family greatly contributes to his personality, views, behaviour and general well-being. The birth order theory was pioneered by Alfred Adler, a philosopher and a psychiatrist. Adler considered that the order of birth can greatly affect a person's personality, outlooks and beliefs. He also believed that the position in the family can foresee what would become of that person. All these could be taken into consideration by teachers in the district of Nkangala in Mpumalanga province as they deliver their lessons in order to improve learners' performance.

According to Fattah (2013) the problem of low achievement from high school to tertiary level in the South African (SA) educational system has given the green light to educators and planners to embark on programmes to raise the quality of educators. Many sectors are alarmed by the low performance of SA learners. This low performance is attributed to many factors (EDCOM, 1991).

Citing other examples, researchers classified three significant factors that affect the teaching-learning process namely the teacher, the learner and the teaching-learning process. According to Gloria (1997), the best teacher using the best equipment and materials available will fail unless the learner is ready to learn, and the quality of learning depends upon the quality of the learner. Gloria (1997) further elaborates that these factors include environmental factors, classrooms, textbooks, equipment, school supplies, and other instructional materials, the school head, the teacher, the learner, home environment and the language of instruction.

In another study Cabusa (2008) identified factors affecting low retention of learners in their school and these were contributions imposed by the teacher, lack of needed materials for study, lack of interest in schooling and irregular attendance of lessons. Other factors noted were school policies, lack of administrative support, and distance of home from the school, relocation, housekeeping responsibilities and insufficient financial assistance. The researcher was of the opinion that the knowledge of these policies can assist stakeholders in the Department of Education (DoE) to come up with workable solutions.

## **2.16 CLASS SIZE AND LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT**

The contending literature from Trow (1995), Krueger (2002), and Glass and Smith (1979) among many other educationists assist in unpacking the debate on learners' achievement. They maintained that class size had an impact on learners' achievement. They further maintained that the level of initial intelligence and learner aptitude, the length of time dedicated to the subject and availability of resources are factors that contributed significantly to learners' achievement. Trow (1995) added that reducing class size to increase learners' achievement was an approach that has been tried, debated and analysed for several decades. The premise seemed logical: with fewer learners to teach, teachers could promote better performance from each of them. It was evident that the issue of class size is not simply a matter of less is more. The pattern of research evidence only favours class size reduction if it is substantial and brings the class size below a certain threshold.

According to Biggs (1999) achievement can be realised when one gets learners to engage in learning related activities which are aimed at fulfilling a certain objective; such as theorising problem solving, coming up with ideas of their own and reflection. In this way knowledge would be constructed and this will significantly improve learners' achievement in Nkangala district in Mpumalanga province.

## **2.17 TEACHERS' CREDENTIALS AND LEARNERS ACHIEVEMENT**

West and Woessmann (2003) believed that school districts would do better to hire fewer teachers with better credentials than to hire more teachers with disregard to the level of credentials and experience. They argue that the quality of the teacher drives learners' achievement. This is in line with the department of education policy of quality education for all and South African School Act No.84 of 1996.

## **2.18 THE TEACHER AND LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT**

So much importance is attached to learners' achievement that Biggs in Bakasa (2011:33) believes there is only one way to improve learners' achievement. His studies show that the only factor that can create learner achievement is a knowledgeable, skilful teacher. A large scale study that he conducted discovered that every dollar spent on raising teacher quality netted greater learner achievement gains than any other use of school resources.

Researchers such as Bakasa (2011) are of the opinion that having a less effective teacher can significantly lower learners' achievement over time, even if the learner gets more competent teachers later on.

## **2.19 CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENT**

Biggs (2003) posits that the number one factor governing learners' achievement is classroom management. It is what the teacher does in the classroom to structure and organise a learning environment that governs learning. The classroom must be organised for learning if learner achievement is to increase. Gordon (1999) in a

journal on “Approaches to improving learners ‘achievement” looked at five very successful but diverse schools all structured differently yet they all had five factors in common. They all had prominent features of schools that produce learners’ achievement and these are:

- Clear and high standards.
- Multiple changes.
- Strong leadership.
- Collaborative teams.
- Committed teachers.

Motivated by this summary of how achievement is realised in education, Calweti (1999:298) defines teachers as:

The most effective men and women in every area are those who can quite competently organise the cooperation and assistance of other people toward the accomplishment of important goals and objectives. Calweti’s views are supported by Biggs (2003:342) who concurs that:

There is only one way to improve learners’ achievement. The teacher is the only factor that can improve learners’ achievement. How schools produce learners and learning achievement has nothing to do with literacy results and mere class size dynamics. Education is a profession currently marked by an absence of goals. We must become goal-oriented and results-driven. Just implementing promising practices like site based management, cooperative learning, or interdisciplinary teaching is not enough. We need to implement and obtain solid, purposeful, and enduring goals.

It is apparent therefore that class size is only a piece of the Jigsaw puzzle and cannot be a fix all solution to the issues related to learner achievement. There is, hence, the need to adopt a more holistic approach to the situation if a solution is to be found.

The study that Makonye (2009) did bears a special relationship to this study. Hence the researcher would refer to it. The study entitled “The impact of a national curriculum on equity learning and achievement” explores the impact of curriculum 2005 on equitable achievement in mathematics in South Africa. The findings

suggested that curriculum 2005 does not seem to have reduced inequity in mathematics achievement hence the introduction of the new Curriculum Assessment Policy (CAPS) which is currently being used in South African schools.

## **2.20 ANXIETY IN MATHEMATICS AND LEARNERS ACHIEVEMENT**

Hembree (1990:34) affirms that many learners experience mathematics anxiety in USA schools and the consequence had been the avoidance of mathematics and a decline in mathematics achievement. Hembree (1990:34) and Barnes (1984: 14) note that this avoidance was the result of a complex set of interacting factors affecting boys and girls differently, but the main causes for both sexes was anxiety which mathematics stirs in many learners. The researcher believes the same set of factors could be attributed to schools in Nkangala district in Mpumalanga province.

## **2.21 BACKGROUND LANGUAGE AND LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENT**

Scrimgeour (2013) alludes that background language learners perform at a significantly higher level than their counterparts who perceive the language as foreign. This suggested that the two groups also differed in performance, that learners whose home language was Mandarin, for instance, perform lower than Australian learners whose home language was English. The implication here therefore is that background plays a significant role in learners' achievement. By exploring the educational pedagogies and classroom discourses, it was the aim of the researcher to extend theoretical insight into learners' achievement in Nkangala district in the Mpumalanga province.

## **2.22 SCHOOL LIBRARY AND LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT**

Barett (2010:136-139) confirms that school libraries have a significant impact on learners learning and achievement. Several common contributing factors that would lead to learners' achievement are:

- Flexible scheduling.

- Effective collaboration between library staff and teachers.
- Appropriate library staff levels and opening hours.
- An up –to date library collection.
- Access via library ICT to online resources.
- Being well funded.
- Being a well utilised library.

## **2.23 TECHNOLOGY AND LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT**

The Bester’s (2013) study on the effect of technology on learner attention and achievement in the classroom confirms the widely accepted view that technology promotes academic achievement. The investigation was on the effect of technology on attention and achievement within a class context, taking motivation and concentration into account. Lessons on Geography, English and Mathematics were presented to an experimental group and a control group consisting of 23 and 22 Grade eight learners respectively. Technology was implemented for the experimental group but not for the control group. The experimental group did better than the control group. The conclusion drawn by the researcher was that a school with a well-established library supported with appropriate technology would significantly contribute to learner achievement.

## **2.24 SCHOOL SAFETY AND LEARNERS’ ACHIEVEMENT**

In an article titled “School safety influences literacy rate” the South African Institute of Race Relation(SAIRR 2006) , confirmed that South African schools are the most dangerous in the world, and if the issue is not addressed it will stunt learners education and jeopardise the future development of the country.

In another study by US–based Institute for Education Sciences (IES) in 30 countries worldwide, South Africa ranked last in school safety.

”It is not an exaggeration that we need to pay more attention to schools –this [safety] is certainly a cause for concern” (SAIRR researcher and spokesman Thomas Blaser). According to a recent study only 23% of learners felt safe in SA

schools (SAIRR 2011).The South African school system has distinguished itself by coming last or very low down the scale in a number of schooling quality surveys over recent years. It therefore comes as no surprise to learn that conditions in many schools are not only far from ideal but downright dangerous. Recent reports in the South African media have indicated a surge in shooting, stabbings, rapes and robberies. The findings suggest that media reports of school violence are not only isolated incidences but also part of a growing pattern of violence and disorder (SAIRR2011). What the researcher can deduce from this is that school safety plays a significant role to learners' achievement.

## **2.25 TIME OF THE DAY AND INSTRUCTION**

It was important to appreciate the universality of the impact of learner achievement. In the words of Amanda and Garry (2011), the time of the day instruction is delivered has an impact on learners achievement. They maintain that the school as a contributing factor to the problem of low academic achievement by some learners was due to a conflict between personality chronotype and school schedule which may have research significance. It is therefore important for school administrators to design appropriate time tables that will carter for all the learning areas.

## **2.26 SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENT**

A recent study in the United States of America (USA) declares that poverty, which forms a specific culture and way of life, is a growing issue in the USA. The number of Americans living in poverty is continually increasing. Poverty indicates the extent to which an individual lives without basic resources. Resources can include financial, emotional, mental, spiritual and physical resources as well as support systems, relationships, role models and knowledge of hidden rules. Poverty directly affects academic achievement due to the lack of resources available for learners' success. Low achievement is closely correlated with lack of resources and numerous studies have documented the correlation between low socio-economic status and low achievement of learners.



## **2.27 POSITIVE LEARNER ENGAGEMENT AND LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT**

The Centre for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2010) published a report titled “Using positive student engagement to increase learner achievement”. The report maintains that positive learner engagement is not an easy term to define, yet we know it when we see it. Learners are engaged when they “devote substantial time and effort to a task, when they care about the quality of their work and when they commit themselves because the work seems to have significance beyond its personal instrumental value” (Newmann, 1986:242). Engaged learners are also more likely to perform well academically. Therefore teachers need a large inventory of instructional strategies to engage a variety of learners (Garcia-Reid, Reid & Peterson 2005).

### **What can teachers do to foster positive student engagement in the classroom?**

According to Garcia –Reid et al. (2005), teachers can do the following:

- Create a culture of achievement in the classroom.
- Develop interactive and relevant lessons and activities.
- Encourage and support learners.

These are some ways teachers can foster learners’ engagement in the class room.

## **2.28 PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

Samantha (2013) maintains that parental education is a factor in academic achievement. She maintains that many factors influence a learner’s academic achievement beyond a child’s innate ability. The neighbourhood that children live in , the quality of the school , parents occupation and economic status all have an effect. The level of parental education is a proven factor in predicting the academic achievement of their children.

The Michigan Department of education concurs with Samantha’s (ibid) view that parent involvement is twice as likely to have a positive effect on academic success

as the financial status of a family. Mchunu's (2012) study of parental involvement and academic achievement of previously disadvantaged learners awarded scholarships to attend independent schools in Johannesburg held that parents' involvement was essential in high school and that parent involvement at home had an impact on the learners' achievement irrespective of the parents' socio-economic status and level of education.

Recent research on the socio-economic status on learners' achievement both nationally and internationally pointed positive effects on learners' achievement. Reay (2005) Deslandes and Bertrand (2005), Sanders and Lewis (2005), Henderson and Mapp's (2002:7) research reports conclude that learners with parent involved, no matter their income or background, were more likely to gain the following benefits: to obtain better results and performance in tests, to enrol in higher level courses and to pass their classes and be promoted to the next grade. These same learners attend school regularly, had better social skills, and showed improved behaviour both in and out of school and to adapted well to the school environment. They equally finish their basic education and go on to higher education. In spite of the fact that these benefits have been proven, the impact of socio-economic status on learners' achievement at public schools in Nkangala, Mpumalanga province have not been thoroughly researched. It is therefore the intention of the researcher to fill this gap.

## **2.29 DYSLEXIA AND LEARNER ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

A study by Gibson and Kendall (2010) alludes that dyslexia was a factor that impacts on learners' self-esteem and academic achievement. Educators in South African schools should pay special attention to learners suffering from dyslexia.

## **2.30 SENSE OF EFFICACY AND LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENT**

Yasser(2006) believes that adult learners who possess a strong sense of efficacy , employ a wide range of self-regulatory strategies and maintain high motivational levels during the course of learning, are more likely to be successful than their

counterparts who doubt their abilities, lack meta cognitive activities and exhibit low motivational levels.

According to Chinapah (2003), quality education for all can only be ensured on the condition that all educational role-players fully understand the dynamics of the teaching-learning processes where learners remain at the centre, as targets for any intervention, be it at the level of curriculum, teaching, or learning environment. In a similar vein, he asserted that enormous efforts are needed to have a stable, qualified, better-rewarded and less mobile teaching force.

Critical problems such as scarcity of teaching and learning resources, multiple school shifts, large class size, and long distances to school should be seriously addressed if there is any desire to improve learner achievement in Nkangala District in Mpumalanga province.

### **2.31 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS**

Research on school effectiveness has yielded an impressive number of school factors related to learners' achievement. Creemers and Reezigt (1996:200) argue that the consistency in the findings might be an indication of the robustness of these factors. The reviews by Levine and Lezotte (1990) & Sammons, Hillman & Mortimore (1995) had been comprehensive in that each review referred to several hundred studies of effective school characteristics (Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000:141). They summarised their findings into nine factors. These nine factors are adopted as the framework for effective schools in this study and will be discussed in detail below.

**TABLE 1**

**Teddlie (2000:144)**

Process	Component of the process
1. The process of effective leadership	a. Being firm and purposeful b. Involving others in the process

	c. Exhibiting instructional leadership d. Frequent personal monitoring
2.The process of effective teaching	a.Maximising class time b. Exhibiting best teaching practices c. Adapting practice to particulars of classroom
3.Developing a pervasive focus on learning	a. Focusing on academics b. Maximising school learning time.
4.Developing staff skills at the school site	a. Site based Integrated with on-going professional development.
5.Creating high (and appropriate) expectations for all	a. For students b. For staff
6.Monitoring progress at all levels	a. At the school level b.At the classroom level c.At the student level
7. Emphasising student responsibilities and rights.	a. Responsibilities b. Rights
8. Involving parents in productive and appropriate ways.	a. Encouraging productive interactions with parents'
9.Producing a positive school culture	a. Creating a shared vision b. Creating an orderly environment c.Emphasising positive reinforcement

## 2.32 CONCEPTUAL MODELS

The researcher selected two conceptual models for the study of the Implication for learners' achievement in the Nkangala district of Mpumalanga province.

## 2.33 EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Hallinger (2007:2) and Stewart (2006:1) stated that the past 25 years have witnessed the emergence of new conceptual models which focused explicitly on

educational leadership as the manner in which leadership exercised by school administrators and teachers impacted on learners' achievement or outcomes. Two of such models are instructional and transformational leadership.

The two most frequently cited models which offer comprehensive learners achievement frame work are the instructional leadership and transformational models. These models were examined in the light of how educational management can enhance learners' achievement in Nkangala district in the Mpumalanga province.

### **2.34 INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP**

According to Mohiemang (2008), the leadership of the principal needs to focus on the organisational conditions of the school and in particular, on the way teaching and learning is conducted. The responsibility of the principal to enhance the school's teaching and learning activities emerged in the 1980s as an area of emphasis from the effective schools research and was termed instructional leadership. Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999:8) define it as an approach to leadership that emphasises the behaviour of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of learners.

Heck, Larsen and Marcouldides' (1990:120-121) study on the validation of a causal relationship between instructional leadership and learners achievement indicated that principals can directly influence the students' achievement through their leadership practices. They asserted that their research confirmed the earlier correlation studies, suggesting that strong instructional leadership is directly related to the school performance at a higher or lower academic level.

Heck et al. (1990) concluded that principals must be considered as one of the school effects variable that directly influences students' achievement. The national Staff Development Council (2000:3) asserted that principals who acted as instructional leaders added a focus on helping teachers improve their classroom performance and made the academic instruction of the school a top priority. Effective instructional leaders spend a lot of time in classrooms observing teaching and encouraging higher performance. They track learners test score results and

other indicators of learners' learning to help teachers focus attention where it is needed most. They also focus much of their time on staff development and help provide opportunities for teachers to share information and plan together for curriculum and instruction.

Hallinger and Murphy in Leithwood (2005:8-9) proposed a model of instructional leadership that consisted of twenty specific functions within three broad categories: defining the school mission, managing the instructional programme, and promoting school climate. There was considerable empirical support for this model particularly as it related to learners outcome (Hallinger & Heck, 1996:38, Hopkins, 2003:59). Leithwood (2005:8-9) describes this model as:

**Dimension 1:** Defining the mission of the school included framing the school goals and communicating them to all members of the school community. The principal's role is to establish the vision, expectations and commitment to the goals.

**Dimension 2:** Managing the instructional programme includes knowing and coordinating the curriculum and instruction, supervising and evaluating instruction, and monitoring learners' progress.

**Dimension 3:** At the heart of this model was promoting a positive school learning climate which includes setting standards and expectations, protecting instructional time from being disturbed, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for learning and promoting professional development.

From what has been discussed above, it is not necessary for principals to be subject experts or to do classroom observation for them to be effective instructional leaders. The subject expertise can be left to the senior teachers. Principals can promote a positive school climate and maintain visibility. The skills that matter in educational leadership are those that can lead to improved learners achievement. Hopkins (2003:5-6) puts it succinctly by stating that "the prime function of leadership for authentic school is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning". Effective schools therefore had strong instructional leaders who are sufficiently involved in and are knowledgeable about what is going on in the classrooms and the individual progress of all learners. This means that instructional leadership is not the domain of the principal but of the school

management team, which consists of the senior management and the subject's senior teachers.

### **2.35 TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

Traditionally, leadership in schools had been associated with positional authority and was primarily seen as “top-down”, that was the province and responsibility of the principal. Macbeth in Harris (2003b:72) in Mohiemang (2008) reported on a study where principals were asked to depict themselves as being at the top of an apex. This ‘heroic’ view of leadership had been challenged. While it cannot be denied that leaders are inevitably in the midst of the action, effective leadership is not always derived at the top. Leaders lead from the centre of a complex myriad of complex relationships.

The second characteristics of effective leadership are the involvement of others in the process of leadership. Their leadership is dependent upon others and the relationship they have with others. The principal should make an effort to develop and secure leadership at different levels of the organisation to impact on students learning. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004:7) asserted that successful leaders develop and count on the contributions of others in the organisation. Barth (1999:17) argued that when teachers lead, principals extend their own capacity and hence the teacher leadership would have a good influence on the school as well as within the classroom. Teachers exercised their leadership role in the class room when they check on lesson attendance, implement school and departmental policies, monitor students’ progress and take the necessary action when there was a need. Teachers themselves need to see and understand their role as leaders in their own classrooms and they need to be empowered and assisted to exercise their leadership role.

Shared leadership had been given different names by different scholars. Page and Wong (2000:2) referred to it as servant leadership, which they described as turning the hierarchical pyramid upside down with the leader at the base of the organisational roles. This was the opposite of how principals depicted themselves in the study reported earlier. The relationship between shared leadership and

learners' achievement had been established by different studies. In a study to examine the relationship between servant leadership, school climate and student achievement in 42 Michigan high schools, Kelley and Williamson (2006:6) found that the school climate became more open as the leaders practiced more of servant leadership. The more of learner leadership the principal practiced the slight the increase in learners' achievement. Although the relationship was weak, learners' achievement could be explained solely by the servant leadership behaviour of the principal. Another finding was that the impact on learners' achievement was strongest when the principals combined servant leadership behaviour with an open school climate. What was most significant was that the actions of the principal had an impact on both. They finally concluded that, by adopting a servant leadership approach to their work and by creating a more open school climate, principals can positively impact the learning of their students. His study explained that both can explain a 7.4% of the variability of learners' achievement.

Shared leadership was also known as transformational leadership. Harris (2003a:17) argued that in transformational leadership, the leader used power with or through other people rather than exercising control over them. Leithwood et al.(1999:9) and Leithwood and Jantzi (2000:114) defined transformational leadership in schools along six dimensions: Building the schools vision and goals, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individual support, symbolising professional practices and values, demonstrating high performance expectations and developing structures to foster participation in decision making. These behaviours encouraged teacher collaboration, increased motivation and improved teacher self-efficacy (Harris 2003a:18). When these processes are integrated and aligned, school communities would be able to enhance their capacity to improve the learners' achievement.

Leithwood et.al (2004: 6) asserted that transformational leadership drew attention to a broader array of school and classroom conditions that may need to be changed if learning was to improve. This made transformational leaders to be change agents. They specifically changed the school culture to support learners learning.



In today's challenging and demanding educational climate of constant and turbulent change, no single person is likely to have the combined capacities necessary to engage in effective leadership. And it can be legitimately argued that in empowering a range of people within the school community teachers, students, parents and others as appropriate, a combined richness of educational thought and activity, superior to that of a single leader could be achieved. That is leadership at its best if it is a shared venture engaged by many. The pastoral policy in Botswana advocated for transformational leadership in schools that have become too big. This is also true in public schools in Nkangala district in Mpumalanga province. Leadership should not be a Jurisdiction of one person alone but a shared venture between learners and teachers. Learners' involvement in leadership is through the prefect system and school councils. Principals are required to build school cultures that empower the entire school community.

In conclusion, the leadership that made a difference was both position based (principal) and distributive (administrative team and teachers). Schools needed to be aware and avoid the observation made by Harris and Muijs (2002:3-4) that "one of the barriers to teacher leadership is the top- down leadership model that still dominates in many schools". The possibility of a teacher leadership in any school will be dependent upon whether the school head and the Senior Management Team within the school relinquishes power to teachers and the extent to which teachers accept the influence of colleagues.

## **2.36 CONCLUSION**

This chapter documented available literature on learners' achievement (LA). A summary of the literature review was given as a conclusion to this chapter. The literature review was conducted to find out the grounds covered so far in the field of LA. It was also done to find gaps in the research, for example that there is lack of ample study on learners' achievement in the area under review.

Literature available alludes to the fact that research on LA is not a new phenomenon. In South Africa research on this topic took off as far as the 1980s. One large scale study of recent academic achievement was done by Mchunu(2012). Mchunu's (2012) study explores parental involvement and academic achievement of previously disadvantaged learners awarded

scholarships to attend independent schools in Johannesburg. Some sources of LA came from Lemmer (2005:53), Mwamwenda (2004:479) who concur with Lemmer (2005) that LA is a tendency to strive for success in learning. Other useful sources for this research were [www.studyMode.cm](http://www.studyMode.cm), [www.e-How](http://www.e-How) and [www.scholar.com](http://www.scholar.com).

To bring LA into proper perspective, a study of the legal provisions guiding LA was done. Literature insinuated that there was a plethora of legal provision for learners' achievement. Some of these legal provisions are The South African School Act (SASA) and the National Qualification Frame work (NQF). In spite of these legal provisions, a few teachers and principals were willing to go through the whole process that may take months to encourage LA. Two theoretical frameworks used in studying L A were given. They are Instructional leadership and transformational leadership. The researcher noted that there is an abundance of literature on L A in many parts of the world, but not in the geographic area under investigation. This is the gap the researcher seeks to bridge by doing this study on the impact of socioeconomic status on learners' achievement at public schools in the Nkangala district in Mpumalanga province.

By way of conclusion, the researcher quoted from the National Qualification Frame Work (NQF) whose objective is to "create an integrated National frame work for learning achievement in order to contribute to the full personal, economic and social development of each learner". Chapter three will deal with the methodology that the researcher used to study LA and the research design. Strength and weaknesses of the methodology will be documented as mirrored against previous studies and available literature.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The literature review in Chapter Two provided a theoretical framework for the empirical part of the investigation into the Impact of socio- economic status on learners' achievement at public schools in Nkangala District in Mpumalanga province. In this chapter, the researcher concentrated on the research design and methods that were used to collect the data. A qualitative research design was used; therefore data collection and analysis was done according to the norms of qualitative research.

#### **3.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

The researcher employed two theoretical frame works to support this research. Social Constructionism examines the development of jointly constructed understandings of the world. It assumes that understanding, significance and meaning were developed not separately within the individual, but in coordination with other human beings. This theory has been studied by many educational psychologists who are concerned with its implications for teaching and learning and how relevant it is for educational management. A Proponent of this theory is Ernst Von Glaserfeld.

My theoretical frame work also emanated from phenomenology. Phenomenology is an approach concerned primarily with how individuals view their own world. An important requirement for successful learning is that the child must first have personal experience with the unknown phenomenon, learning material and the supportive educator who can be a parent or a teacher. Concerns by these authors is understandable in that the child learns best through problem solving based on assignments taken from his or her immediate environment. The implications of these theories on learner achievement are therefore important to the educational

management perspective. In this study, an attempt was made to explore and describe the impact of socio- economic status on learner achievement at public schools in the Nkangala District in Mpumalanga province. Data had to be collected in order to determine the socio-economic conditions on learners' achievement in the Nkangala District. This was done by the use of action research. This research was undertaken by practitioners in schools to address an actual problem in the school or in the classroom. Through this research, it was hoped that a model could be developed that can be used to minimise the impact of socio -economic status on learner achievement. The next section will discuss the stages in data analysis.

### **3.3 STAGES IN DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis is a method of categorising, ordering, manipulating and summarising data to obtain answers to specific research questions. Data was collected by way of face to face interviews, focus group interviews and observation with the principal, district officer, teachers, parents and learners in selected schools in the Nkangala District. After transcribing and coding of the interviews, an analysis of the field notes was made. The researcher obtained a holistic sense by reading carefully through them all and examining the data as mentioned in chapter three.

- Data was grouped into concepts and categories then compared and similar themes grouped together under conceptual labels.
- A list of topics were formulated from all the sources and clustered in a process known as “open coding”.
- The categories were then integrated and refined. The presentation of data will be assumed in the next section.

The steps undertaken to ensure that data was transcribed verbatim to ease analysis was mentioned in chapter three. In this study reference to certain excerpt was done to validate information that was acquired. This excerpt was attached as an annexure at the end of the study. The process of coding different categories and sub categories was done according to the theme of the study.

### **3.4 THE PRESENTATION OF DATA**

Data analysis in qualitative research is not a neat process because it does not follow a linear pattern. It is rather an ambiguous, time consuming and messy exercise. The researcher had to be very creative when working with the collected data. Apart from being creative he needed to be selective in what was presented by giving priority over certain aspects. The reason was that in the analysis of qualitative data, it is not possible to present all the data that were collected by means of the interview. The sample that the researcher used was made up of four focus groups of teachers from each school, four focus groups of learners from each of the four schools, four principals from each school, one district officer and four parents. The principals, parents and district officer participated in the face to face interviews. The next section deals with the presentation of the findings, analysis and discussions.

### **3.5 RESEARCH APPROACH**

Singh (2013:230) defines a research design as the structure of research. It is the “glue “that holds all of the elements in a research project together. Vogt, Gardener and Haeffele (2012:340) maintain that a research design is an overall plan for conducting a research project that includes methods of data collection, sampling, ethics, data coding and measurement and strategies for analysing and interpreting data. The data was obtained from naturally occurring phenomena. The researcher conducted the research and gathered data in the learners’ natural surroundings (Christensen 2004:52), which is the classroom. The researcher observed the principals, teachers, and district officer in their offices. The researcher did not manipulate the participants as is dictated by quantitative research. However, the choice of the research design was also influenced by the researcher’s own research paradigm as explained below.

### **3.6 Research paradigms**

The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of English (1985:609) holds that a paradigm is a pattern or a model on how something is done. In this particular case, the major aim of this research was to show the extent to which the impact of socio-

economic status on learners' achievement in Nkangala district could be used to enhance quality teaching and learning which invariably would promote learners achievement. The study was also intended to find out the extent to which the school environment impacted on learners' achievement. In order to achieve the aims of this study, the researcher made use of qualitative methods of inquiry.

In the researcher's hypothesis it was stated that not much has been done within the Nkangala schools to determine the impact of socio-economic status on learner achievement in the district. With this in mind, the researcher decided to make use of qualitative research, which involves making use of various data collection methods. This included the review of related literature, observation and a semi structured interview for learners, teachers, parents and the district officer.

### **3.7 Literature study**

A study of related literature was conducted in Chapter Two. The literature study was a way of obtaining data. The literature described the theoretical perspectives and previous research related to the topic under investigation. Thus by means of the literature review, the researcher was able to make use of other researchers' findings and conclusions as well as insight gained by other writers regarding the impact of socio-economic status on learners' achievement. Furthermore, the literature review enabled the researcher to:

- Link the findings of the study to the work of other scholars who have carried out similar studies.
- Follow the methodological design and research methods that were used in this study.

### **3.8 Qualitative approach**

The Indian scholar Singh (2013:230) characterised qualitative approach as a general way of thinking about conducting qualitative research. It describes either explicitly or implicitly the purpose of qualitative research, the role of the researcher, the stages of the research and the method of data collection and data analysis.

Schumacher and McMillan (1993:372), define qualitative research as “a naturalistic inquiry involving the use of non-interfering data collection strategies to discover the natural flow of events and processes and how participants interpret them”. By its very nature, qualitative research is:

- Holistic in approach because it places emphasis on the whole and seeks to understand phenomenon in its totality.
- It is interested in how people make sense of their world, lives and experiences.
- Interpretive because it is aimed at understanding and interpreting the meaning and intentions that accrue to every human action.
- Descriptive because the researcher is interested in the process, meaning and intentions that accrue to every human action.
- Inductive because the researcher starts with observed data in a particular situation and then develops a generalisation between the objects observed.
- Discovery oriented with the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis.
- Contextual, because it focuses on specific theories that concern phenomena.

The researcher had chosen to make use of the qualitative method of investigation because little has been done in the Nkangala district to establish the extent to which socio-economic status of learners has enhanced quality teaching and learning that will foster learners' achievement. Against this background, the researcher undertook qualitative research to generate new ideas about the subject. On the other hand, the researcher sees the qualitative research approach as the best approach for the study because it will provide him with the opportunity to understand the social phenomena from the participants' meanings which includes their feelings, beliefs, ideas, thoughts and actions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:315). Qualitative research is based on shared social experiences that are interpreted by the individuals. Reality is a social construction, this means that individuals or groups derive or ascribe meanings to specific events, persons, processes and objects. People form constructions to make sense of their world, and reorganise these constructions as viewpoints, perceptions and

belief systems. Thus peoples' perceptions are what they consider real and what directs their actions, thoughts and feelings (McMillan & Schumacher 2006:315). Accordingly the researcher made use of the qualitative approach to explore the perspectives and experiences of the participants. This is in line with what Christensen (2004:52) referred to as the basis of qualitative research that lies in the interpretative approach to social reality.

### **3.9 Research sampling**

In this study purposive sampling was used. According to Liamputtong (2013:390), purposive sampling selects cases with the purpose of providing a representative sample of the different processes involved. Purposive sampling does not provide a statistically representative sample. The research sample consists of individuals who were selected from a larger group known as the research population (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh & Sorensen 2009:272). According to Check, Russell and Schutte (2012:394) population is the entire set of individuals or other entities to which study findings are to be generalised. The participants who were selected to form the sample were supposed to be the ones who were likely to be information rich in respect to the purpose of the study (McMillan & Schumacher (2006). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006:336), purposeful sampling is done to increase the utility of information obtained from small samples. McMillan and Schumacher (2006), further clarify that purposeful sampling is done to increase the utility of information obtained from small samples.

The research population in this study comprised four schools from the Nkangala district in Mpumalanga province. These schools were chosen from the North, South, East and West of the various Circuits. Various stakeholders of these schools were interviewed. Twenty Grade 11 and 12 learners of these schools were interviewed to get their perception on the impact of Socio-economic status on learners' achievement at public schools. The school district has parents who do not make the education of their children a priority.

### **3.10 Data Collection**



To satisfy the information needs of this research, the correct methodology has to be chosen alongside suitable tools for data collection. Adrian (2012:60), when discussing the phenomenon of qualitative data, observed that qualitative data is what happens in a particular social setting, in a particular place or amongst a particular group of people. A qualitative research design is considered appropriate for this study for it allowed the researcher to personally interview the learners, conduct a focus group interview and a semi structured interview.

### **3.10.1 Procedure**

- The procedure in data collection included the following:

A letter was sent to the Nkangala district Department of Education requesting permission to conduct research at four schools in their district. A letter was sent to the principal of the four senior secondary schools requesting permission to engage teachers, learners, parents and the principal. Discussions were held with the principal and the researcher on the selection of learners. An information letter was despatched to the selected learners' parents and guardians providing them with information on what the researcher intended to do. A signed consent form was requested from the guardian or parent allowing the learner to be part of the study.

An informed assent form was also sent to the parents and guardians for children to sign. Parents were requested to explain the nature of the study to their children. Parents were also informed that their children would not receive any gift from the researcher for participating in the study.

### **3.10.2 Data collection phases**

Mcmillan and Schumacher (2006:322-323) are of the opinion that the researcher can carry out the empirical study effectively by using five strategic data collection phases:

PHASE 1: Planning: The planning stage was the most important because good planning produces good results. Planning entails sample selection, as well as

arranging a suitable venue and appropriate interview questions. As noted above, purposive sampling was used because the researcher wanted participants that are information rich (McMillan & Schumacher 2010). In the case of learners, the sample was deliberately made up of equal numbers of girls and boys to ensure that the data collection was not gender biased. The deliberate hand picking of the learners in terms of the characteristics mentioned ensured that the research was rich in the information sought.

The researcher's planning and analysis with regard to the formulation of the problem statement and the initial research questions suggested the type of setting or interviewees that would be logically conducive to achieving the purpose in hand, as regards to data collection. The researcher gained permission from the relevant authorities to use the proposed site and to select suitable subjects to participate in the study. The researcher decided how the semi-structured interview was to be conducted with the principal and how the focus group interviews were to be conducted with the educators and learners. The school environment is very busy and abuzz with activities. It was important to select a quiet venue where interruptions would be minimal. The interviews were done behind closed doors as an attempt to minimise interruptions.

PHASE 2: Beginning of data collection: This stage allowed the researcher to establish rapport, trust, and reciprocal relations with the participants. The researcher had to adjust interviewing and recording procedures depending on the site and participants being interviewed. An audiotape recorder was used to gather information from the principal and the focus groups. As in the classroom, each participant was given a chance to speak individually to allow ideas to flow easily. The researcher also made use of a field journal where notes were taken and observation recorded.

PHASE 3: Basic data collection: The researcher listened, observed, and directed the interview in a strategic and non-threatening manner. The collected data was critically analysed during the process to ensure its relevance. Tentative data analysis began by processing ideas and facts while collecting data. Initial descriptions were summarised and identified for later coloration. The whole interview was transcribed to provide a complete record of the discussion. This

made it easier to analyse the information gathered and to identify the trends and patterns. The interview with the principal was a face to face interview. A field journal was also used to record and take notes to avoid losing the information presented. The face to face interview was an effective way of obtaining a large amount of information in a single session. The focus group interviews were used to gather information from teachers and learners. A focus group interview, according to Tonkiss (2012a:228), is a small group discussion focused on a particular topic and facilitated by a researcher. In this interview, participants were encouraged to share perceptions, points of view, experiences, wishes and concerns without pressurising participants to vote or reach a consensus (De Vos et al. 2002:306).

Phase 4: concluding stage: The researcher felt confident that the collected information was rich enough to effectively address the research problem.

PHASE 5: Completion: The collected data was gathered in a manner that ensured easy understanding, inference and interpretation with the aid of a diagram. The researcher proceeded through the five phases in collecting data from all the participants, namely the principal, the teachers, parents, learners and the district officer.

### **3.11 Semi- structured Interviews**

Semi- structured interviews warranted that the researcher should have a list of questions on specific topics to be covered in the interview. These questions were included in the interview guide which the researcher referred to while conducting the interview. Kormuta and Germaine (2006:126) clearly articulate that in a semi-structured interview, the interviewer has a considerable deal of leeway in how to use the interview schedule during the interview. Questions may not necessarily follow the exact order as stipulated in the interview schedule. Questions which are not included in the guide are posed to follow up on matters for a deeper understanding of the specific issue in relation to the interviewees' responses. In this study, the researcher used the semi-structured approach to all the interviews conducted. The rationale for this was because of the specific topic focused on, namely the impact of socio-economic status on learners' achievement at public

schools in the Nkangala district in Mpumalanga province. The semi structured interview was also suitable to ensure that all aspects relating to the topic were covered with each interview. In this study, four principals, four parents and one district official and learners from the Nkangala district were interviewed.

### **3.11.1 Focus group interviews**

Liamputtong (2013:388) maintains that focus group interviewing is a particular method of making use of group discussion in which there is a moderator who acts as the leader of the group. The participants express their views by discussing the issue in a group. The thinking of Liamputtong (2013) provided a template for the researcher. Eight teachers in each school were interviewed in a focus group interview to get their perception about the impact of socio-economic status on learners' achievement at public schools in the Nkangala district in Mpumalanga province.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010:201) single out that with any data collection instrument there are advantages as well as disadvantages with regard to making use of interviewing to collect data. The advantage of interviewing is that it is flexible and adaptable to any kind of situation and type of person such as the illiterate or participants that are too young to read and write. Nonverbal as well as verbal behaviour can be noted in face to face interviews. The interviewer has an opportunity to motivate and prompt the participant in order to collect more and deeper information. Interviews result in a much higher response rate from participants especially when topics that are dealt with in the interview concerns participants' personal qualities and their negative feelings about the discussed matter (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:210).

Disadvantages of interviewing includes the potential for subjectivity and bias and the higher cost involved that relate to the time consuming nature of conducting and transcribing interviews. The participants may be uncomfortable in the interview and unwilling to report true feelings. The interviewer may ask leading questions to support a particular point of view or the interviewer's perceptions of what was said

or may be inaccurate (Barbour 2008:73). The following questions were posed in the focus group interview for teachers and learners.

### **3.11.2 Individual interviewing**

Wiersma and Jurs (2008:207) posit that individual interview is a formal discussion between the interviewer and the person chosen specifically for the discussion. This interview is one that is mostly employed in qualitative research. The goal is not to represent the population as a whole as it will be the case with quantitative research investigation, but rather to gather points of view. According to Patton (2002: 43) the flexibility of individual interviewing makes it attractive for the researcher in that he or she avoids getting locked into rigid designs that eliminate responsiveness but instead pursues a new path of discovery as they emerge. The following questions were posed to all participants in the focus group and individual interviews. It should be noted that for learners the questions were structured to their level of comprehension.

- In terms of the socio- economic conditions in the Nkangala District, how would you say this impact on learner performance?
- How do you think these socio economic conditions in the Nkangala District could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?
- To what extent does the learners' home environment determine their academic performance?
- How do you think these socio economic conditions in your home environment could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?
- In your opinion, to what extent does the schooling environment determine the learners' academic achievement?
- How do you think these socio-economic conditions in your school could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?
- To what extent does the education department influence learners' academic performance?

- How do you think these socio-economic conditions in your education department could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?
- For the learners, the questions were structured to their level of understanding as follows:
  - In terms of the living conditions in the Nkangala District, how would you say this impact on learner performance?
  - How do you think these living conditions in the Nkangala District could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?
  - To what extent does the learners' home environment determine their academic performance?
  - How do you think these living conditions in your home environment could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?

In your opinion, to what extent does the schooling environment determine the learners' academic achievement?

- How do you think these conditions in your school could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?
- To what extent does the education department influence learners' academic performance?
- How do you think these conditions could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?

### **3.11. Interview protocol**

In this study, the researcher remained neutral when information was exchanged so that his presence could have no effect on the perceptions or answers of the participants. He only interjected when clarity was required. A few minutes were spent for introduction purposes and on reaching common ground pertaining to what would be dealt with during the interview. The researcher started with an introduction, then explained the purpose of the interview and asked whether the participants were ready to begin. This contributed to the establishment of a proper

relationship between the researcher and the participants. The questions were then posed to the participants in a natural and unforced manner with reference to the interview schedule to ensure completeness of topic coverage. At the end of the interview, the researcher asked the participants if they had any question they wanted to ask.

The researcher recorded the answers from individual and focus group interviews as the participants responded by means of written notes and voice recording. The researcher allowed sufficient time for the participants to answer, to avoid anticipating and provoking a potential answer. For the purpose of other interviews in other schools in the circuit, questions that resulted in probing in order to gain clarity and deeper understanding of the matter under consideration were marked with an asterisk. After all the questions were asked the researcher thanked the participants for their time and asked for final questions, comments or suggestions.

As Gay and Airasian (2008:218) point out “regardless of the method of data collection, the researcher should make use of field notes to facilitate data analysis”. In this study, the researcher took field notes during and after each session.

### **3.12 Observation**

According to Newby (2010:660), observation is the process of collecting data by watching the source that generates the data. The researcher made use of observation in gathering information. It is a data collection technique wherein the learners in the classroom and the other participants in their offices were observed. This method relied on the researcher seeing, hearing and recording these observations, rather than relying on the subjects’ self-report responses to questions or statements (McMillan &Schumacher 2006:207).The researcher believes that observations were suitable, as they may lead to field-records that note non-verbal interviewee body language and facial expressions which may help to interpret the verbal data( McMillan &Schumacher 2006:359).

### **3.13 Analysis of the data**

According to Mcmillan and Schumacher (2010), qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns and relationships among the categories. To buttress what analysis of data is Gay and Airsaian (2008:219) argue that the analysis of qualitative data is a dynamic, intuitive and creative process of inductive reasoning, thinking and theorising in order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study and to continually refine interpretations of data collected.

Researchers have, over the years, pointed to the complexity of data analysis. Patton (2002:432) taps into this kind of thinking when he states “there are no short cuts to data analysis and one must allow plenty of time and energy for the task”. Further, the analysis of qualitative data continues throughout the research and is not a separate self-contained phase.

Merriam (2009:169) used the term “data condensation or data distillation” as a description of the eventual outcome of a qualitative analysis , implying that the body of data did not merely become smaller and manageable in the analysis process because there was less to deal with , but was the result of interpretation and organisation. The establishment of categories was viewed as an organising tool and an important part of the outcome.

Discussing the phenomenon of data analysis, Vithal and Jansen (2008) observe that there are three steps in preparing data. These steps are scanning and cleaning the data, organising the data, and representing the data. The researcher considered the first two steps which are scanning and cleaning the data, and organising the data as they were the ones relevant at this stage.

The audio tapes were transcribed *verbatim* by the researcher. No additions or omissions were made. Additional notes were taken during the session in a field notes book.

De Vos and Strydom (2011:335) posit that analysis is a method of categorising, ordering, manipulation and summarising data to obtain answers to specific research questions. Data was collected by way of individual interviews and observation with the principal, district officer, teachers, parents and learners in selected schools in the Nkangala District. After transcribing and coding the



interviews, an analysis of the field notes was made. The researcher obtained a holistic sense by reading carefully through and examining the data as mentioned in chapter three.

- Data was grouped into concepts and categories then compared and similar themes grouped together under conceptual labels.
- A list of topics were formulated from all the sources and clustered in a process known as open coding.

The categories were then integrated and refined. The presentation of data will be assumed in the next section. The steps undertaken to ensure that data was transcribed *verbatim* to ease analysis was mentioned in chapter three. In this study reference to certain excerpt was made to validate acquired information. This excerpt was attached at the end of the study. The process of coding different categories and sub categories was done according to the themes of the study.

### **3.13.1 Scanning and cleaning data**

Scanning and cleaning data was done by listening to the voice recorder and checking for incomplete, inaccurate, inconsistent or irrelevant data. The researcher did this without adding new ideas or reducing the ideas that were provided by the interviewees. This was done easily because of the use of the tape recorder.

### **3.13.2 Organising the data**

To organise the data, the researcher needed to code, compare and categorise the information. He coded the information that was related. Thereafter he categorised them into themes which assisted in analysing the data. Questions were also posed as to whether the information was relevant to answering the research question. For each theme that emerged from the interpreted data, a code was given as labelling purpose in order to determine the most high frequency themes. For example in one of the questions included in the interview schedule for school principals namely "In terms of the socio economic conditions in the Nkangala District, how would you say this impacted on learners academic performance?" A

Majority of the school principals answered: "Child headed families." This became an evident theme with similar responses.

### **3.13.3 Trustworthiness**

Establishing trustworthiness ensures the quality of the findings. It increases the confidence of the reader and other researchers that the findings are worthy of attention (Law, Stewart, Letts, Pollock, Bosch & Westmorland 1998:8). In qualitative research the following are the four ways to arrive at trustworthiness:

### **3.13.4 Credibility**

According to Singh (2013:2002) credibility involves establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participant in the research. What Singh is purporting is very simple. He points out that credibility focuses on establishing a match between what the respondents say to those presented by the researcher. In this study, credibility was addressed by interviewing four school principals, four parents of the schools, one district official and the focus group interviews with teachers and learners in the four schools. This was done to elicit their experience of the Impact of socio economic conditions on learners' achievement at public schools in the Nkangala District. Furthermore, the participants were knowledge rich as they were purposively selected because of their involvement in the education of the child. The only exception was where learners were selected by hand picking in their class rooms. The full transcripts of the focus group sessions were included in this dissertation.

### **3.13.5 Transferability**

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings. Transferring the findings of qualitative research involves the researcher having to refer to the original theoretical frame work in order to show how data collection and analysis is

guided by concepts and models. De Vos et al. (2009:346) hold that transferability can be obtained by making more than one data gathering method. In the case of this work, data was obtained by means of focus group interviews, individual interviews and observation. Direct quotes from the focus group interviews and individual interviews were included in this study.

### **3.13.6 Dependability**

De Vos et al. (2009:346) maintain that dependability refers to whether the same findings will be consistent if the same study was replicated, with the same participants, within the same context. Furthermore for a research study to be trustworthy, it must have the element of stability over time. The researcher needed to explain clearly how the data would be processed and analysed. During the interview process, the researcher verified with the participants the accuracy of what they said. This was done by replaying what was recorded. Dependability essentially is concerned with whether the same results would be obtained if the same phenomenon is observed twice.

### **3.13.7 Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others (Singh 2013:2002). To ensure objectivity, the findings must be confirmed by another. Therefore evaluation of the research rested purely on the data and not on some characteristics of the researcher (De Vos et al. 2009:347). In this research the researcher had to re-read the transcripts to check for themes that would confirm the researcher's findings. Participants were also questioned on whether they agreed with the researcher's conclusion on their responses during the interview.

## **3.14 The role of the researcher**

According to Newby (2010:50) educational researchers should aim to avoid fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation of evidence, data, findings or conclusions. De Vos et al. (2005:358) are of the opinion that no qualitative report can exclude the researcher's own perspective and consideration, which should be projected in a professional and scientific manner as it will influence events and interpretations of the research. The role of the researcher in this piece of work was one of a facilitator, ensuring that the necessary procedures were followed in terms of organising and managing the research in a scientific manner. The researcher's own perspective will be seen in the data analysis as well as interpretation and presentation of the research findings.

The researcher was the primary data collector of the raw data. It was incumbent for the researcher to conduct the interviews without leading questions that could have influenced the participants' responses. According to McMillan (2006:334), researchers devise roles that elicit cooperation, trust, openness, and acceptance. Speaking the truth about the research ensured that the participants' confidence was protected during the interviews and privacy was maintained at all times. During the interviews the researcher was skilful in creating a conducive environment and group dynamics that allowed fair participation by all participants to ensure that no-one dominated the interview. It was important to select a comfortable and quiet interview environment. The level of subjectivity had to be reduced to the minimum. The researcher analysed data by first transcribing the interview and then picking out the trends and patterns in the recorded discussions.

### **3.15 ETHICAL STANDARDS**

McMillan and Schumacher (2006:136) contended that researchers should be aware of ethical responsibilities and legal constraints that accompany the gathering and reporting of information in such a way as to protect the rights and welfare of the participants involved in the research. Singh (2013:29) complemented McMillan and Schumacher (2006) by stating that ethical standards require researchers not to put participants in a situation where they might be at risk of harm as a result of their participation, whether physical or psychological. Using

this frame work, the ethical issues embedded in this study are outlined in the paragraphs below.

### **3.16 Informed consent**

The researcher appropriately sought consent from the Nkangala district office to conduct research in December 2013. Permission to carry out research in any four schools in Nkangala district was granted on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February 2014. The school community was informed on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April 2014 that a research on the impact of socio-economic status on learners' achievement at public schools in Nkangala district in Mpumalanga province would be carried out. Informed consent was obtained from all participants taking part in this study. Participants were told they could withdraw from the study at any time they feel uncomfortable without any reprisal.

### **3.17 Right to privacy**

McMillan and Schumacher (2006:136) articulated the following measures to protect participants from harm and ensure participants' rights to privacy.

- Confidentiality was ensured through the aggregation of data, and every attempt was made to maintain anonymity so that participants could not be identified.
- Only the researcher had access to focus group interviews, so that voices could be recognised on the voice recorder.
- All paper documents were kept securely in the researchers' office.
- A consent form was signed by the researcher and the participants.

### **3.18 Protection from harm**

The researcher was responsive, sensitive and aware of any situation that could be harmful to all participants' and ensured that the participants would not suffer any physical harm. He interviewed them at their places of work, which means that they did not have to travel to the interview venue. The participants were not at any stage humiliated as the researcher ensured that there were no instances where gestures or language, which may be seen as derogatory, were used.

### **3.19. CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, the research design and methodology of the present study was explained. This chapter also included the ethical measures taken and the handling of confidentiality as part of ethical considerations. It was clear that a qualitative research approach is the best research approach to enable the researcher to understand the phenomenon of study, namely the impact of socio-economic status on learners' academic achievement at public schools in Nkangala district in Mpumalanga province. The following chapter will tackle the presentation of findings, analysis and discussions.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Three the researcher explained the methodology that was used when gathering data. Focus group and face to face interviews, which were the instruments that were used when gathering data, were also discussed. In addition, the sample, data analysis of the study and the ethical procedures were discussed. This chapter consists of the presentation of findings, analysis and discussions.

#### 4.2 THE PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

The research findings are presented according to the participants responses to the research questions. The questions were formulated to correspond with the research aim. A copy of the questions is attached in the appendix. The views and recommendations were organised into themes, categories and sub-categories, and later analysed using the constant comparative method with the content analysis of data. All the participants were asked the same questions to increase the validity and reliability of the study. The following questions were posed to all the participants who participated in the study except for the learners.

- *In terms of the socio- economic conditions in the Nkangala District, how would you say these impacts on learner performance?*
- *How do you think these socio economic conditions in the Nkangala District could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?*
- *To what extent does the learners' home environment determine their academic performance?*
- *How do you think these socio economic conditions in your home environment could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?*
- *In your opinion, to what extent does the schooling environment determine the learners' academic achievement?*

- *How do you think these socio-economic conditions in your school could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?*
- *To what extent does the education department influence learners' academic performance?*
- *How do you think these socio-economic conditions in your education department could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?*

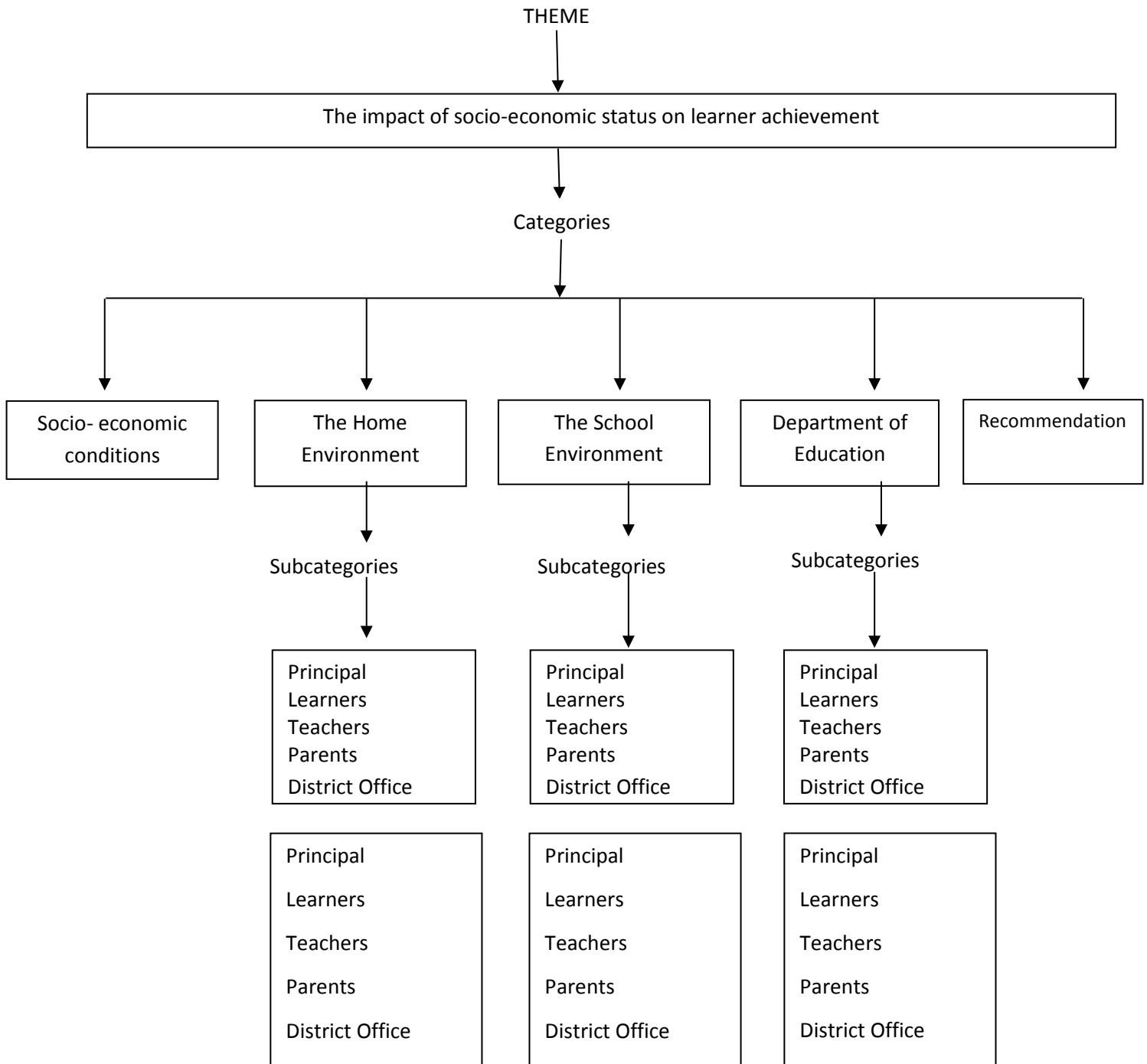
For the learners, the questions were conditioned to their level of understanding as follows:

- *In terms of the living conditions in the Nkangala District, how would you say this impacts on learner performance?*
- *How do you think these living conditions in the Nkangala District could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?*
- *To what extent does the learners' home environment determine their academic performance?*
- *How do you think these living conditions in your home environment could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?*
- *In your opinion, to what extent does the schooling environment determine the learners' academic achievement?*
- *How do you think these conditions in your school could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?*
- *To what extent does the education department influence learners' academic performance?*
- *How do you think these conditions could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?*

The above questions formed the categories according to which all the participants expressed their views. These views were later grouped into themes, categories and sub-categories as depicted in the table below.



**TABLE 2**



**4.3 The theme: The socio economic conditions and learners’ achievement**

In terms of the socio- economic conditions in the Nkangala District, how would you say this impact on learner performance?

- **Views of the principals**

The principals cited parents who do not attend meetings as a challenge to the school. Many parents according to the principal work and live in distant places like Pretoria, Rustenburg and Johannesburg. This therefore means no one supervises the learners with their homework and assignments. The principals also cited that “teenage pregnancy was on the rise because no one engages them with work and as a result they try to experiment with sex which ultimately leads to pregnancy.”

- **The views of the District officer**

In spite of the achievements recorded by the African National Congress (ANC) in the twenty years of democracy, the legacy of apartheid has not been eradicated. African families in the rural areas are still impoverished. “Most of them live in small houses with no space to study.” This had a significant impact on learners’ achievement in the district. The socio economic conditions in the district had pushed many parents to look for work elsewhere leaving learners with little supervision. Most of the parents were also not educated therefore could not assist the learners with school work at home.

- **The Views of teachers**

The teachers who participated in the interviews overwhelmingly accepted that the socio economic conditions in the district had a negative impact on learner achievement. One group of teachers enumerated factors such as poverty, parents not assisting the learners at home and the learners being demotivated. The other group of teachers believed that the socio economic conditions at home made the learners not to have learning material on time and that “many of the learners were from child headed families.”

- **Views of the learners**

The learners who participated in the focus group interviews presented a list of socio economic conditions in the district that affect their performance. Some of these factors were “transport difficulty, electricity problem, not living with their parents and most of the parents depending on social grants.” Interestingly one

learner was of the view that “socio economic conditions in the district impacted negatively on learners’ achievement but a learner who is committed could succeed in his or her studies.”

- **Views of the parents**

Three parents said that these learners do not want to study at home, “they spent their time playing with their cell phones”. They also maintained that the learners had too many friends who disturb them while studying. “On Fridays they go to the tavern”

- **Discussion**

The study investigated how the socio-economic conditions in the district impacted on learners’ academic performance in the four schools in Nkangala District in Mpumalanga. Information collected by the researcher depicted a number of socio economic conditions that affected learner performance as seen from the views of the participants. Even though some learners articulated that academic performance was a function of how serious a learner engages in his or her books, one can summarise that the socio economic conditions in the district are a clog in the wheel of progress. The information from the interviews was transcribed in all the four schools. It was seen that child headed families and non- involvement of parents in child education was widespread. It was emphasised during the interviews that the socio-economic conditions in the district were multi-faceted. The study of related literature in chapter two is an index of how prevalent socio economic conditions impact on learner performance. Without a model in place or measures in place, the situation could escalate in the district. The Bill of Rights Chapter two in the constitution of the Republic of South Africa(1996) states that : Everyone has the right to a basic education , including adult basic education, which the state through reasonable measures , must make progressively available and accessible. Stakeholders in the Nkangala Department of education could provide schools with necessary resources to foster teaching and learning. Also the preamble of the South African School Act(SASA) No. 84 of 1996, states that:

South Africa requires a new national system for schools which will redress past injustices in educational provision, provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners and in so doing lay a strong foundation for the development of all our people's talents and capabilities. The South African School Act (SASA) further advances the democratic transformation of society, combat racism and sexism and all forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance. The provision of a quality educational system is pivotal and will contribute to the eradication of poverty and the economic wellbeing of society.

Writing about the United States system, Sherman (2008:347-360) maintained that teachers who demonstrate patience, knowledge and intervention techniques can have positive impact on learners' success. The same could be applicable to learners in the Nkangala district in order for the learners to achieve success. Chindanya (2011:23) contended that if teachers are perceived as caring about the welfare of children, communicate respect for parents and establish effective ways of communicating with families, parents become inclined to be involved in their children's schooling. This view is corroborated by Lemmer(1994:93), Dekker(1993:155) who viewed parental involvement as the participation of parents in a wide range of school based and home based activities to improve their children's education. It applied support given to the school which can take the form of cooperation, participation and partnership. Cooperation implied that parents support the school at home through their actions, such as demonstrating loyalty towards the school and supervising children's homework. Participation means that parents become more involved in school matters as Vandergrift and Greene (1992:59) term it type 1: (+,+). Partnership constitutes the highest level of parent involvement at school level. Parents who are in partnership with schools serve on school governing bodies where they participate in decision making.

Moreover, Ergul (2004) discovered in his study that high motivation levels and self-discipline were necessary for learners to be successful in e-learning. He further advocated that it is extremely important to provide more extrinsic motivation and feedback, something that is more feasible with increasing numbers of learners with access to the internet. This can yield the same results in the Nkangala District if there is provision of computer and internet facilities as advocated by a cross section of the participants that the researcher engaged in this study. Citing other

examples, researchers over the years have classified three significant factors that affect the teaching learning process. According to Gloria (1997), the best teacher using the best equipment and material available will fail unless the learner is ready to learn, and the quality of learning depends upon the quality of the learner. Various factors affected learning in school. Gloria (1997) elaborated these factors to include environmental factors, classrooms, textbooks, equipment, school supplies, and other instructional materials, the school head, the teacher, the learner, home environment and the language of instruction. This fits like a prism to the socio economic conditions of learners in the Nkangala District. In another study, Cabusa (2008) identified the following factors as hindering learners' achievement in schools; lack of needed materials for study, lack of interest in schooling and irregular attendance of lessons. Other factors noted were school policies, lack of administrative support, distance of home from the school, transfer of residence looking for work, housekeeping responsibilities and insufficient financial assistance. The researcher is of the opinion that knowledge of these policies can assist stakeholders in the Department of Education (DoE) in the Nkangala District to come up with workable solutions.

A recent study in the United State of America contended that the socio-economic status of learners determine their achievement. This study maintained that poverty, which forms a specific way of life, was a growing issue in the United States. The number of Americans living in poverty is on the increase. Poverty indicated the extent to which an individual does without resources. Resources can include financial, emotional, mental, spiritual and physical resources as well as support systems, relationships, role models and knowledge hidden rules. Poverty directly affects academic achievement due to lack of resources available for learners' success. Low achievement is closely correlated with lack of resources and numerous studies have documented the correlation between low socio economic status and low achievement of learners.

The next section deals with the impact of the school environment on learners' achievement.

#### **4.3.1 The prerequisites and the school environment**

How do you think the school environment could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?

All the participants in the study concurred that the school environment impacted on learners' academic performance. The subsequent paragraphs discussed the views of the participants as far as school environment is concerned.

- **The views of the principals**

All the principals that participated in the study indicated that schools need to have “enough structures such as classrooms, laboratories, computers with internet and necessary equipment to ensure that learners are not over crowded in the classroom and teachers are accommodated and well catered for, learners would be motivated to learn and teachers would be motivated to teach well.” In addition to that, morning and afternoon classes would easily be attended to if teachers were accommodated within the school premises. They further stated that the school environment should be conducive to learning and teaching. Another principal said instilling discipline to all the learners was a necessary prerequisite. Another principal said “there should be punctuality and discipline from the learners”. The principals emphasised that all the stakeholders should be willing to work as a team. It is worth mentioning that another principal indicated that there had to be well qualified and devoted teachers who are in possession of all the necessary teaching and learning resources since these are important prerequisites. Effective management takes place if there are human resources that one can manage. These people within the specific world of the school environment should have common outcomes or needs they seek to realise on behalf of the school. They can reach their common outcomes through financial and physical resources. It is worth mentioning that resources are needed to facilitate learning and teaching which is an aspect of sound teaching and learning culture. So the principals of the four schools believed that the school factor of teaching and learning would be effective if they all had the necessary resources. The resources include human resources, financial and good structures. The views of the teachers will be given in the next section.

## **The views of the teachers**

The teachers focus group indicated that the provision of learning and teaching materials in time were important requirements. Other things that they mentioned as important were “computers with internet, science laboratory and well equipped libraries”. These they said would assist both teachers and learners to effectively do their work. All the teachers in the four schools indicated that the senior secondary schools in the district had parents who did not give attention to their children’s school needs. They also said some of the learners were not committed to their school work .This was explained by the fact that most of the learners are from child headed families. They all agreed that having healthy relationships in the school and good communication were a necessary benefit. The next section gave the views of the learners.

- **The views of the learners**

The focus groups with learners indicated that learners accepted that school factors in the district impacted on their learning. They also indicated that adequate facilities such as classrooms, libraries, and science and computer laboratories would go a long way in assisting them with their studies. The learners also cited that there should be a collection of sufficient learning and teaching materials in time so that classes could begin at the beginning of the year. Other learners indicated that overcrowding was a problem that they were facing. The learners indicated that it was not enough to have buildings without furniture and that well organised classrooms motivated learners to learn. The learners also approved that high schools should have constant electricity so that all learners could use it to study after school hours. The subsequent paragraph will shed light on the views of the parents.

- **The views of the parents**

The general feeling among the parents indicated that the socio economic conditions in the district impacted on the learners’ performance. They state that most of them were unemployed and they rely on social grants, consequently they do not have money to buy learning material in time. The parents also were of the view that the schools in the district lacked infrastructure such as buildings, libraries

and computer laboratories. One parent who had been a principal before and went on retirement said “a part of the fact that the learners were coming from poor background, many of them do not study at home, they spent their time playing with their cell phones. Most of them also go to the taverns especially on Fridays”.

The findings from the parents indicated that the impact of the socio- economic conditions in the district had a role to play as far as learners’ achievement was concerned. To these parents the following would serve as a panacea to learners’ achievement; provision of enough learning and teaching material, enough classrooms and furniture to avoid overcrowding, creating job opportunities in the district for parent motivating the learners to work hard and to be better than their parents, requesting social workers and the South African police service to talk to the learners about the importance of taking education seriously and the consequences of the opposite and other parents approved that a good welcoming environment is an outcome of learners’ achievement and that the school environment should be friendly for the learners. The views of the district officer were not left out. They are presented below.

- **The views of the District officer**

The face to face interview conducted with the district officer revealed that the poor background of the learners was a contributing factor to their performance. Most of the parents of these learners were also not educated; consequently they could not assist their children. “Learners from poor families have low self-esteem”. This made them not to have confidence in their work. Most of the families live in small rooms which are not comfortable to study in. Most parents live on grants making it difficult for them to provide the needs of the learners on time. These were some of the factors that the district officer believed were socio economic conditions in the district that impinged on their academic performance. A discussion on the above findings appears in the following section.

- **Discussions**

The researcher concurs with the participants on the premise that, according to Chisholm and Vally (1996:13) adequate, decent facilities and equipment are a prerequisite for effective teaching and learning to take place. All the participants



had an unfaltering view that the socio economic conditions in the district, the home environment, the school environment and the department of education had a role to play if any meaningful change was desired for learners' achievement. According to Deventer and Kruger (2008:8), the correct and careful management of resources of the school is one of the most important administrative duties of the principal of a school. The resources should be available in order to be managed. David and Lazarus (1997:117) state that management of school resources is the key role for all the staff members, even though the principal plays a major role in that field. According to the researcher, the skilful management of school resources must work in conjunction with an improved socio economic status of learners for meaningful learners' achievement. According to Banks (1991:141), the role of the school should not merely be places of social reproduction where learners are passively socialised into accepting and filling their places in the existing social order. While this may be one of its functions, the school must also enable learners to acquire the appropriate attitudes, knowledge and skills required to participate in social action and social change. Sleeter (1992:2) also contends that social transformation should be an integral part of the school. An illumination of the role of the home environment to learners' achievement will follow.

#### **4.3.2 The role of the home environment to learners' achievement**

To what extent does the learners' home environment determine their academic performance?

The participants who were involved in the study concurred that the home environment impacted significantly on learners' achievement in the Nkangala district, except for one focus group of learners who said it is how determined learners are with their studies that determine their achievement. The views of all the participants were discussed below.

- **The views of the principal**

The principals of the four schools unanimously indicated that the home environment impacted on learners' academic performance. A litany of home factors was enumerated by the four principals. Some of these factors were "lack of

learning material due to poverty; many of them live with their grannies who pay little or no attention to their studies”. One of the principals also said “the absence of a role model in the community who they could look up to is a factor that could encourage learners’ achievement”. The absence of a role model therefore impacts negatively on learners’ academic achievement in the district”. Gangsterism and poverty were also cited by the principals.

- **The views of the teachers**

The teachers’ focus groups pointed out that there was no cohesion between the home and the schools. Other things which they indicated as impacting on learners’ performance in their own words were:

“Poverty, absence of a culture of learning, lack of learning material, peer pressure, no one supervises them at home, prevalence of drugs and alcohol, absenteeism especially on Fridays, absence of a role model at home, absence of motivation, child headed families, overcrowding , the use of cell phones by the learners, ill-disciplined learners and non- committed learners”.

All the teachers agreed that excellent communication between the schools and the community was important.

- **The views of the learners**

The focus group with the learners indicated that most of the learners were given a lot of home chores like cleaning and washing and looking after their siblings. They further cited a lack of parental assistance with homework because most parents work at distant places and come home only at the end of the month. Others cited that noise emanating from the taverns especially on Fridays and peer pressure impacted negatively on them.

- **The views of the parents**

The parents indicated that these learners did not want to study at home. “They spend their time playing with the cell phones”. They also maintained that the learners had too many friends who disturb them and encourage them not to study. “On Fridays they go to the taverns and comeback late in the night”.

- **The views of the district officer**

The district officer cited poverty as a major factor that hampered on the learners' performance. "Most of these learners come from poverty stricken homes". Poverty makes them not to have educational material in time. Some of them live in houses without a sufficient space to study". He also mentioned that there was lack of role models and an upsurge in gangsterism, teenage pregnancy, and drug and alcohol abuse in the district.

- **Discussions**

One point that needed elaboration is poverty. According to the World Bank, poverty means living below one US dollar a day(Levin 2011:22). When a person lives below this threshold, that person is said to be poor. Poor living conditions, undernourishment, lack of proper housing and unemployment have a negative impact on all learners. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO 2005:16) poverty often determines whether a child can attend school. Because of their financial burden, poor parents often struggle to provide even the basic necessities of life. Poverty was identified by the principals as a major problem faced by learners in the District. The participants said most of the learners were from extended families which depended on their parents' social grant. It was also indicated that some of them are orphans and they did not receive proper care. Child headed families were also cited by the participants. Some of them stated that they have experienced absenteeism especially on Fridays because of poverty. One area where poverty manifested itself is in the inability of parents to buy school uniform for their children. This is why learners abrogated the school dressing code. The consequences of poverty hindered the learners' academic performance and ultimately those who cannot persevere would drop out of the system.

According to Mchunu (2012), parent involvement is essential in senior secondary school learners and that parent's involvement at home impacts on learners' achievement irrespective of the parent's socio economic status and the level of education. Recent research on the socio economic status on learners' achievement internationally points positive effect on learners achievement (Sander & Lewis 2005); and (Henderson & Mapp 2002:7). This research report concludes

that learners with involved parents, no matter their income and background, are more likely to gain the following benefits: obtain better results and performance in tests, enrol in higher level courses, pass their classes and be promoted to the next grade. These same learners attend school regularly, have better social skills and show improved behaviour both in and out of school and adapt well to the school environment. They equally finish their basic education and proceed to higher education. In spite of the fact that these benefits have been proven, the impact of socio economic status on learners' achievement at public schools in Nkangala, Mpumalanga province had not been shown to have been straightened. It was therefore the aim of the researcher to fill this gap.

According to Chinapa, (2003) quality education for all can only be ensured on the condition that all educational role-players fully understand the dynamics of the teaching and learning processes where learners remain at the centre, as targets for any intervention, be it at the level of curriculum, teaching, or learning environment. In a similar vein, he asserts that enormous efforts are needed to have a stable, qualified, better rewarded and less mobile teaching force. Critical problems such as scarcity of teaching and learning resources, multiple school shifts, large class sizes, and long distances to school should be seriously addressed. The researcher concurs with the above view that if there is any desire to improve learner achievement in the Nkangala District in Mpumalanga province, appropriate steps must be taken to address the impact of socio economic status on learners achievement in the district

The researcher is of the opinion that there are five key aspects of school management, which, if managed efficiently, would promote learners' achievement in the Nkangala District. These aspects are the socio economic conditions, the home environment, the school environment, the department of education and parental involvement. The next section was devoted to the role of the department of education.

#### **4.3.3 The role of the Department of education**

To what extent does the education department influence learners' academic performance?

- **The views of the teachers**

The teachers were unanimous in their views that the education department could not supply learning and teaching material in time. Mention was also made of the fact that the department could not provide the learners with an up to date library and Information technology centre. If these could be provided, it would impact positively on learners' performance. This therefore means the DoE impacts negatively on learners' performance.

- **The views of the learners**

Interestingly the learners who participated in the study indicated that the Department of Education plays an important part in as far as their performance is concerned. They cited that the pass rate of 30% is demotivating. They wished that if it can be stepped up to 50% percent, they would be pressed to work harder. Others indicated that *the time table provided to them during common exams in the district was not adhered to as some learning areas were not written on stipulated dates*. This suggest that the DoE impacts negatively to learners performance

- **The views of the District officer**

According to the district officer the department of education has a negative impact on learners' academic achievement in that principals' recruitment was done by parents. Meritocracy was therefore not followed because parents decided who should head the schools. Scandals in daily Newspapers that posts are sold are a reality in Education management circles in the district. Like the saying "every cloud has a silver lining", the DoE also impacts positively on learners' achievement in the district. *This is done by the government policy of free public education .The departments also provides text books to learners. Members of the Department of Education visit schools and support the schools. The Department of Education also made it a priority that there be an intervention strategy and an improvement plan in place. The school feeding scheme is also a DoE initiative that helps learners from poor homes.*

- **The views of the parents**

The four parents who were interviewed face to face agreed that the education department had an impact on learners' achievement in the district. They believed that if the department could provide the schools with adequate libraries and a computer facility, it would help the learners and the teachers in doing their work. One parent who had been a principal had this to say *Minister Angie always changes the school curriculum Outcomes Based Education (OBE), National Curriculum Statement (NCS), and of recent Curriculum Assessment Policy(CAPS) .These changes impact on teachers and learners because mastery of the content is difficult to be achieved.* This therefore means the DoE impacts negatively on learners achievement.

- **Views of Principals**

The principals of the four schools accepted that the department of education had a positive impact on learners' achievement in the district. *This is because the department provides learning and teaching material to the schools. The school feeding scheme is also an initiative of the department of education. The department of education has provided the schools with subject facilitators who assist teachers. All these are attempts by the department of education to improve learners' achievement in the district'*. One principal said if the department of education can provide text books to learners on time it would assist learners well. But they come late.

- **Discussion**

Some of the participants involved in the study agreed that the Department of Education (DoE) played a significant role in learners' achievement in the following ways. Government is providing nutrition, free text books, subject facilitators and the organisation of common exams. The DoE did this in order to empower the learners with the necessary skills for the 21st century. Empowerment according to Giroux and McLaren (1986:229) is a process whereby learners are able to critically evaluate and select an appropriate aspect of a dominant culture that will provide the means of participating in social action and change in a wider society, and not simply serve the existing order. Cummins (1986:24) added that learners who are empowered by their school experiences develop the ability, confidence and motivation to succeed academically. To achieve this, it means the learners' cultural

and linguistic heritages need to be incorporated into their school experiences. Sleeter (1991:9) corroborated this view by stating that when learners are empowered through learning content and teaching practices, it advances critical thinking and active participation in the learning process .The Department of education also plays a role in promoting equity and quality in education. Equity and quality imply providing learners with equal access and with equal chance of succeeding in the classroom (Squelch 1993:190). The next sections dealt with the promotion of a culture of learning and teaching as a model to learners' achievement.

#### **4.4. THE PROMOTION OF A CULTURE OF LEARNING AND TEACHING**

According to Van Deventer and Kruger(2008:3) in Ndlela's (2014) unpublished work, the concept of a culture of learning and teaching(COLT) refers to an attitude of all the role players towards teaching and learning and the presence of quality teaching and learning in schools. Van Deventer and Kruger (2008:3) depicted the following characteristics that a school could possess in order to promote COLT.

Positive school climate, sound classroom environment, sound home school relations, effective leadership, management and administration, neat building and facilities availability of resources, high professional standards among teachers, healthy relationships between all role players, order and discipline, effective instructional leadership and shared sense of purpose.

Davidoff and Lazarus (1993) are of the view that a sound COLT can be obtained when:

All role players value the processes of teaching and learning, practices reflect commitment to teaching and learning, the resources needed to facilitate this processes are available, the school is structured to facilitate these processes.

Basson, Van der Westhuizen and Niemann (1991:619-620) have written extensively on how the function of a school culture revolves on the culture of teaching and learning. They maintain the following:

The school's organisational culture can help to define staff tasks, the organisational culture influences teachers' commitment to their teaching tasks in isolation of the classroom, it is cohesive in nature and binds the staff and learners in a common fate and vision, it is directive by nature and plays an important role in decision making in the school, it determines behaviour and indicates proper and ideal behaviour for various members, the researcher accorded to the views of these scholars on what a school as an organisation had to pursue in order for to promote learners' achievement. The next section was devoted to the suggestions of the participants as a strategy to promote learner achievement in the Nkangala District.

#### **4.4 Suggestions of the participants**

The researcher received suggestions from all the participants that were involved in the study. Suggestions are discussed below

- **Suggestions made by the principals**

According to the principals motivational speakers were invited to talk to the learners on the importance of hard work. Former learners of the schools and some successful individuals are in this category. Social workers, members of the South African Police Service (SAPS) were also invited to talk to the learners on the effects of drugs and alcohol abuse. To boost their morale, members of the school governing bodies are invited to talk to the learners from time to time. There is a disciplinary committee in place that handles matters related to discipline and educators also play a part in maintaining discipline. In addition, illiterate parents were requested to take interest in the education of their children during the consultation and parents' evening. At the end of each term, awards are given to learners as a way of motivating them. Two of the principals recommended that content workshops be held from time to time to empowered the teachers in their teaching subjects. Saturday classes and extra classes in the morning and after school were organised so as to complete work in time. If this is done, there would be sufficient time for revision. The School Based Support Team (SBST) also plays a pivotal role in that referrals are made to the District for environmentally deprived



learners. Other recommendations offered by principals were to praise good behaviour from learners and discourage negative behaviour. A further recommendation that schools should be funded so that there are available funds to embark on new projects was made and that teachers, learners and parents should inform the School Management Team (SMT) of any deviant behaviour. Lastly the principals recommended that all stakeholders should be invited to be on board with all the school goals, vision and mission.

- **Suggestions made by the teachers**

The researcher requested the teachers to submit their suggestions that could help resolve the issue of socio- economic impact on learners' achievement .The following were their suggestions; *toward best performing learners, both male and female. This has impacted the learners positively because there is competition to get the award. Furthermore, consultations with parents should be held quarterly. During these consultations parents are informed of the performance of the learners and a plan is put in place to assist struggling learners. To minimise truancy, there is a code of conduct for each school that details what learners cannot do. To facilitate learning, the teachers suggested that facilities such as science laboratory, computer laboratory and a library be put in place. They also suggested that the disciplinary committee should be active as this would promote healthy and vibrant behaviour. This would also encourage the learners to do and submit their tasks on time, because they would know the consequences of not submitting on time. An active disciplinary committee would also ensure that there is regular learner attendance. Truancy therefore would be minimised. As they are entrusted with the enormous task of running schools, teachers held that there should be proper renovation of buildings, repairing of broken walls, raising flower beds, removing graffiti on the walls. They pointed out that this could go a long way in lifting the image of the schools. This can be done by encouraging fund raising activities since most of the schools in the district are not well funded. The teacher participants also pointed out that extra classes in the morning and in the afternoon, informing parents to assist learners with their studies and inviting motivational speakers to talk to them would boost the learners' morale. The principal, as an*

*instructional leader, could assist learners and teachers by organising coaching sessions on how to study and plan a career day. The challenge of pupil-teacher ratio could be addressed by solving overcrowding. This would mean building more classrooms.*

### **Suggestions made by the learners.**

The learners who participated in the focus group interview suggested that *facilities like computer and science libraries should be put in place. Interestingly, they said that the pass rate should be moved to 50% and not the current 30% in all subjects. This would motivate learners to study hard. More classrooms with electricity should be provided to prevent overcrowding and the provision of text books in time would make learning enjoyable. The learners also advocated that extra classes should be provided and that teachers should be friendly to learners and they should be motivated from time to time by giving them information about available bursaries. The principals should enforce discipline so that teaching and learning is effective and that the principal should be visible and approachable. The learners further recommended that past examination questions should be accessible to them as it would assist in adequately preparing for upcoming examinations. To curb the shortage of teachers, the learners suggested the employment of more teachers.*

- **Suggestions made by the parents**

The parents who were interviewed suggested that *if they were to talk to the learners together with successful learners in the community, this would motivate the learners to know the importance of education. Like the principals who emphasised the importance of awards in encouraging competition among learners, the parents also stressed the importance of awards. The parents held that awards in the form of certificates lasted longer than monetary awards. They said the learners would always remember this when they look at the certificate.* To understand how to bring the best out of learners, a parent who had once been a principal told the researcher that a record could be kept for late comers, for absenteeism and for learners who disrupt lessons. This parent stressed that

*discipline is the core of any meaningful learner achievement. An army which is not disciplined cannot win a war, it is the same with a learner who is not disciplined they cannot succeed in their exams .Therefore; deviant behaviour should be severely dealt with. Citing pregnancy as a factor that hinders learner achievement, the parents recommended that social workers should be called in to educate the learners on teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse. According to some parents, the government should provide infrastructure such as additional classes, computer and science laboratories. This they believe would make the learners competitive in the field of work. Some parents alluded to the fact that the recent surge in drug abuse stems from the fact that the learners are not engaged constructively and as such they clamour for Saturday classes in order to keep them busy. The principal, as a the department of education representative, has a vanguard role of maintaining a harmonious working environment .This can be achieved by providing teachers with learning and teaching material on time, ensuring that there is a conducive atmosphere for learning, ensuring that learners obey school rules and regulations and I monitoring each teacher's annual teaching plan.*

- **Suggestions made by the District officer**

The district officer maintained that *long term solutions were the only way to surmount barriers to learner achievement. Long term solutions were recommended by the district officer such as getting the parents and the community educated on the importance of education and ploughing back to the community. When graduates are encouraged to go back to the community and educate their people, it will motivate the learners. Graduates from the community could also help the learners with holiday classes. This will keep them busy and away from gangsterism, alcohol and drug abuse. In addition to ploughing back to the community, recruitment of school principals should be done by competent people so that a competent educational manager is recruited. A competent educational manager is the engine of the school he maintains.* The district officer pointed out that teaching school administrators and teachers how to fish, by putting in place an improvement plan and intervention strategies, could improve learner achievement in the district. Lastly, a concerted effort from all stakeholders is a long term solution. The next section was devoted to the discussions of the research findings.

#### **4.5 Summary of findings**

How schooling environment determines the learners' academic achievement?

The physical environment of a school as a teaching and learning site is pivotal to both the physical and intellectual development of learners. As people involved in school governance, the researcher engaged parents, teachers, principals and the district officer in discussions pertaining to the kind of physical environment that school managers could undertake to improve the physical conditions of their respective schools. Although the interviews were conducted on different days and times, the participants were unanimous in their responses in that schools management could renovate buildings, repair broken walls, raise flower beds, plant trees and a lawn to make the school environment healthy and attractive. In the rural areas many parents were not able to pay their fees and government subsidies were not enough to provide schools with all their basic amenities. Therefore, parents could engage in fund raising activities such as beauty contests, singing and dancing competitions, and casual days in order to raise funds to improve the physical conditions of the schools. It was a helpful reality for this study that three of the four schools where this study was carried out had problems relating to the physical environment as a result of neglect, erosion, broken furniture and defacing graffiti on the walls. The researcher asserts that the renovation efforts by the communities are steps in the right direction. Also the repair of school furniture, for example, may have a direct and positive impact on learner achievement. This could provide enough tables and chairs for learners to use instead of two learners sitting on one chair. Three parents from the four schools engaged in the study presented a very unique and significant project of establishing a computer centre. All participants from this school, parents, teachers and the principals accepted that they want their children to learn skills which would enable them to compete with their counterparts in the urban areas. The discovery that some schools are effective in teaching learners from disadvantaged family backgrounds makes it plausible to the conclusion that the nature of school environment can make a difference in the level of learners' achievement. In unity lies strength and so when parents and teachers come together in collaborative

efforts, schools can improve their academic performance. The collaboration between home and school which is now becoming a worldwide trend is linked to school effectiveness. Lemmer and van Wyk (2004:260) maintained that school improvement has been effective and reported in many parts of the world including the UK, Indonesia and the Netherlands.

### **Establishing a culture of learning and teaching**

Effective teaching and learning can only take place under a conducive atmosphere. In recent years, many schools in South Africa face crisis which makes teaching and learning difficult. In chapter two of this study the investigator asserted that South African schools are not safe places. From the views of this study's participants, they pointed out that various practical measures have been taken by school managers to introduce a culture of learning and teaching. These measures include consultations with parents, frequent visits by selected motivational speakers and regular visits by social workers and members of the South African Police Service (SAPS). The responses from parents, principals, learners and the district officer indicated that all the participants agreed that the culture of teaching and learning is the very foundation of accelerating learner performance. To realise the dream of a favourable teaching and learning climate in these schools, parents and teachers said members from the SAPS are invited to the schools to talk to learners on topics such as alcohol, violence, drugs and careers that they are can followed after Grade 12. These are laudable efforts because social leaders are teachers as they steer society to success (Nyerere, 1971).

Apart from the consultation meetings held by the teachers inviting members of the public to talk to learners, the School Governing Bodies meet with the Learner Representative Council (LRC) consisting of the school prefects, to learn about some of their problems. The parents' representatives then make the school management team, which comprises of the principal and HODs, aware of learners' grievances and as partners seek solutions together. For instance, teachers who do not come to class are investigated and solutions proposed.

Teachers who were interviewed in the focus group interview specifically pointed out that in order to achieve the culture of learning, learners work such as homework, assignments and portfolios should be monitored. Discipline needs to be maintained at all times, for instance punctuality and regular attendance and problems relating to bunking of classes, drinking of alcohol and drugs must be seriously discouraged. Talks by social workers on teenage pregnancies are steps in the right direction because women should be at the centre of learning (Malcolm X 1960).

### **Poverty**

According to the World Bank poverty means living below one US dollar per day. When a person lives below this threshold, that person is said to be poor. Poor living conditions, undernourishment, lack of proper housing and unemployment have a negative impact on all learners. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and cultural organisation (UNESCO 2005:16) poverty often determines whether a child can attend school or not. Because of their financial burden, poor parents often struggle to provide even the basic necessities of life. Poverty was identified as a major problem besetting the learners in the Nkangala District. The participants said in unequivocal terms that most of the learners were from extended families and depended on their parents' pension grants. It was also indicated that some are orphans and do not receive proper care. Child headed families were also mentioned by all the participants. *Meneer* the other problem that these learners face because of poverty is that *most of them come to school being very tired and hungry*. The responses indicated that their concentration span is limited because of fatigue and hunger. Some stated that they have experienced absenteeism especially on Fridays because of poverty. One area where poverty manifests itself in the district is in the inability of parents to buy school uniforms for their children. This is probably the reason why learners also abrogate the school dressing code. The consequence of poverty hinders the academic performance of these learners and ultimately those who cannot persevere will drop out of the education system.

### **Resources**

Based on the evidence gathered as well as observation, the participants emphatically mentioned the inadequacy of resources such as computer laboratory and libraries. Only one of the four schools has a computer room. One parent noted that if they could have internet facilities, it would go a long way in assisting the learners in doing their assignments and homework. According to the researcher's observations, lack of resources is a major problem in the schools of the district. According to Basson (1986:421) the school is the nodal point of a diversity of interests and expectations. This means that the use of a computer in school management could be studied in all perspectives. The advantages of using computers in schools are numerous. It saves time, it is cost effective and it is reliable. The researcher observed how in one class there were 48 learners in a instead of the recommended 40. The few posters on the wall that the researcher observed were dusty charts that were very old and had no relevance to the current syllabi, which is Curriculum Assessment Policy (CAPS). Still in line with resources, some parents are unemployed or do not have high paying jobs. This therefore means that the resources they provide for their children's education are grossly inadequate. A good number of parents cited their financial position as a factor that makes them to reluctantly provide resources that are necessary in learning such as access to the internet, own transport and to attending parents' meetings and other school activities.

### **Transportation**

In one of the schools, parent echoed that transport on weekly basis was a problem to him as he gets his grants only at the end of the month. In the other three schools, parents had no transport problems because the school was a walking distance from their homes.

### **Poor educational back ground of the parents**

Three of the parents that the researcher interviewed said they did not go beyond standard eight so it was difficult to assist their children with homework. One parent who holds a university qualification said the "Minister Angie changes school programmes so often". He said Outcomes Based Education (OBE), National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and the recent Curriculum Assessment Policy (CAP) confuses him a lot. This view was corroborated by two teachers who complained

that they cannot get mastery on the content they are to teach. These comments are daily realities of the educational system in South Africa. A study by Smith (1982:109) bore special relationship here. "The best curriculum facilities and teachers in the world will be of no avail unless the parents are clearly seen as the *raison d'être* or reason for existence of the whole process". All attempts must be done to involve parents in the education of their children.

### **Lack of role models**

External forces impact negatively on learners' achievement. Five educators said in the community where these learners come from, there are no role models. This means there is no one whom the learners can aspire to become like. One teacher said their role models have nothing positive that they can emulate. Gangsterism was cited by the principals and district officer as a factor that has a disastrous effect on learner achievement. According to a survey of teachers in the United Kingdom conducted in 2008 by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, young people most frequently chose sports stars as role models, followed by pop stars. Many simply aspired to be "famous for being famous" believing that fame and fortune could easily be accessed through reality television. It is therefore incumbent on stakeholders to expose learners to prominent role models in the community.

### **School library and learner achievement**

The findings of the study fit like a prism to the review of literature in chapter two as Barrett (2010:136-139) confirms that school libraries have a significant impact on learners learning and achievement. Several common contributing factors that will lead to learners' achievement are:

Flexible scheduling, effective collaboration between library staff and teachers, appropriate library ,staff levels and opening hours, an up to date library collection, access via library ICT to online resources, being well funded.

Factors that deter parents from becoming involved in their children's education are:



- **Parents' lack of interest**

Participants in the study said parents lack interest when it comes to the education of their children, a finding consistent with that of Cooper and Crosnoe (2007:375) that economic disadvantaged parents pay little attention to the education of their children especially when they have financial constraints. Most parents would be unable to provide the kind of education that is expected from the different kinds of schools. This high education expectation makes parents to shun away from their children's education. In addition to the problem of high education expectation, is the issue of man power shortage and high standard of living. Many parents work outside the home and become uninvolved in their children's education. At present, the state has taken control of education to such an extent that there is little room for parent involvement. Research findings also suggest that both parents and teachers sometimes manifest negative attitudes towards parent involvement. Parents sometimes do not or cannot become involved, while teachers regard parents' involvement as unnecessary

Singh, Nkopodi and Msila (2004:301-304), maintain that the home conditions of many learners prevent the existence of a suitable learning environment. In this study, 45% of parents expected children to work in *spaza* shops. Ninety percent of the parents were of the opinion that schools were competent to deal with the formal education of their children and did not understand their role as parents in this regard. The teachers who were interviewed regarded domestic problems as obstacles to learner achievement. Collaboration between parents and schools was unsatisfactory. Both parents and educators blamed each other for the lack of parent involvement. Many parents, for instance, blamed the schools for not involving them when curriculum 2005 and later CAP were introduced.

- **The rationale for involving parents in the education of their children.**

The principals agreed how government ensures that communities, particularly, parents should participate in the education of children. There was consensus among all the participants that parent's involvement and participation in children's education is crucial for the realisation of educational goals. A comprehensive parent involvement is a prerequisite for improving the culture of teaching and learning (Lemmer & Van Wyk 2004:259). It is for this reason the government has

made it obligatory for parents to serve as governors in schools where their children attend. By allocating roles to communities through the SGB, the government ensures that parents in particular play a pivotal role in all aspects of their children's education. This is in contrast with the period before 1994. At present, there is a forum for parents where they may not only discuss grievances about children but provide suggestions, support and solutions to educational problems. The participants concurred that the task of educating children in the modern society is too complex to be left in the hands of teachers or the school alone. Many of the learners in the schools where this study was conducted are teenagers. At this stage in life, many children due in part to problems at home, poverty or peer pressure may get involved in some kind of bad behaviour, for instance experimenting on drugs, alcohol or sex. Such behaviour very often leads to poor academic performance or school dropout. This situation requires parents' involvement in children's education where as parents they could provide guidance to learners at all times. Participants concurred that parents have a role to play by making learners aware of the dangers and effects of drugs, alcohol and sex abuse. A parent who participated in the study mentioned the steps taken to assist the schools to address the problem. Aware of the damaging effects of drugs, alcohol abuse and teenage pregnancies on learners all the four parents reported on what they do to warn learners about the consequences of indulging in such activities. Parents, teachers and principals either invite health workers, the police, and correctional service personnel or sometimes they themselves talk about the negative effects of substance abuse and teenage pregnancies on the future of the teenagers in general and on their academic achievement in particular. All the participants agreed that teenage hood is a period of experiment and in many cases disobedience to authority. Many children at this stage of life are susceptible to contracting sexually transmissible diseases (STDs) including HIV/AIDS or become drug takers and peddlers because they very often ignore advice from adults, parents and teachers. The parents agreed that it is their duty to ensure that their children avoid drugs, alcohol and early sex in order to focus on studies. The parent group for example in one of the schools reported that at general meetings they advise parents to have a closer relationship with their children and instil in them ethical and moral values such as truth, punctuality, respect and obedience to all adults.

Some of the teachers focus groups agreed that they involve parents in organising career days and all school trips. They said this could boost the motivation of learners and get the support of parents in all educational activities that the schools organise. The government acknowledged the fact that parents have a major role to play hence through legislation it has made provision for parents and community members to collaborate or come together with schools to educate children. This collaborative responsibility may remove the impression among some parents and community members that teachers are the ones paid to educate the children and by getting involved they put their children's education at risk. Two of the parents involved in the study wanted the schools in the district to be equipped with resources like those in the cities because teachers and learners alike can improve academic output when they have access to modern teaching and learning resources such as computers, overhead projectors, science laboratories and libraries. A better school can only be realised when parents and teachers work together (Lemmer & Van Wyk 2004). As school principals, parents in rural areas would like to transform their schools to be equal with well-equipped urban schools but can only do so in partnership with teachers and principals. Parent involvement is an important aspect of democratisation and educational transformation in the new and democratic South Africa. Schools are located in different communities, and residents of the communities should own the school, protect and improve it the way they see fit. With the introduction of school governing bodies, parents have been given the opportunity not only to be involved but also to actively participate in matters relating to the improvement of learning. It is only when parents are visible on the school governance structures that they can influence policies and transformation and improvement agenda of community schools. School improvement strategies can have positive results on learners' performance. In an article written by Sergiovanni (1994), he states that "if we are to rewrite the script to enable good schools to flourish, we need to rebuild the community. Community building must become the heart of any school improvement effort".

### **Establishing a culture of learning and teaching**

Effective teaching and learning can only take place under a conducive atmosphere. In recent years many schools in South Africa face a crisis which makes teaching and learning difficult. From the participants of this study, their views were taken into consideration on how to ensure that the culture of teaching and learning is established in these schools. The participants pointed out that various practical measures have been put in place by school managers to promote a culture of learning and teaching. . These measures include regular meetings with learners to learn of their problems, frequent visits by selected motivational speakers, and regular visits by SGB members. The responses from parents, principals, learners and the district officer indicate that all the participants agreed that the culture of teaching and learning is the very foundation of improved learner performance. To realise the dream of a conducive teaching and learning climate in these schools, parents and teachers said members from the South African Police Services (SAPS) are invited to the schools to talk to learners on topics such as alcohol, violence, drugs abuse and careers that are can be followed after completing Grade 12.

Apart from the regular meetings held by the SGB inviting members of the public to talk to learners, the SGB meets with Learner Representative Council (LRC) made up of the school prefects, to be informed of some of their problems. The parents' representatives then make the school management team aware of learners' grievances and seek solutions together. For instance teachers that do not come to class are investigated and solutions proposed.

Teachers who were interviewed in the focus group specifically pointed out that in order to achieve the culture of learning, learners' work must be monitored. Discipline needs to be maintained at all times for example punctuality and regular attendance and problems relating to bunking of classes, drinking of alcohol and drugs must be seriously discouraged.

### **Skills of learning and learners achievement**

Carzinado (2009) attaches a lot of attention to learners' achievement that he concludes that learners who master the skills of learning will do better than their

counterparts who fail to master learning skills. The learners who fail will get smaller or even zero scores. It simply means that each child has an estimate of his own abilities based on mastery of the acquired skills and previous personal experience. Most of the learners in the study contended that they lack learning skills which they could use to improve academic performance. When asked by the researcher what they think can be done as a solution to this problem, they all agreed that the school should teach them how to acquire these skills. The concern by these learners is in line with what Carzinado (2009) in chapter two submits as follows:

The range of individual differences originates because learners have different capacities, have different learning experiences, and have been developed at different rates. This is a fact that every parent and teacher must content to, because there is no way to eradicate these differences among children. This concept explains why learners differ in their achievement or performance, particularly in the school setting. Hence, it is not a guarantee that a good teacher will produce good learners or an ineffective teacher will produce poor learners in terms of academic achievement.

### **Class size and learners' achievement**

The participants in the study all agreed that class size had a major impact on their performance. Even though the government gazette stipulates that there should be a maximum of 40 learners in a class; the schools where this study was conducted had an enrolment exceeding 40 learners per class.

The contending literature from Trow (1995), Krueger (2002), and Glass and Smith (1979) among many other educationists, assist in unpacking the debate on learners' achievement. They maintain that class size has an impact on learners' achievement. They further maintain that the level of initial intelligence and learner aptitude, the length of time dedicated to the subject and availability of resources are factors that contribute significantly to learners' achievement.

Trow (1995) adds that reducing class size to increase learners' achievement is an approach that has been tried, debated and analysed for several decades. The premise seems logical: with fewer learners to teach, teachers can coax better performance from each of them. It is evident that the issue of class size is not

simply a matter of less is more effective. The pattern of research evidence only favours class size reduction if it is substantial and brings the class size below a certain threshold. According to Biggs(1999) achievement can be realised when one gets learners to engage in learning –related activities which are aimed at fulfilling a certain objective, such as theorising problem solving , coming up with ideas of their own and reflection. In this way knowledge is constructed and this will significantly improve learners’ achievement in Nkangala district in Mpumalanga province.

### **How the school environment could be improved to accelerate learners’ performance?**

Discipline is a cornerstone of a good school climate, teaching and learning and the image of a school relates very much to its climate or the prevailing atmosphere in that school. Learning climates are characterised by the degree to which they are effective in producing the desired learning outcomes (Brooker, Beaner & Efthim, 1982). Thus all the participants concur that a good climate or image can promote effective teaching and learning while a poor school climate does the opposite. In reality, a school with a poor image cannot attract good teachers and learners because most people would not like to be associated with a bad image or poor results. As the district officer suggested, a short term solution cannot be found. He suggested that to improve a school environment a competent school manager must be recruited by competent people not by the parents.

The four chosen schools for this study, like their counter parts in the rural areas, face crises or problems of indiscipline amongst learners. Throughout the discussion the various participants mentioned drugs and alcohol as the main causes of indiscipline, vandalism, bunking of classes and poor academic performance by learners. To note is that all participants were aware of the potential damage of drugs, alcohol and sex to their learners.

When asked by the researcher how this could be changed to improve the school environment, the participants agreed that parents need to unite with teachers to provide the learners with guidance and counselling on a regular basis. One parent concurred with the district officer that the district psychologist, social workers, police and correctional service personnel should be invited to talk to learners. This,

according to the parent, is done to create motivation amongst learners, reduce indiscipline, give them direction and improve the image of the school. These sentiments were echoed by parents in other rural areas who expressed their desperation. The issue of discipline has become the greatest concern among all education stakeholders. Effective teaching and learning and improvement in school performance can only take place where and when there is discipline. Although a school may have the best code of conduct, if it is not enforced by all role players it cannot assist the school to improve its academic performance. Learning can be fruitful where there is a conducive atmosphere, respect for law and order, calmness and security for both learners and teachers. Teachers can also teach well for the learning output to be increased when there is a culture of teaching and learning. It is for this very reason that the co-operation of parents through the SGB is crucial in providing and maintaining discipline for improved learners' academic performance.

#### **4.6 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the theoretical perspective of the study, the stages in data analysis, the presentation of data, the presentation of the findings, discussions and the recommendations from the participants were presented. The data collected from the various interviews assisted the researcher to come up with the relevant recommendations from all the participants. The recommendations could provide strategies that could be used by the stakeholders in the Nkangala District to triumph over the impact of socio economic status of learners' achievement in the District. The next chapter will be devoted to the interpretations, conclusions and recommendations of this study.

## **CHAPTER5**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONSAND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Chapter One the introduction of the research topic was given alongside the aims and objectives of the study, the research questions and the stated research problem. Learner achievement and other operational definitions were defined as used in the context of the study. The chapter then proceeded with a brief description of the research design and methodology. The chapter ended with a summary of the five chapters of the study.

Chapter Two reviewed literature that was related to the learners' achievement. The major gaps in literature were identified and other studies related to socio-economic status were examined. It was discovered from available literature that there was a lack of socio- economic status on learner achievement in the Nkangala District in Mpumalanga province.

Chapter Three presented a detailed account of the study's research design and methodology. Sampling strategies that were used in the study and the instruments were documented in detail. The researcher selected a qualitative research design and gave the rationale for this approach. Aspects related to ethical considerations and the trustworthiness of the research were given.

Chapter Four presented the data collected; its analyses and discussions were explained and taken into consideration. The research questions and the objectives of the study were also covered. A comparison was made between what literature holds on the socio economic status on learner achievement and the research findings. The researcher discovered that there was congruency between the findings and the available literature.

The last chapter of the study, Chapter five, is devoted to the summary of the research findings calculated against the research topic and the aim. Chapter Five also provides recommendations for teachers, principals, the Department of Education and the government with particular reference to the socio economic



status of learners achievement in the various schools involved in the study. The limitations and draw backs encountered in the study are enumerated. Lastly chapter five provides recommendations for further studies. The chapter commences with a brief summary of the study.

## **5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the study was to investigate the impact of socio- economic status on learner achievement at public schools in the Nkangala District, Mpumalanga province. This was done to reveal the impact of socio- economic status on learners' achievement in the district so that measures could be taken. .

The investigation revealed that there are a number of factors that hamper on learner achievement in the district. These factors are wide spread as all the schools that the researcher included in the study confirmed these factors. These factors are:

- **The socio economic conditions and learner achievement**

The study investigated how socio- economic conditions impacted on learners' performance in the four schools in the Nkangala District in Mpumalanga province. Information collected by the researcher confirmed that child headed families and non-involvement of parents in their children's education are wide spread. The fact that most of the parents work in distant places such as Johannesburg and Rustenburg renders these learners to live as child headed families. Learners' sound socio- economic conditions do not produce the desired results especially if parents are not involved. This point is buttressed by Smith (1982:109) when he posits "the best curriculum, facilities and teachers in the world will be of no avail unless the investors (parent) are behind the whole process. The parents and teachers are jointly responsible for the education of the learners".

- **The home environment and learner achievement**

The home environment of the learners negatively affected their achievement as the participants who were involved in the study concurred. They maintained that the home environment impacted negatively on learner achievement in the Nkangala District because most of learners come from houses with very little space to study. The study also found out that in the learners' home environment, there were no role models whom the learners could emulate. Gangsterism, alcohol and drug abuse were on the rise. According to a study conducted by Aston and McLanahan (1991:309) children who live with one parent during adolescence receive less encouragement and less help with school work than children who live with both parents. Aston and McLanahan's (1991:309) observation is much in line with the fact that learners who do not live with their parents receive no support or encouragement.

- **The school environment and learner achievement**

The impact of socio-economic status on learners' achievement is a malaise that must be fought tooth and nail. Therefore the school environment should be conducive to promote learners achievement at the end of year exams. The participants who were involved in the study confirmed that the school environment impacted negatively in as much as learner achievement is concerned. This was articulated by Basson's (1990:445) assertion that if a school is to function effectively, the school administration must be managed efficiently. Sound school management enables the administrative system of a school to form a supportive infrastructure in which teachers can perform their tasks with confidence. In the light of persuasive literature, there existed a positive relationship between school climate and learner achievement. According to Savo (1996), a positive school climate is one in which learners are assisted along a number of developmental pathways. For the school to continue with business as usual Savo (1996) contends that a positive school climate will have the following effect on the teaching and learning situation and the achievement of learners. The effect is the reduction of absenteeism and dropout rates because learners want to be at school, the promotion of learner motivation and their will to learn, and the encouragement of learners to continue with confidence in their efforts even if they fail to succeed the first time. The principals as vanguards of learning should play an important role in ensuring that learners succeed at the end of the school year.

- **The Department of Education and learners' achievement**

When the DoE does not provide teaching and learning resources on time, learner achievement tend to suffer. This has to be fought. The study revealed that not only the school environment impacted negatively on learner achievement but also the Department of Education. The researcher discovered that the Department of Education plays a significant role in learners' achievement by providing free nutrition, text books, subject facilitators and the organisation of common examinations. This is done to empower learners with skills to flourish in the 21st century. These are some of the laudable efforts by the Department of Education (DoE). The researcher shares the same convictions. However, when the DoE fails to provide resources in time, it impacts negatively on learner achievement. The DoE can drum up support by encouraging parents do give the education of their children a priority. This can be done during parents' evening or consultations with learners. Frequent visits to the homes of uninvolved parents could also produce desire results. The building of enough structures such as classrooms, science and computer laboratories with internet facilities would help learners and educators to effectively do their work. Deventer and Kruger (2003:74-75) maintains that effective management takes place if there are people whom you can manage. These people within the specific world of work should have common outcomes or needs that they want to realise or meet on behalf of the school. They can realise their common outcomes through financial and physical resources.

### **5.3 CONCLUSIONS FROM LITERATURE AND EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

The negative impact of socio- economic status on learner achievement is a social malaise that should be fought tooth and nail by all and sundry. The government should uphold its promise as stated in the Bill of Right Chapter Two of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa that; "Everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education and to further education, which the state through reasonable measures must make progressively available and accessible." Illiteracy is still the greatest scourge afflicting humanity in the 21st century especially in the rural areas. It is destroying human potential on a vast scale. Most of the victims are poor (Human Right Resource Centre 1991). The vast majority

are young girls and women. Failure to act will carry a price. The importance of education cannot be over emphasized – The U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child protects children against discrimination and assert their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights (Dugard, 2001:250). When children go to school and succeed, they will be less dependent on social grants and this underscores the importance of the study.

### **5.3.1 Background on learner achievement**

There is abundant and ever growing literature on the impact of socio- economic status on learner achievement all over the world. These socio- economic influences are well documented in literature from Biggs (1990), Gloria (1997), Ngorima ( 2001), Mwamwenda (2004), Ergul ( 2004), Austin & Jennifer(2005), SAIRR (2006), Sherman (2008), Strebel (2009), Makonye ( 2009), Dylan (2010), Chindanya (2011), Bakassa (2011), Byamugisha (2011), Bester (2013), and Modisaotsile (2013). They hold that learners from homes and environments encouraging learning tend to do better in their school work than their counterparts from homes and environment that that do not support learning.

### **Further contributions of the research**

The researcher views this study as important because it unveiled challenges of learner achievement in the Nkangala District .It will serve as a point of departure for future research among academics and stakeholders in the district. The researcher desires to draw imperatively that the interviews were limited to Grade 11 and 12grade learners. The interviews could have been administered to other grades as well. The investigation was conducted using only learners from the Nkangala District in Mpumalanga province. The same study could be done using learners from urban areas so that one can compare the results. The researcher was cognisant of the fact that the study was conducted in an area dominated by the Ndebele group in the district. A further investigation could be conducted in areas dominated by other ethnic groups such as Sothos, Pedis and the Zulus. The interviews covered four main themes which are the socio economic conditions of learners, the home environment of the learners, the school environment and the impact of the Department of Education. The same interview could be expanded and developed to cover further aspects of learners' achievement. The next section

will table the recommendations for teachers, the school Management Team (SMT), Department of Education (DoE) and the South African government.

#### **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHERS**

Discipline needs to be maintained at all times for instance punctuality and regular school attendance should be encouraged and problems relating to bunking of classes, drinking of alcohol and drugs should be seriously discouraged. If teachers are empowered in the administration of schools, more can be achieved. Bezzina (1993:23) and Slater (1994:49) believe that teachers are willing to undertake additional roles if given the opportunity to work together in creating a professional culture and that they wish to be involved in those issues in which they have expertise and which directly affect their work. Teachers could educate parents on this creating a warm and tolerant family environment. This in turn can stimulate the learner and allow him or her to participate in various challenging activities. In his writings, Bezzina (1993) appeals that stability and faithfulness in the learner's home environment are considered to be the major factors in child development. Parents should be informed that marital strife, divorce, changing of schools or homes may all have a negative effect on the emotional stability of the learner. Parents should also be aware that the way a learner is treated at home determines the development of his or her sense of competence and self-worth.

#### **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SMT**

Evaluating teaching is undoubtedly one of the most important tasks that administrators are called on to do. Evaluation is a substantial role of those in leadership positions in any organisation, and as such has to be grounded in the same organisational philosophy and vision that guides its significant activities. According to Stronge (1997), "a dynamic relationship between the teacher and the school exists in a healthy organisation. What is good for the organisation must also be good for the teacher". The role of the teacher must be recognised by the SMT. At school level, there should be a budget allocation for each identified child with learning barriers. Alternatively, members of the School Based Support Team

(SBST) could identify struggling learners and seek appropriate assistance from the DoE.

### **Parenting**

Parenting has been envisaged as a strategy that has been used over the years to increase learner achievement in schools. According to Lemmer and Van Wyk (1999:13-14) parenting refers to the school's role in helping families to provide a supportive learning environment at home for its learners. The school can, for example, assist parents to create the optimum learning environment for their children by offering a programme focusing on the various developmental phases of the learner to enable parents to assist the learner during each stage.

### **Top Ten learners**

Top ten is a strategy that is currently used in some South African schools. The top ten learners of each grade at the end of each term could be displayed in the school notice board and in the classrooms. The intention is to encourage the spirit of healthy competition among learners. To the researcher's observation, this strategy is producing desired positive results.

### **Poverty**

Although the interviews were conducted on different days and times, the participants were unanimous in their responses in that schools management could renovate buildings, repair broken walls, raise flower beds, plant trees and a lawn to make the school environment healthy and attractive. In the rural areas, many parents are not able to pay their children's fees and government subsidies are not enough to provide schools with basic amenities. Parents could therefore engage in fund raising activities such as beauty contests, singing and dancing competitions, casual days in order to raise funds for improving the physical conditions of the schools.

## **5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

It warms the researcher's heart to learn that the Department of Basic Education has issued an action plan entitled "Towards the realisation of schooling 2025". The action plan aims at ensuring job satisfaction and that teaching takes place

through responsible leadership, promotion of harmony, creativity and a sound work ethic within the school community and beyond. This action plan should include a review of the socio economic conditions of learners in the Nkangala District by the officials of the Department of Education. The most effective level at which such interventions can be made is the district, provincial, or national Department of Education where policy formulation is debated and promulgated. The Department of Education should fund and hold seminars on learner achievement in school clusters to bring awareness to the SMT's and teachers.

## **5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT**

The researcher is aware that an obvious way to promote learners achievement is by reducing the number of learners in the class. Large classes not only discourage discussion and student or group-centred activities , but the evaluation of writing assignments and non-objective forms of evaluation become difficult and time consuming. The researcher, through his recommendation, hopes he will raise the expectations and challenge the *status quo* for what currently transpires in many classrooms.

While a lot of emphasis was placed on the socio- economic status of learners 'and their academic achievement, there was no emphasis placed on teachers and school managers who are the most important component in this research. The researcher was made to understand that on Fridays many learners do not come to school. While teachers may be teaching well, as long as they are dealing with absent learners all their efforts will not bear fruit. Mechanisms must be put in place to ensure that learners are held responsible for rampant absenteeism. This can be done by instructing teachers to conduct periodic attendance registers on a daily basis .The researcher, being a teacher, noticed that some learners were in school but did not attend classes.

The data from this study can be used to involve teachers, administrators, and parents in conversations about what teachers need to be doing in their classrooms in order to increase learners' achievement. It is further suggested that future research in this area investigates the possibility that learner learning style and motivation could further confound research results in this area. Teachers and all stake holders need to keep in mind that effective teachers are not perfect but

areas individuals as the learners they teach. According to Lewis (2006:197) it is therefore vital to make connection between learner achievement, teacher accountability and classroom instruction.

The creation of employment opportunities in the district is also recommended by the researcher. The researcher found that many parents work in distant places such as Johannesburg and Rustenburg. This, therefore, means many learners are not supervised at home. Parent involvement has a significant effect on the quality of learners' experience of teaching and learning in the school, and also on their results. Without cooperation between the parent and the teacher the child cannot be sufficiently educated. The parent and the teacher each have a special and important role to play in the education of the child. Research on parent involvement in recent years is increasing. Some of the research is from Hess (1992:131), Van Schalkwyk (1990:27), and Squelch and Lemmer (1994:93). They all point out that children whose parents are involved in their education would do better in schools than those whose parents are not involved.

Most African families in the rural areas are still impoverished despite the successes of the African National Congress (ANC) government. Most of them live in small houses with little space to study. This matter lays in the hands of government to speed up its Reconstruction and Development programme policy to enable all South Africans access to adequate housing. It is hoped that with the intensification of this policy, many families could have adequate housing.

### **Community involvement.**

It is only when parents are visible on the school governance structures that they can influence policies and transformation and improve the agenda of community schools. School improvement strategies can have positive results on learners' performance. In an article written by Sergiovanni (1994), he states that *if we are to rewrite the script to enable good schools to flourish, we need to rebuild the community. Community building must become the heart of any school improvement effort*'. The desire and willingness of local communities or associations to support schools materially and financially has been demonstrated throughout Africa, and has been one of the main factors in the expansion and development of education. In South Africa, there are many communities that have



built or repaired schools at their own expense. The principal can enhance the relationship that the school has with the community by making school facilities available for community activities such as evening classes for adult education (Deventer 2003:257). In this way the schools will benefit from the community since the community will see that they are co-owners of the school.

### **Lack of role models**

External forces impact negatively on learners' achievement. Five educators said in the community where these learners come from, there are no role models. This means there is no one whom the learners can aspire to become like. One teacher said their role models have nothing positive that they can emulate. Gangsterism was cited by the principals and district officer as a factor that has a disastrous effect on learner achievement. According to a survey of teachers in the United Kingdom conducted in 2008 by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, young people most frequently chose sports stars as role models, followed by pop stars. Many simply aspire to be "famous for being famous" believing that fame and fortune could be easily accessed through reality television. It is therefore incumbent on stakeholders to expose these learners to prominent role models in our community.

### **Discipline**

The researcher was made to understand that learners were disruptive during lessons and that there were instances where they played with their cell phones both at home and at school. Measures to curb disruptive behaviour like the appointment of discipline masters in charge of disciplinary problems have been effective in countries such as Cameroon. This discipline can be implemented in schools in the Nkangala District. These discipline masters are not part of teaching staff, and as such sufficient time is accorded to them to deal with disciplinary problems that learners exhibit.

### **Hostile learning environment**

In Chapter Two, South African schools were seen to be unsafe places for learning. The South African School Act (SASA) Act No. 84 of 1996 that empowers school principals the sole right to conduct searches should be extended to educators as

well. The call for the installation of metal detectors in schools by minister of Basic Education is a laudable initiative that should be extended to all schools in the Nkangala District in Mpumalanga province in order to forestall dangerous weapons that learners bring to school.

### **Learner- teacher support material**

At school level there should be a budget allowance for each learner to address the shortage of learning and teaching material indicated by the participants. According to Deventer and Kruger (2003:8) in South Africa's present financial situation, schools do not always receive sufficient financial resources, yet despite this they must still perform their primary task of teaching and learning effectively. The financial management of the school is currently one of the most important management functions of a principal. It is therefore of absolute necessity for a sound financial management to be in place that will contribute to the acquisition and utilisation of resources which will positively influence the culture of learning and teaching.

### **5.8 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

The study was limited to the Nkangala District in Mpumalanga province, therefore the findings cannot be generalised to the whole of the Republic of South Africa. A study of this nature has to be carried out for a considerable longer period of time so as to obtain extensive results. The researcher had to interview the district officer in order to get better results. Another limitation of the interview as a research instrument is that interviewees may have not been completely truthful in their responses in order to please the researcher or to protect their role (Catania 1999). This can be bad when the researcher is not skilled to solicit good responses. To minimise this, the researcher was careful not to indicate agreement with the teachers or preference for the direction of the discussion (Branch 2007:277). That however, did not completely eliminate this short coming.

The use of a tape recorder was not welcomed by some participants, but after explaining confidentiality and anonymity and that the researcher had been given permission from the district office, the principal gave the researcher the permission to conduct the study. The sample consisted of four schools. The wish of the researcher is that there could be a wider audit of these phenomenon particularly salient aspects as why learners do not take their education seriously so that well planned programmes and procedures could be formulated to deal with this challenge.

## **5.9 CONCLUSION**

The findings of the study exposed that the socio- economic conditions of learners, the home environment, the school environment and the department of education impacted negatively on learners' achievement in the Nkangala District. To surmount this, all stakeholders are called to come on board and utilise all resources that are available so that educational goals are realised. The principal, who is the custodian of learner achievement, should work in conjunction with other stakeholders and should assist in the creation of a conducive atmosphere in the school and community. Chapter Three of the study showed how data collected formed the point of departure for presentations and discussions done in chapter four. The impact of socio- economic status is not healthy for education. Interviews conducted with the principal, teachers and the district officer revealed that most parents do not prioritise the education of their children. This is a stumbling block to the solutions of the problem. Chapter Four was dedicated to the presentation of findings, analysis and discussions. The researcher saw from the views of the participants that the socio- economic conditions of learners impacted negatively on their performance at school.

Education in South Africa is imperative for social transformation and the building of an industrial and competitive country comparable with the developed countries. Learner achievement is the bed rock to the realisation of this. A clarion call is therefore sent to educational stakeholders in the Nkangala District to consider the findings of this study and recommendations highlighted when preparing the curricula for learners at the beginning of the school year.

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ANNEXURE A

DoE. letter of approval to carry out research



**Education**  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
**MPUMALANGA**  
NKANGALA DISTRICT

Private Bag x 4021  
KwaMhlanga  
1022  
Building No.5  
Government Complex  
Mpumalanga Province  
Republic of South Africa

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR

Litiko leTemfundvo    Umnyango weFundo    Departement van Onderwys    Umnyango wezeMfundo

ENQUIRIES : SM KABINI  
013 947 1745  
[skabini@education.mpu.gov.za](mailto:skabini@education.mpu.gov.za)

**TO :** MR. MOTALE GT  
MARLENE COURT  
73 BOURKE STREET  
002 PRETORIA  
0848631510

**FROM :** MR JJ MABENA  
DISTRICT DIRECTOR

**DATE :** 04 FEBRUARY 2014

**SUBJECT :** RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT A RESEARCH IN ANY FOUR SCHOOLS  
IN NKANGALA DISTRICT.

1. We hereby acknowledge receipt of your request dated the 06<sup>th</sup> December 2013, on the above matter.
2. Permission is hereby granted that you conduct the said research with the following conditions:
  - That you notify the school before visit.
  - That you do not disturb teaching and learning.
3. Thank you.

  
MR JJ MABENA  
DISTRICT DIRECTOR

04. 02. 14  
DATE

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE  
DISTRICT DIRECTOR  
04 -02- 2014  
NKANGALA DISTRICT OFFICE  
P/BAG X4021 KWAMHLANGA 1022

Sisonke Sifundzisa Sive



## **ANNEXURE B**

### **Research question**

What are the socio economic impacts on learners' achievement at public schools in the Nkangala District in Mpumalanga Province?

## **ANNEXURE C**

### **Interview schedule for principals**

- In terms of the socio- economic conditions in the Nkangala District, how would you say this impact on learner performance?
- How do you think these socio economic conditions in the Nkangala District could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?
- To what extent does the learners' home environment determine their academic performance?
- How do you think these socio economic conditions in your home environment could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?
- In your opinion, to what extent does the schooling environment determine the learners' academic achievement?
- How do you think these socio-economic conditions in your school could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?
- To what extent does the education department influence learners' academic performance?
- How do you think these socio-economic conditions in your education department could be changed to add improvement toward s learners' academic performance?

## **ANNEXURE D-**

### **Interview schedule for teachers**

- In terms of the socio- economic conditions in the Nkangala District, how would you say this impact on learner performance?
- How do you think these socio economic conditions in the Nkangala District could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?
- To what extent does the learners' home environment determine their academic performance?
- How do you think these socio economic conditions in your home environment could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?
- In your opinion, to what extent does the schooling environment determine the learners' academic achievement?
- How do you think these socio-economic conditions in your school could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?
- To what extent does the education department influence learners' academic performance?
- How do you think these socio-economic conditions in your education department could be changed to add improvement toward s learners' academic performance?

## **ANNEXURE E**

### **Interview schedule for District officer**

- In terms of the socio- economic conditions in the Nkangala District, how would you say this impact on learner performance?
- How do you think these socio economic conditions in the Nkangala District could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?
- To what extent does the learners' home environment determine their academic performance?
- How do you think these socio economic conditions in your home environment could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?
- In your opinion, to what extent does the schooling environment determine the learners' academic achievement?
- How do you think these socio-economic conditions in your school could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?
- To what extent does the education department influence learners' academic performance?
- How do you think these socio-economic conditions in your education department could be changed to add improvement toward s learners' academic performance?

## **ANNEXURE F**

### **Interview Schedule for parents**

- In terms of the socio- economic conditions in the Nkangala District, how would you say this impact on learner performance?
- How do you think these socio economic conditions in the Nkangala District could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?
- To what extent does the learners' home environment determine their academic performance?
- How do you think these socio economic conditions in your home environment could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?
- In your opinion, to what extent does the schooling environment determine the learners' academic achievement?
- How do you think these socio-economic conditions in your school could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?
- To what extent does the education department influence learners' academic performance?
- How do you think these socio-economic conditions in your education department could be changed to add improvement toward s learners' academic performance?



## **ANNEXURE G**

### **Interview schedule for learners**

(Modified to meet the comprehension of learners)

- How does the social and economic factors in the district i.e. Nkangala District affect your performance in school?
- What do you think we can do to change these factors so that learners can perform better in school?
- How does your home environment affect your academic performance?
- What do you think should be done to change the economic conditions in your home environment so that learners can perform better in school?
- How does the school environment affect the learners' academic achievement?
- What do you suggest can be done in your school so that learners can pass their examination?
- How does the education department affect learners' academic performance?
- What do you suggest the education department could do so that you can perform well in your examination?

## **ANNEXURE H**

### **INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

I am interviewing the district officer

R Good morning sir,

D.O Good morning, how are you?

R I am doing well sir, thank you.

D.O You may sit down.

Introduction and Ice- breaker:

Thank you sir, for granting me consent to interview you. The aim of the interview is to get you thinking about your experiences and perceptions of the impact of socio –economic status on learners’ achievement at public schools in Nkangala district in Mpumalanga province. The purpose of the study is to evaluate the findings and see how we can improve on learners’ academic achievement. I will like to assure you that confidentiality and anonymity will be upheld and that participation is voluntary and there will be no reprisal for withdrawal. I will like to tape record what you say so that I do not miss any of it. I do not want to take the chance of relying on my notes and may be missing something or inadvertently changing your words somehow. So if you do not mind, I would very much like to use the tape recorder .Please relax and feel free to respond and comment as honestly as possible. I am specifically looking at learners’ achievement in your District. There are eight questions that I will like to ask you. Let me start with the first one.

R In terms of the socio- economic conditions in the Nkangala District, how would you say this impact on learners’ performance?

D.O They impact negatively on learners’ performance in the classroom because they are carrying this baggage before they come to school. A practical example is I visited a school on the first day we re-open this term a parent came to complain that that her daughter did not go to school because she did not have the school uniform. He had plans to buy her a new one at the end of the month because he

receives grants only at the end of the month. This is an example on how the socio economic conditions impacted on learners.

R Thank you sir, let us move to the second question. How do you think these socio economic conditions in the Nkangala District could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?

D.O Our government is doing a lot, they provide nutrition, text books. There is therefore no reasons why they should not go to school. But to improve these conditions we need to call the community. By ploughing back, companies which are found in distant places like Witbank should plough back to our community because we have produce graduates with Bachelor of Science (BSc) who are working there.

R What do you mean by ploughing back?

D.O I mean to invest back in our community

R How would ploughing back alleviate these situations?

D.O They can build community halls; they can provide the learners opportunity to play, because children like playing especially during holidays. This will keep them busy. The fact that these learners are not occupied during holidays make many of them to indulge in "Nyaope". We have also seen of recent a rise in teenage pregnancy. You know as the saying goes "an idle mind is a devils workshop". Our community has produced graduates also who can help to teach the younger ones.

R Well understood sir, the next question; to what extent does the learners' home environment determine their academic performance?

D.O I thought I answered this question?

R No sir, the first question was on the impact of socio-economic conditions on learner achievement. This one focuses on the learners' home environment.

D.O Alright, You know I am a black South African, to us family is more important. We make sure that we respect the elders; elders cannot be sleeping while children are still awake. The fact that our houses are not big enough; there is

no space to study. As I mentioned the learners do not have sufficient space to study. This affects them.

R How do you think these socio economic conditions in the learners' home environment could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?

D.O Look, the solution is to arrest these ones who are in school. They are the only ones who can change the situation. Like myself my parents had a house when I built one for them. So Mr Motale it is not an easy problem to solve. The ANC government has done alot, but they still need to do more. You see their houses are small, They are the ones who can change them for their parents if they study hard. Short term is not possible, because the government is already doing enough, They can change this house to look bigger if they study hard.

R Thank you sir, the next questions is , In your opinion, to what extent does the schooling environment determine the learners' academic achievement?

D.O The school impact on learner achievement. Like a business without an effective CEO, the business is not expected to perform well. You see the school has an impact. I am going to use the example of school A, that has never gone above 67%. This is as a result of the schooling environment. You must have heard reports in daily newspapers that post are sold, some are bought under the blanket. These are daily realities in the District. Can one get a good school manager in this state of affair? The school Act has empower parents in the running of the schools. They decide on whom to hire. If a post is advertised they do not look at the quality of the person but whether the person is known. Mr Motale, do you think a person who has been producing a 30% pass rate will produce 100% if he is made the HOD?

R It is not possible sir.

D.O This is the situation we face.

R I see, I see let us move to the next question .How do you think these socio-economic conditions in your schools could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?

D.O Management is complicated. When you own a company and you want it to run well, you must get a good CEO. Our problem is that recruitment is done by parents according to the school act. They say they are empowered to make decisions affecting their children. When poor recruitment is done it will affect learners' performance. Even though we assist the school principals, this to me is not enough. This is what I call micro management because we assist them in curriculum only. When you are not there, the situation goes worse. The recent scandals of post for sex I mentioned are daily realities. What good leader can you get? It is the same as soccer, once a good coach is not selected, the team would not do well. When a school wants an HOD, the parents are the ones who select. They select someone who produces 30%, because they know him.

R I get your point sir, let us move to the next question. To what extent does the education department influence learners' academic performance?

D.O The Department provide basic material, visits, we observe how they start the day, my approach is to do the best every day. We identify the gaps, we teach them, how to catch fish, we make a follow up. Next times we check how are they are doing. We urge them always to make an improvement plan.

R How do you think these socio-economic conditions in your education department could be changed to add improvement towards learners' academic performance?

D.O Not too different from what I discussed above, we also offer training workshops especially with the CAPS curriculum in place , we prepare common examination in June and November we are rolling out the school nutrition programme. These to me I think are laudable initiatives from the department.

R I wish to thank you very much for your time and co-operation in this interview. I must say I have benefited alot from your expertise an experience.

Thank you very much. Before we close the interview are there any questions you will like to ask or issues you will like to raise?

D.O I wish we could get a copy of this research when you complete it. This is because I will be using collective wisdom to make informed decisions. I believe in collective wisdom to address a problem.

R I have used thirty six minutes of your precious time, I have learnt a lot from your experience and your expertise. Thank you again sir, ----- with a hand shake.

D.O You are welcome.

## SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT NO. 84 OF 1996

[\[View Regulation\]](#)

[ASSENTED TO 6 NOVEMBER, 1996]  
[DATE OF COMMENCEMENT: 1 JANUARY, 1997]

(Unless otherwise indicated)

(English texts signed by the President)

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This Act has been updated to *Government Gazette* 34620 dated 19 September, 2011.

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### as amended by

Education Laws Amendment Act, [No. 100 of 1997](#)

Education Laws Amendment Act, [No. 48 of 1999](#)

Education Laws Amendment Act, No. 53 of 2000

Education Laws Amendment Act, [No. 57 of 2001](#)

Education Laws Amendment Act, [No. 50 of 2002](#)

Education Laws Amendment Act, No. 1 of 2004

Education Laws Amendment Act, No. 24 of 2005

Education Laws Amendment Act, [No. 31 of 2007](#)

Basic Education Laws Amendment Act, [No. 15 of 2011](#)

### ACT

**To provide for a uniform system for the organisation, governance and funding of schools; to amend and repeal certain laws relating to schools; and to provide for matters connected therewith.**

**Preamble.** - WHEREAS the achievement of democracy in South Africa has consigned to history the past system of education which was based on racial inequality and segregation; and

WHEREAS this country requires a new national system for *schools* which will redress past injustices in educational provision, provide an education of progressively high quality for all *learners* and in so doing lay a strong foundation for the development of all our people's talents and capabilities, advance the democratic transformation of society, combat racism and sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance, contribute to the eradication of poverty and the economic well-being of society, protect and advance our diverse cultures and languages, uphold the rights of all *learners, parents and educators*, and promote their acceptance of responsibility for the organisation, governance and funding of *schools* in partnership with the State; and

WHEREAS it is necessary to set uniform norms and standards for the education of *learners* at *schools* and the organisation, governance and funding of *schools* throughout the Republic of South Africa;

## ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

### CHAPTER 1 DEFINITIONS AND APPLICATION OF ACT

Definitions  
Application of Act

### CHAPTER 2 LEARNERS

J.	Compulsory attendance
1.	Exemption from compulsory attendance
s.	Admission to public schools
SA.	Norms and standards for basic infrastructure and capacity in public schools
Q.	Language policy of public schools
6A.	Curriculum and assessment
§ a.	Non-discrimination in respect of official languages
z.	Freedom of conscience and religion at public schools
a.	Code of conduct
SA.	Random search and seizure and drug testing at schools
2.	Suspension and expulsion from public school
10.	Prohibition of corporal punishment
IOA.	Prohibition of initiation practices
u.	Representative council of learners

### CHAPTER 3 PUBLIC SCHOOLS

12.	Provision of public schools
12A.	Merger of public schools
13.	Public schools on State property
14.	Public schools on private property
15.	Status of public schools
16.	Governance and professional management of public schools
16A.	Functions and responsibilities of principal of public school
17.	Governing body serving two or more schools
18.	Constitution
18A.	Code of conduct of governing body
19.	Enhancement of capacity of governing bodies
20.	Functions of all governing bodies
21.	Allocated functions of governing bodies
22.	Withdrawal of functions from governing bodies
23.	Membership of governing body of ordinary public school
24.	Membership of governing body of public school for learners with special education needs
25.	Failure by governing body to perform functions
26.	Recusal by members of governing body
27.	Reimbursement of members of governing body
28.	Election of members of governing body
29.	Office-bearers of governing bodies
30.	Committees of governing body
31.	Term of office of members and office-bearers of governing bodies
32.	Status of minors on governing bodies of public schools
33.	Closure of public schools
33A.	Prohibition of political activities during school time



#### CHAPTER 4

34. Responsibility of State FUNDING OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS
- Norms and standards for school funding
  - .1Q. Responsibility of governing body
  - n. School funds and assets of public schools
  - .1a. School budget
  - \_1M. Prohibition of payment of unauthorised remuneration, or giving of financial benefit or benefit in kind to certain employees
  - J2. School fees at public schools
  - 40. Parent's liability for payment of school fees
  - 41. Enforcement of payment of school fees
  - 42. Financial records and statements of public schools
  - ,11. Audit examination of financial records and statements
  - 44. Financial year of public school

#### CHAPTER 5

- INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS Establishment of independent school
- 4SA. Admission to independent school
- Registration of independent school
- 47. Withdrawal of registration of independent school
- 1fi. Subsidies to registered independent schools
- \_12. Declaration of independent school as public school
- SQ. Duties of Member of Executive Council relating to independent schools
- .5.1. Registration of learner for education at home

#### CHAPTER 6

- TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS
- \_52. Transitional provisions relating to schools other than private schools
- 52.. Transitional provisions relating to private schools
- .5.2. Transitional provisions relating to immovable property of certain schools
- Transitional provisions relating to public schools on private property
- Transitional provisions relating to private property owned by religious organisation

#### CHAPTER 7

- Expropriation GENERAL PROVISIONS
- 5.a8. Alienation of assets of public school
- Identification of underperforming public schools
- Compliance with norms and standards
- 22. Duty of schools to provide information
- QQ. Liability of State
- Q.I. Regulations
- Delegation of powers
- Repeal and amendment of laws
- 21. Short title and commencement
- Schedule 1, Schedule 2. Amendment of Educators' Employment Act, 1994, by section 63

CHAPTER 1  
DEFINITIONS AND APPLICATION OF ACT

**1. Definitions.**-(!) In this Act, unless the context indicates otherwise-

**"Constitution"** means the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996);

[Definition of "Constitution" substituted **by** of Act No. 100 of 1997.]  
Wording of Sections

**"Council of Education Ministers"** means the Council of Education Ministers established by the National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act No. 27 of 1996);

**"dangerous object"** means-

- (a) any explosive material or device;
- (b) any firearm or gas weapon;
- (c) any article, object or instrument that may be employed to cause bodily harm to a person or damage to property, or to render a person temporarily paralysed or unconscious; or
- (d) any object that the Minister may, by notice in the Gazette, declare to be a dangerous object for the purpose of this Act;

[Definition of "dangerous object" inserted **by** of Act No. 31 of 2007.]

**"education department"** means the department established by section 7(2) of the Public Service Act, 1994 (Proclamation No. 103 of 1994), which is responsible for education in a province;

**"educator"** means any person, excluding a person who is appointed to exclusively perform extracurricular duties, who teaches, educates or trains other persons or who provides professional educational services, including professional therapy and education psychological services, at a school;

[Definition of "educator" substituted **by** of Act No. 48 of 1999.]  
Wording of Sections

**"gove-, ning body"** means a governing body contemplated in section 16(1);

**"grade"** means that part of an educational programme which a learner may complete in one school year, or any other education programme which the Member of the Executive Council may deem to be equivalent thereto;

**"Head of Department"** means the head of an education department;

**"illegal drug"** means-

- (a) any unlawful substance that has a psychological or physiological effect; or
- (b) any substance having such effect that is possessed unlawfully;

[Definition of "illegal drug" inserted by h.i. (Q) of Act No. 31 of 2007.]

**"independent school"** means a school registered or deemed to be registered in terms of section 46;

**"learner"** means any person receiving education or obliged to receive education in terms of this Act;

**"loan"** means any financial obligation based on agreement, which obligation renders a school liable to make payment, in one or more instalments, in favour of any person, but does not include the payment of staff appointed by the governing body in terms of section 20(4) or 11;

[Definition of "loan" inserted **by** of Act No. 15 of 2011.]

**"member of staff"** means a person employed at a school;

**"Member of the Executive Council"** means the Member of the Executive Council of a province who is responsible for education in that province;

**"Minister"** means the Minister of Basic Education;

[Definition of "Minister" substituted **by** of Act No. 15 of 2011.]

Wording of Sections

**"no fee threshold"** means the level of funding per learner contemplated in the norms and standards for school funding applicable to a public school which enables the Minister to declare a school a 11c fee school in terms of this Act;

[Definition of "no fee threshold" inserted **by** of Act No. 24 of 2005.]

**"norms and standards for school funding"**

means the national norms and standards for the funding of schools determined by the Minister in terms of section 35:

[Definition of "norms and standards for school funding" inserted **by** of Act No. 24 of 2005.]

**"officer"** means an employee of an education department appointed in terms of the Educators Employment Act, 1994 (Proclamation No. 138 of 1994), or the Public Service Act, 1994 (Proclamation No. 103 of 1994);

**"parent"** means - (a)

the biological or adoptive parent or legal guardian of a learner;

[Para. (a) substituted **by** of Act No. 15 of 2011.]

Wording of Sections

"

- (b) the person legally entitled to custody of a learner; or
- (c) the person who undertakes to fulfil the obligations of a person referred to in paragraphs (b) and (c) towards the learner's education at school;

**"principal"** means an educator appointed or acting as the head of a school;

**"province"** means a province established by section 124 of the Constitution;

**"provincial legislature"** means a provincial legislature contemplated in section 125 of the Constitution;

**"public school"** means a school contemplated in Chapter 3;

**"Registrar of deeds"** means the registrar of deeds referred to in section 2 of the Deeds Registries Act, 1937 (Act No. 47 of 1937);

[Definition of "Registrar of deeds" inserted **by** of Act No. 100 of 1997  
7.]

**"school"** means a public school or an independent school which enrolls learners in one or more grades from grade R (Reception) to grade twelve;

[Definition of "school" substituted by Act No. 100 of 1997 and **by** of Act No. 48 of 1999.]