

**SCHOOL MANAGEMENT IMPERATIVES IN ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF
IMPOVERISHED SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS IN RURAL AREAS**

By

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“I declare that **AN INVESTIGATION OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT IMPERATIVES IN ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF IMPOVERISHED SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS IN RURAL AREAS** is my own work and that all the resources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.”
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Date

SUMMARY

The study focuses on management strategies of the highly impoverished secondary schools of the Mount Fletcher District in the Eastern Cape. Challenges facing the impoverished learners and managerial experiences of principals of these schools have been discussed in the study. A literature review provided a conceptual framework and covered definitions of poverty, school management strategies, leadership styles and qualities required for a successful principal heading a secondary school with impoverished learners. An empirical investigation using a qualitative approach was conducted and data gathered by means of interviews with principals, Life Orientation teachers and parents. Finally a synopsis of findings and recommendations were made to assist the policy makers, Departmental officials, principals, teachers and parents in proper management of secondary schools in the poor rural communities.

KEY WORDS

Impoverished learners, qualitative research, poverty, highly impoverished secondary school principals, Mount Fletcher District in the Eastern Cape, socio-economic conditions, poverty effect on learning, teenage pregnancy, learner drop-out rates, unemployment, management strategies, leadership styles, interviews, community upliftment.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
CM	Circuit Manager
CSTL	Care and Support of Teaching and Learning programme
DMP	District Management Plan
DoEEC	Department of Education Eastern Cape
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESSS	Education and Social Support Services
FFC	Financial and Fiscal Commission
GEM	Girls Education Movement
HSCR	Human Science Research Council
IDP	Integrated Development Programme
LO	Life Orientation
LRC	Learner Representative Council
MIP	Matric Intervention Programme
NSSF	Norms and Standards for Schools Funding
SASA	South African Schools Act
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team.
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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CHAPTER 1
SCHOOL MANAGEMENT IMPERATIVES IN ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF
IMPOVERISHED SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS IN RURAL AREAS: AN
ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Statistics South Africa, the Eastern Cape is noted as one of the impoverished provinces in South Africa (HSRC, 2004). The situation has urged the former Premier, Nosimo Bhalindlela, to launch the Provincial Growth and Development Plan which *inter alia* sets out to eliminate poverty (Daily Dispatch, 2004). As the province is predominantly rural, being an educator here is a challenging experience. Most of these rural schools have enrolled learners who are seriously impoverished; the researcher's school is no exception.

This study focuses on schools in Elundini Municipality, Ukhahlamba district which, according to research findings by the Department of Social Development (2004:7), are poverty-stricken.

The demographic feature (*ibid.*:8) of this district are as follows:

- 89% rural population;
- 10% farming population; and
- 1% urban

Statistics of the 2001 census (*ibid.*:9) indicate that the area had a population of 134 652 households, of which 42% had no form of income. This shows that there is high level of dependency on services and the agricultural sector. From this information it is evident that most people are reliant on grants and subsidies, according to the socio-economic and demographic profile of the Department of Social Development (2004). Blacks living in poverty constitute about 80% of the population (IDP, 2005/2006:6) in the (Elundini Municipal publication 2005).

The area is quite suitable for the study since most parents in this community are unemployed. According to Elundini Municipal publication (2005: 2), the socio-economic status in the area was as follows:

- Population (people) = 8000 +
- Adults unemployed = 36 %
- Social grants recipients = 51 %
- Civil servants = 4 %
- Self-employed = 2 %
- Economically inactive group = 7 %

From this population we draw our senior secondary learners who often start school very tired during early hours of the day. Fatigue is due to the fact that these learners travel long distances on foot as they cannot afford transport. Furthermore, they come to school hungry with inadequate clothing, especially in winter. These learners are usually victims of the following problems: Low self-esteem, poor or inadequate learning resources (Crouch & Mabogoane, 1998), inability to meet other school requirements such as proper school uniforms, and victimisation by fellow learners or abusive parents. Their parents are usually called “slow-paying parents” (Mothata, 2000). These parents are unable to pay their dues simply because they live below the poverty line. May and Woolard (2007) define the poverty line as “the minimum level of income deemed necessary to achieve an adequate standard of living in a given country”. This definition is further supported by Kamper (2001:110) who notes that “the norm for establishing absolute poverty is usually the so called “poverty line”, set at a minimum of 2000 calories per day needed by a person to survive. These are the socio-economic conditions under which these learners live. Such conditions constitute to what is called “absolute poverty”. Absolute poverty is said to be a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information (United Nations, in Borat & Kanbur, (2006:398).

These problems have a negative effect on the impoverished learners. The most serious consequences are truancy, theft and impaired concentration. Moreover, one of the major problems facing these impoverished learners is the language barrier. English is highly recommended as language of teaching and learning and therefore poses a problem for our

learners who are mostly African language speakers (Hargis, 1989). According to the socio-economic and the demographic profile as indicated by the Department of Local Government (2004:17), 72% of the population in Ukhahlamba district constitutes Xhosa speakers. Baratz & Grimsby, in Howley, (1999:151) also see poverty as a severe lack of physical and mental well-being, closely associated with inadequate economic resources and consumption.

After having observed the situation in our schools, it became evident that impoverished learners imply specific school management challenges. Extensive reading on the subject has brought about the realisation that there is a strong rationale for this study. It is hoped that findings from this research will assist school managers to build up their skills in handling challenges that face the impoverished learners. Moreover, problems such as poor matric results, high school learners' drop-out rates and a high level of teenage pregnancy are associated with poverty in our province. School managers, as heads of the institutions, should be fully empowered to deal with poverty-stricken learners. Furthermore, teachers and other school personnel can use the findings of this investigation as strategies that could be utilised as social support processes to bring about improved school outcomes for academically at risk students (Rosenfeld & Richman, 1999: 298). Poverty is a reality around us. In South Africa, most pertinently the Eastern Cape Province, the rural population is faced with severe poverty (Research Surveys, 2005:1).

This study therefore, hopes to bring about awareness of the school management challenges in dealing with the effects of poverty on learning. So far little has been done by the Provincial Department of Education in empowering school managers in dealing with this challenge. For example, the Department of Education in this province has introduced a feeding scheme for learners up to Grade six. In the researcher's experience, this feeding scheme is already faced with challenges such as late arrival of supplies. Sometimes there is no food supply for weeks. Not all learners from the same challenged family but in different grades qualify to benefit from the scheme. According to the Financial and Fiscal Commission (FFC), there is a growing recognition that the exclusion of deserving children from secondary schools compromises the principle of equity, especially if these children are from the same household or community as beneficiaries (FFC Review, 2007).

There are various ways through which the specific school management challenges in dealing with impoverished secondary learners could be tackled. It is hoped that this study will assist in highlighting these. From the research that has already been done on the topic, it is evident that further study is still required as far as our province is concerned (Simkins & Paterson, 2005).

1.2 BACKGROUND

In their research monograph, Simkins and Paterson (2005) conclude that learners who are backed by strong household resources have an advantage. Furthermore, learners with educated parents using English at home do better than those who do not. These findings prove that socio-economic conditions can be a determinant of the learner's academic performance.

Supporting the idea that poverty does have a negative impact on learning, Hargis (1989: 33) goes on to say that the impoverished learners are more likely to get non-productive labels, like lazy and unmotivated. These learners are more likely to be easily engulfed in what has been termed as the poverty trap (Kamper, 2008:4). *Poverty trap* means the persistence of poverty, when poverty increases instead of decreasing with time. Teachers who have such learners often wish that they be removed from their classroom (*ibid.*). He further states that many of these learners ultimately remove themselves as they drop through the cracks in the education system. These high school dropouts result in an increase of crime levels in our communities because they end up losing their sense of purpose. Another problem among these learners is false identification, i.e. a learner disowning his/her parents' background to associate himself or herself with a better-off family.

Hargis (1989) claims that socio-economically disadvantaged learners are eligible for compensatory education. According to him, these compensatory programmes are of great assistance. Hargis (1989) further states that compensatory education was designed to overcome the effects of poverty. It was based on the assumption that children could catch up if they were given extra help. In Mount Fletcher, a District Management Plan (DMP) has been developed to offer this extra help in dealing with impoverished learners in the following manner:

- The MIP (Matric Intervention Programme). This programme identifies rural senior secondary schools which are labelled as “underachievers” or low performing schools. Educators registered in the programme offer tuition during holidays and on weekends at identified centres. If the centre is far from some of these rural learners, alternative accommodation is sought and the district office sets aside money for catering purposes. Consequently learners attend these extra classes. The catering provided, coupled with these classes, has a positive impact on their learning process.
- Another programme is the GEM (Girls Education Movement). It has been realised by the government that compensatory education is essential in social advancement; therefore, schools as community centres have to enhance such programmes. According to the GEM coordinator in the Eastern Cape, empowerment and education of girls is the key to overcoming barriers to social and economic development, ensuring healthy, stable families and building peaceful and productive communities (Umdibanisi, 2004:4).

In view of the socio-economic background of the Eastern Cape Province, the Ukhahlamba district municipality in particular has introduced some strategies to combat poverty which affects our secondary school learners. The Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health in the district have identified pilot schools for poverty alleviation and health promotion. The pilot schools are called “*Health Promoting Schools*”. Farmers from this municipal district are going around to these schools offering assistance, donating seedlings, small farming tools and training learners in basic farming skills. These farmers and health promoters are encouraging schools and communities to have and maintain their own vegetable gardens.

It is important to remember that the fact that a learner is impoverished cannot only be attributed to a family’s socio-economic circumstances. Other social systems also play a substantial role in the learner’s life, e.g. a poorly resourced local clinic, dependency on social grants, a poor community, less knowledgeable church leaders and poor infrastructure. Thomson (2003) says, “Let community groups and councils make sure that there are facilities for children and young adults so they have got somewhere to go” (Thomson, 2003: 15).

In an effort to enhance the idea of compensatory programmes, Americans have turned their highly impoverished secondary schools into “*one-stop shopping*” venues (Lawrence & Jack, 1999). In this way they are able to organise other social systems, such as youth social clubs, adult sports clubs, and health promoting clubs to be part of the school programme, the school thereby taking the initiative to generate funds to address the alleviation of poverty’. A similar pattern has been followed by the Eastern Cape Department of Education .Our schools have recently been asked to host various events on social advancement, for example, Health Education Day arranged by the clinic staff which is 0,5 km from the school, and Life skills for youth, which was presented by the Love Life non-governmental organisation (NGO). Voter education was also provided in preparation for local government elections by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC).

The Department of Education has also selected pilot schools on community projects such as *Imbewu*, meaning ‘seed’. This is a community project established by the Eastern Cape Department of Education. The aim of this project is to develop the community through partnership with schools. The project has started preparing communities where each of the identified school is urged to join the *Imbewu* project. Orientation workshops were conducted at the piloted schools. The workshops have assisted communities and the youth to understand their own situations in the spirit of *Vuk’uzenzel* (meaning “learn to do things for yourself”). (Umdibanisi, 2004: 7). This is line with the Nelson Mandela Foundation (NMF, 2005) which states that its aim is working with schools and communities in rural and poor areas to create schools and communities of learning care, development and hope.

Problems affecting the impoverished rural secondary learners could be tackled through parental involvement in the school activities. In the disadvantaged communities parent involvement in education is not only possible but essential, (Kamper, 2001: 113). Barrer & Epstein (1987) put emphasis on the importance of parent and family involvement in the child’s educational setting. Regardless of significant student population growth, increased ethnic diversity, and escalating poverty, educators in public schools can employ various strategies to invite positive parental involvement (*ibid.*). Clacherty (2003) in (Library thinkquest) recommended a strategy of working with parents and children. They establish this link through “child-friendly” and “poverty-wise” schools. In a child-friendly school, learners

are exposed to educators and managers who seek to understand and accept that learners come from diverse family backgrounds. These schools will further encourage the development of community and school gardens in a bid to beat poverty, hence establishing poverty-wise schools. These strategies might work out positively to improve the learning performance and learning interest of the impoverished senior secondary learners in our schools. It is against this background that this study was pursued.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite problems encountered by indigent secondary school learners in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape, schools are still expected to produce high quality Grade 12 results. Secondary school managers have to work towards reduction of high drop-out rates and to mould learners into becoming productive and responsible South African citizens. This therefore poses a challenge to secondary school managers as they are expected to come up with suitable strategies that could be used in dealing with problems of impoverished learners. These strategies require an investigation of the school managerial challenges posed by the problems of impoverished learners in the secondary schools. In the light of such a need, the main problem of this study is:

- How can the school managerial challenges related to impoverished secondary school learners be dealt with effectively?

Subsequent to the problem statement, the following sub-problems have been identified:

- What kinds of problems do impoverished learners experience?
- What strategies can educational managers use in dealing with the school-related impact of the problems of impoverished learners?
- What experience do these educational managers have in the field of managing schools in rural poor communities?
- What recommendations can be made based on the findings?

1.4 RESEARCH AIMS

The aim of this study is to investigate managerial strategies that could be used in dealing with problems of the impoverished secondary school learners in the Mount Fletcher district in the Eastern Cape. Consequently, the study's objectives are:

- To investigate the kinds of problems experienced by the impoverished learners to discuss strategies that educational managers can use in dealing with the school-related impact of the problems of impoverished secondary learners.
- To explore through an empirical investigation, the different experiences of educational managers in managing the problems of the impoverished learners in their schools.
- To make recommendation based on the findings.

1.5 MOTIVATION

The rationale for this study is to investigate the strategies that could be useful in dealing with problems of impoverished learners in secondary schools in the Mount Fletcher District in the Eastern Cape.

Findings from this study will contribute towards the improvement of managerial skills that are required by most secondary school managers in the rural communities. It is trusted that the strategies that will be unpacked in this study will help school managers to run these rural secondary schools more effectively.

Furthermore, findings from this investigation will possibly assist in empowering secondary school managers in dealing with impoverished learners' problems. Such findings could also contribute to uplifting the standard of education and to bring about an improvement of the matric pass rate in the Eastern Cape.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

A qualitative approach is considered the most suitable for this study because the aim is to elicit secondary school managers' experiences, perceptions of impoverished learners, and explanations of how best they can manage challenges these learners face at school level. This study investigates how secondary school managers use their observations and experience, make deductions and draw some conclusions on the impact that poverty has on learning processes. Finally, strategies that could be used to manage challenges faced by the impoverished secondary learners will be derived from the collected and analysed participant data.

1.6.1 Selection of participating schools

Two senior secondary schools were selected because of their rural nature, type of learners (mostly impoverished secondary school learners) and proximity to the researcher's place of residence. Another reason for selecting these schools is that both of them draw their learners from the same community but offer different academic streams. One of these schools produces reasonably good matric results and the other one does not perform well. Furthermore, both these schools have been rated as Quintile 2 schools which means they have been declared as 'no fee' schools by the Eastern Cape Department of Education.

1.6.2 Data collection methods

Various data collection methods were used. These include individual and focus group interviews, open-ended questionnaires and document analysis.

1.6.2.1 Interviews

Interviews were used, focusing mainly on problem identification and policy implementation. Both individual and group focus interviews were used for this study. Individual interviews were conducted with the school principals as accounting officers. These interviews were also conducted with the Life Orientation teacher who provided a list of deserving learners drawn from the school data base. The Life Orientation teacher also played a vital role in providing

with authentic information on the learner challenges and experiences as he/she is directly involved with such. Focus group interviews were conducted with parents of the impoverished learners. Interview schedules were prepared for all the interviews and also an open-ended questionnaire for the focus group. The main focus was on those parents who have declared that they cannot afford to provide their impoverished children with school requirements such as school uniform, books or stationery and sport equipment. In addition, all those parents who have shown interest in the school and in the school activities were interviewed.

1.6.2.2 Document analysis

Another method that was used in this study was gathering and interpretation of documents relevant to the problem. These documents range from personal to official (De Vos, 2002:322). Current departmental policy documents that are concerned with assisting the underprivileged learners were consulted, e.g. the SASA. The attendance registers for parents meetings, records of learner reports, welfare committee reports and meetings were analysed. In addition, media coverage together with relevant annual parliament reports by ministers were studied.

1.7 INSTRUMENTATION

The researcher was the key instrument in gathering data. A tape recorder was used to record interviews. These recordings were transcribed verbatim. Data analysis and interpretation followed. Field notes were taken in order to capture activities that observed. Data were finally analysed through identifying, coding and categorising patterns in the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:216). The analysed data were interpreted to make meaning of experiences, views, knowledge and ideas of the participants regarding the problem of impoverished learners. Responses from selected learners, parents and teachers were categorised accordingly. This data were compared with similar information from relevant literature. The next step was data interpretation, i.e. making sense of the data collected and categorised. This means that from the trends that developed from responses of all participants, the study was able to derive the possible strategies that could be suitable for use by school managers of the impoverished secondary school learners in the rural communities.

1.8 KEY TERMINOLOGY

- ***Absolute poverty*** – minimum affordability of basic economic and social needs. This quantifies the number of people below poverty line/threshold, and this poverty line is independent of time and place (Bhorat & Kanbur, 2006).
- ***Relative poverty*** – average per capita income in a certain community relative to the country-wide average (Oxford English Dictionary, 2000).
- ***Acute poverty***- percentage of population living below poverty-line (minimum level of income, below R4 a day – mostly unemployed) (Library thinkquest, 2008).
- ***Education managers*** – heads of schools
- ***Girls Education Movement (GEM)***—movement established to educate and guide school girls on life issues that affect them the most.
- ***Impoverished learners*** – learners who are unable to maximize learning at school due to their poor socio-economic backgrounds.
- ***Matric Intervention Programme (MIP)***—programme by the Department of Education intended to improve the grade 12 results in the Eastern Cape.
- ***Poverty line*** - a minimum level of income deemed necessary to achieve an adequate standard of living in a country. (May & Woolard, 2007).
- ***Poverty trap*** - the causes and effects of poverty forming a vicious cycle and network of isolation, incapability, vulnerability and physical weakness from which the poor can hardly escape (Chambers, 1994:111-114)
- ***Poverty-wise schools***—schools which are prepared to constructively deal with problems emanating as a result of poverty.
- ***Vuk'uzenzele***—“*learn to do things yourself*, i.e. take the initiative rather than waiting for others to do things for you.

1.9 CHAPTER DIVISION

This study is divided into five chapters as follows:

1.9.1 Chapter 1

The chapter outlines the following: The statement of the problem, aims of the study, motivation and methods used for the study.

1.9.2 Chapter 2

The chapter focuses on literature that is relevant to the study.

1.9.3 Chapter 3

This chapter deals with the research methodology.

1.9.4 Chapter 4

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the empirical findings.

1.9.5 Chapter 5

In this chapter there is a summary of the findings followed by the research conclusions and recommendations. Finally, the chapter puts forward recommendations for further research.

1.10. SUMMARY

This chapter discusses the background to the problem, being the incapability of the principals of poor rural communities in managing schools with impoverished learners. Despite problems encountered by indigent secondary school learners in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape, schools are still expected to produce high quality Grade 12 results. Secondary school managers have to work towards reduction of high drop-out rates and to mould learners into

becoming productive and responsible South African citizens. This therefore poses a challenge to secondary school managers as they are expected to come up with suitable strategies that could be used in dealing with problems of impoverished learners.

The researcher found it necessary to establish whether there could be fitting strategies that these principals could employ in order to improve their situation. Consequently, the chapter also provides a problem statement in the form of a question with its sub-questions, the aim, methodology to be followed and demarcation of the study.

A literature review, providing a conceptual and a theoretical framework for the study, is conducted in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT IMPERATIVES IN ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF IMPOVERISHED SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS IN RURAL AREAS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter dwells on literature which provides a conceptual and theoretical framework for the study. The main focus of the chapter is on the investigation of managerial measures that could be used in dealing with problems of the impoverished secondary school learners in rural communities, which is the purpose of the study. The poverty phenomenon is also explained for purposes of contextualisation. The chapter touches on the effects of poverty on education and further identifies the kinds of problems that are experienced by impoverished learners in rural secondary schools.

Furthermore, the chapter explores through a literature review a number of positive practices that could equip managers in fulfilling their leadership role in highly impoverished schools. It has been noticed that there has been a lack of focused attention on examining how people became school leaders or how they are supported once they assume these roles, especially in these schools. The chapter further identifies various instructional leadership roles of the school manager in an effort to manage extremely poor rural schools effectively.

A discussion of the poverty phenomenon is, firstly, provided in this chapter in order to come to a deeper understanding of the concept and its implications on education. Then the chapter looks at challenges that managers are faced with in rural secondary schools and means of addressing them.

2.2 THE POVERTY PHENOMENON

2.2.1 Definition of poverty

Poverty is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. “Its attributes can be captured in a myriad of images ranging from malnutrition, lack of education, inadequate shelter, vulnerability and an absence of voice and powerlessness in society” (Sen, 2000:293).

Pillay (2004:5) postulates that Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1979), which explores different systems within a social context, gave rise to an ecosystemic theory suitable for analysing the experiences of learners from informal settlements as multifaceted manifestations of poverty emerged in South Africa since 1994 (Terreblanche, 2004).

For purposes of this study, the ecosystemic theory will serve as the starting point for analysing poverty in education. As Maarman (2009) puts it, various definitions of poverty over time have directed government's efforts to create a better life for all. For the purposes of this study, however, these definitions should account for the changing face of poverty in different contexts, for example, in informal settlements and in the rural communities. To show how poverty is debated, in his investigation into the causes of poverty from a South African perspective, Kamper uses insights from the sociological literature that reveal economic, political, structural, anthropological, biological, sociological and religious themes (Adcock, 1993:10-33; Lithely, 1993:70).

Similarly, Akinboade and Lalthapersad-Pillay (2004:196-200) locate the causes of poverty mainly in socio-structural trends and the social exclusion characteristic of South African society. To support this, they cite problems related to employment, access to land, access to capital and financial services, women's access to the labour market, HIV/AIDS, gender differences, gender participation and representation, cultural practices, urbanisation, civil conflict and wars.

There is no uniform way of defining poverty, but some commonalities can be highlighted (Has well, 1975:70-72; Sen, 1992:289; McCarthy, 1997; Lok-Dessallien, 2002:2). First, the Copenhagen Declaration lists deprivation of human needs (food, safe drinking water, sanitation

facilities, health, shelter, education and information) as the point of departure when poverty is discussed. A second common feature of poverty is the lack of entitlement, power, control and opportunities. Poor people to varying degrees lack these basic requirements for maintaining themselves to their satisfaction in most societal spaces and thus experience feelings of hopelessness and meaninglessness (Spies, 2004). A third common feature is the exclusion of the poor through existing social structures, which limits their potential to participate in and influence civil society (Sayed, 2003).

“Poverty has multiple definitions and multiple ways of expressing itself. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2002) describes poverty in terms of income, capability, and participation, recognising that poverty leads to trauma, powerlessness and shame, among other things” (Preece 2006:149). In its report, the UNDP 2002 describes poverty as a complex phenomenon that varies with the social and economic conditions of the community or country. (Sen, 2000) contends that poverty is a multiple deprivation from employment, health, housing, education, skills and training. Poverty has been more accurately recognised as social and economic exclusion (The Oxford University Index Team, 2000). Sen, 1999 defines poverty as a state of being incapable. He argues that poor people are incapable because they lack knowledge and skills for participation in economic life. For Sen, the poor are poor because of the effect of inadequate schooling and inadequate curriculum on the labour market. A schooling system which does not provide liberation from poverty condemns children to perpetual poverty (Maile 2008:162).

Ardington, Lam, Leibbrandt and Welch (2006) assert that poverty is defined relative to the standards of living in a society at a specific time. In their understanding, people live in poverty when they are denied an income sufficient for their material needs and when these circumstances exclude them from taking part in activities which are an accepted part of daily life in that society. The most common way to measure poverty is based on income. A person is considered poor if his or her income level falls below minimum level necessary to meet basic needs. This minimum level is usually called the *‘poverty line’*. What is necessary to satisfy basic needs varies across time and societies. Therefore, poverty lines vary in time and place, and each country uses lines which are appropriate to its level of development, societal norms and values (*ibid*).

The Bosnia and Herzegovina's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2002:5) emphasises that "a multidimensional understanding of poverty helps us define poverty as a human condition characterised by sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economical political and social rights. May & Govender (1998) as referred to by Kamper (2008:2) claim that poverty basically concerns the inability of individuals, households or communities to reach and maintain a socially acceptable minimum standard of living due to lack of resources.

Poverty is usually measured as either absolute or relative poverty (the latter actually being an index of income inequality). Absolute poverty refers to a set standard which is consistent over time and between countries. The World Bank defines extreme poverty as living on less than US \$1.25 (PPP) per day, and *moderate poverty* as less than \$2 a day. It estimates that "in 2001, 1.1 billion people had consumption levels below \$1 a day and 2.7 billion lived on less than \$2 a day."(Poverty-Wikipedia, 2009).

The 2005 Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Progress report of South Africa (APRM, 2007) states clearly that there is no nationally accepted definition of poverty as yet. In an effort to give the South African meaning of poverty, Noble, Ratcliffe & Wright, (2004) in the (APRM, 2007) argue that a 'consensual' or 'democratic' definition of poverty in South Africa is the most appropriate approach to help the country overcome the deep social divisions that are apartheid's legacy. Consensual definitions are in a sense 'democratic' in that poverty is defined by the views of the people as a whole (at least as represented in a sample survey) rather than by elite 'experts' (*ibid*).

However, it is worth noting that a consensual definition of poverty can encompass many of the elements of social exclusion. For example, the list of socially perceived necessities underpinning a consensual definition of poverty could include social activities as well as goods and resources. Attending weddings and funerals are activities which may be considered essential in attaining social inclusion; these activities are also likely to be 'socially perceived necessities' under a consensual definition of poverty. Bradshaw, (2003) in Poverty-Wikipedia, (2009) argues that this is not to say that poverty, under consensual

definition, will be identical with social exclusion, but a consensual approach can capture more aspects of social exclusion than minimal, absolute approaches.

In addition to the general theoretical arguments outlined above, there are a number of reasons why a consensual definition of poverty is particularly appropriate for South Africa. The experience of apartheid has left South Africa with an exceptionally divided society, with extensive social and economic inequality (May, 1998; Hirschowitz, 2000 in Noble *et al.*, 2004) in (Poverty-Wikipedia, 2009).

A consensual definition of poverty would provide a truer reflection of what most South Africans think of as an acceptable standard. A pro-poor policy agenda based on such a definition would be a useful tool for helping South Africa move towards the objective contained in its constitution, namely to “Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person; and build a united and democratic South Africa”(*ibid.*).

Due to its complexity, the definition of poverty has been an ongoing debate. In an attempt to understand the concept, some important categories therefore will be debated upon. These are *absolute poverty*, *relative poverty*, *acute poverty* and *ultra poverty*.

Firstly, *absolute poverty* is said to be a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information (United Nations in Borat & Kanbur 2006:398). The United Nations defines “absolute poverty,” as severe deprivation of basic human needs such as clean water, nutrition, health care, education, clothing and shelter, because of the inability to afford them. This is also referred to as destitution (Poverty Wikipedia, 2009). Sachs (2005:20) describes absolute poverty as Third World “extreme” poverty.

Secondly, *relative poverty* is the condition of having fewer resources or less income than others within a society or country, or compared to worldwide averages (Poverty Wikipedia). *Relative poverty* can also be explained as an average per capita income in a certain community relative to the country-wide average (Oxford English Dictionary, 2000).

Thirdly, *acute poverty* means a percentage of the population living below the poverty-line (a minimum level of income, below R4 a day of mostly unemployed people). (Library thinkquest, 2008).

Finally, *ultra poverty*, a term coined by Lipton (2005) in (Poverty-Wikipedia, 2009), connotes being amongst the poorest of the poor in low-income countries. Lipton defined ultra-poverty as receiving less than 80 percent of the minimum caloric intake whilst spending more than 80% of income on food. Alternatively a 2007 report issued by the International Food Policy Research Institute defined ultra-poverty as living on less than 54 cents per day.

To provide more clarity on ultra poverty, Hunter & May (2002) drew the following table from their study:

Table 2.1: Characteristics of households in Durban (means and percentages)
Households

Household characteristics	Non-poor (n=832)	Poor (n=1087)	Ultra-poor (n=598)
Mean household expenditure (Rands/month) *	3860.01	851.72	654.49
Mean per capita expenditure (Rands/month) *	811.77	116.40	76.96
Percentage African	43.70	93.40	95.90
Percentage female headed	34.90	41.70	41.20
Mean years of education (head)	9.80	8.00	7.90
Percentage head employed	69.70	59.30	55.90
Mean household size	5.20	8.00	8.90
Number in household employed	1.90	1.70	1.70
Percentage of households where children never attended school	0.30	0.70	0.90
Household characteristics	Non-poor (n=832)	Poor (n=1087)	Ultra-poor (n=598)

Number in household educated to grade 10	2.80	2.60	2.50
Percentage permanent house	82.60	47.10	40.70
Percentage internal piped water	78.10	32.50	24.50
Percentage flush toilet	81.70	37.50	28.80
Percentage electricity	89.90	70.10	63.30

Source: Poverty, shocks and school disruption episodes (Hunter & May, 2002)

Table 1 enables an assessment of the relative wellbeing of the study sample in terms of social and economic indicators. The poor and particularly the ultra-poor have strikingly less access to services, shelter, education and employment than the non-poor. They are more likely to be female headed, African and live in larger households. (Hunter & May, 2002:22).

In understanding and dealing with the poverty phenomenon, Kamper (2008: 2) emphasises that it is important to have conceptual clarity on key terms such as *poverty rate*, *poverty share* and *poverty gap*. According to him, one should distinguish between the terms *poverty rate* and *poverty share*. The former is used to express the scope of poverty amongst a certain sector of the population (e.g. those living in rural areas or in certain provinces). The latter is used to identify which group(s) make up the largest share of the poor in the country as whole (Kamper, 2008, 2-3). The term *poverty gap* concerns the amount of money needed to wipe out absolute poverty through payment of dedicated poverty relief subsidies to the poor (*ibid*: 4).

2.2.2 Aspects of poverty

Poverty can be further defined according to different aspects such as economic, social and political aspects.

Economic aspects of poverty focus on material needs, typically including the necessities of daily living, such as food, clothing, shelter, or safe drinking water. Poverty in this sense may be understood as a condition in which a person or community is lacking in the basic needs for

a minimum standard of well-being and life, particularly as a result of a persistent lack of income (Poverty-Wikipedia, 2009).

On the other hand, analysis of social aspects of poverty links conditions of scarcity to aspects of the distribution of resources and power in a society and recognises that poverty may be a function of the diminished "capability" of people to live the kinds of lives they value. The social aspects of poverty may include lack of access to information, education, health care, or political power. Poverty may also be understood as an aspect of unequal social status and inequitable social relationships, experienced as social exclusion, dependency, and diminished capacity to participate, or to develop meaningful connections with other people in society. Such social exclusion can be minimised through strengthened connections with the mainstream, such as through the provision of relational care to those who are experiencing poverty (*ibid.*).

Politically, poverty can be simplified to refer to poor service delivery by government to the destitute. This results when the state- established poverty alleviation programmes fail to reach the intended population groups in a country. Such a scenario occurs because of the conflicting demands of politicians and programme managers (Everatt, 2003) in (Poverty-Wikipedia, 2009). "Politicians and programme managers have opposing needs. The latter require specificity, while the former prioritise political above technical considerations and prefer opacity to a definition of poverty eradication. This implies that someone else will have to forego those resources" (*ibid.*) .Poverty has been highly politicised in many countries, including South Africa. As a result (Alcock, 1993:3) has the following to say: "Poverty is inherently a political concept, and thus inherently a contested one" because "poverty is not just a state of affairs, it is an unacceptable state of affairs".

2.2.3 Poverty factors

The World Bank's "Voices of the Poor (World Bank Report, 2000)," based on research with over 20,000 poor people in 23 countries, identifies a range of factors which poor people identify as part of poverty. These include:

- Precarious livelihoods

- Excluded locations
- Physical limitations
- Disturbed gender relationships
- Problems in social relationships
- Lack of security
- Abuse by those in power
- Disempowering institutions
- Limited capabilities
- Weak community organisations

It is on the basis of such definitions that poverty in South Africa can be investigated and discussed.

2.2.4 Scope of poverty

2.2.4.1 Poverty measurement

Existing literature has highlighted clearly that poverty is a complex issue. Because of its complexity, measuring it has also presented a challenge. Measuring the degree of poverty is a subject of ongoing debate” (Alexander & Wall, 2006). Various definitions of poverty exist for various purposes, depending on the objective of the analysis, the nature of the data and the method employed in measuring poverty (Booyesen, 2002:53).

Hills (2004) explains that traditionally poverty has been measured in three basic ways which he categorises as follows: *absolute low income*, or numbers of families or individuals counted below a real, fixed line (e.g. 50% of median income for a specific base year); *relative low income*, or numbers of families or individuals below a contemporary or annual median income (e.g. ratio, annually revised, of perhaps 50% of median or average for each year; and combined material deprivation and low income-measure), or families or individuals lacking particular items (e.g. food, housing, education, health care), a market basket of necessities, and also having an income below 50% of a contemporary median income (Hills, 2004:47).

According to the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) (Schwabe, 2004), the poverty rate measures the proportion of a region’s population living below the *poverty line* but does not give any indication of how far below the poverty line poor households are. (Poverty line means a minimum level of income deemed necessary to achieve an adequate standard of living) (Schwabe, 2004). Statistics SA (2007) argues that there is no agreed best practice on how to design a national poverty line. Processes and experiences differ widely from country to country as do the actual design and content of poverty lines that have been adopted. Most countries have a single poverty line, while others have two or more. Some countries have different poverty lines for rural and urban households, and others make a distinction between different kinds of households (Statistics SA National Treasury, 2007).

In 2007 a report compiled for Statistics South Africa, based on a basic household consumption basket, proposes a “lower” and “upper” bound for consideration as an official poverty line in South Africa (Statistics SA National Treasury, 2007). A selection of available measures and thresholds is summarised in the Table 1.2 below (*ibid.*). These measures vary significantly, reflecting both the complexity of poverty and inequality and the various purposes that a poverty measure can serve.

Table 2. 2. Rand values and poverty incidence: alternative “poverty lines”

	Poverty line in 2000 Rands*	% of individuals below the poverty line (2000 IES) (Income and Expenditure Survey)
Poverty line set as per capita expenditure of the 40th percentile of households	R346 per capita	54.9%
Poverty line set as at 50% of mean national per capita expenditure	R538 per capita	68.1%
Statistics SA- lower bound	R322 per capita	52.6%
Statistics SA- upper bound	R593 per capita	70.4%

“Dollar a day”-International poverty line of US\$370 (1985 prices) per capita per annum	R81 per capita	8.1 %
“Two dollars a day”- International poverty line of US\$370(1985 prices) per capita per annum	R162 per capita	27.0%
“Poverty line implied by Old Age Pension means test for married persons, assuming a household of 5 persons and no non-elderly income earners	R454 per capita	63.4%
“Indigence” line of R800 per household per month in 2006 prices)	R573 per capita	11.7%
“Indigence” line of R2400 per household per month in 2006 prices)	R1720 per capita	55.1%

Source: Leibbrandt & Woolard, (2006) and Magasela (2005)

Table 2.3 Poverty rate (%) in South African municipalities

Province	No. of poor persons (million)	% of population in poverty	Poverty gap (R billion)	Share of poverty gap
Eastern Cape	4.6	72%	14.8	18.2%
Free state	1.8	68%	5.9	7.2%
Gauteng	3.7	42%	12.1	14.9%
KwaZulu-Natal	5.7	61%	18.3	22.5%
Limpopo	4.1	77%	11.5	14.1%
Mpumalanga	1.8	57%	7.1	8.7%

North West	1.9	52%	6.1	7.5%
Northern Cape	0.5	61%	1.5	1.8%
Western Cape	1.4	32%	4.1	5.0%
SOUTH AFRICA	25.7	57%	81.3	100%

Source: (Whiteford, 2004, in Schwabe, 2004)

With its large poor population KwaZulu-Natal has the biggest poverty gap of R18.3billion. The Eastern Cape follows with R 14.8 billion and Gauteng with R11.5 billion. The Gauteng Province's poverty gap has grown faster between 1996 and 2001 than all other provinces. This is probably a result of its population growth rapidly exceeding economic growth. The poverty gap has grown faster than the economy indicating that poor households have not yet shared in the benefits of economic growth (Statistics SA National Treasury, 2007: 2-3).

For purposes of this study, the focus will mainly be on the cycle of poverty and educational disadvantage. As stated in the Poverty Glossary (2009:1), a cycle of poverty is a phenomenon where poor families become trapped in poverty for generations. Because they have no access to critical resources, such as education and financial services, subsequent generations are also impoverished. According to Preece (2006:151) poverty reduces educational attainment, which in turn reduces opportunity to escape poverty. This is very clear with families who cannot provide their children with educational necessities such as a school uniform and stationery. In the Eastern Cape, poor rural communities struggle to have access to secondary schooling. Carter & May (1999) point to the fact that the poor are poor not only because they have few assets, but also because they are constrained in their ability to effectively accumulate, protect and utilise the assets that they do have, including the human capital present in the household. Furthermore, the two authors demonstrate how lack of assets such as houses and money contributes towards persistent poverty and create a *poverty trap* from which poor households are unable to exit (Carter & May, 2001). In the absence of assets, it is difficult for the household to protect itself against external poverty shocks, which in turn means that children may be forced to leave school as part of a household coping strategy (Hunter & May, 2002:6).

Multidimensional as it is, poverty is a reality. This study therefore seeks to identify ways and means of how school managers can best apply their leadership skills in dealing with impoverished learners. It is therefore important to discuss the scope of poverty in Africa in general and in South Africa specifically.

2.2.4.2 Scope of poverty in Africa

In an effort to portray an informative picture of poverty in South Africa and Africa, it is necessary to have an insight of how the global picture is presented. As Preece (2006) puts it, the global picture of poverty is usually portrayed by statistical measurements of particular performance indicators such as income levels, literacy levels, primary school enrolment figures, infant mortality, HIV/AIDS prevalence, national GDP figures, and life expectancy. These figures build up a global image of poor countries and what constitutes poverty. So, for instance, absolute poverty is calculated at living on less than one dollar a day, and South Asia is consequently defined as having the largest number of poor people (25 million or 40% of the population) while Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest proportion of poor people (46.3%). The authoritative resources for this type of information are international agencies like World Bank, UNESCO and DFI (Preece (2006).

Preece (2006) further states that in terms of education, Sub-Saharan Africa has only 55% of primary school enrolment compared with the world average of 90%. She also adds that the proportion of children who actually complete primary education is significantly lower, with consequences for secondary school enrolment, skills acquisition and employment (UNESCO, 2006 in Preece, 2006).

World Bank Report, 2000, revealed that the global statistics have indicated that Africa is still engulfed in pervasive poverty regardless of international endeavours to eradicate the pandemic. Much of Africa will have difficulty keeping pace with the rest of the developing world and even if conditions improve in absolute terms, the report warns, Africa in 2030 will be home to a larger proportion of the world's poorest people than it is today (World Bank Report, 2000 in Poverty-Wikipedia, 2009).

Despite a number of poverty eradication measures by governments, poverty has shown no declining tendencies. In Sub-Saharan Africa extreme poverty went up from 41 percent in 1981 to 46 percent in 2001 (World Bank: 2004), which combined with a growing population increased the number of people living in extreme poverty from 231 million to 318 million (*ibid.*).

2.2.4.3 Scope of poverty in South Africa and its impact on the provision of education

According to Maharaj, Kaufman & Richter (2000), almost all children in South Africa complete primary schooling, but only 30 % of mainly African 20-24 year olds complete secondary school. Statistics S.A's 2005 General Household Survey (APRM, 2007) confirmed the finding that most primary learners do attend schools. Among the survey population group aged 7 to 15 years, only 2,1 per cent was not attending school. This, according to Statistics S.A., means that 98 per cent of that age group was enrolled in primary schools.

Table 2.4 Provincial provisions of basic services in % (2004-2006)

Province and Capital	Population (Mid-Year estimate 2006)	Area (Square Km)	GDP per Region and as a % of total National GDP(2004)	GDP Per Capita	Unemployment Rate(%2005)	% Persons Attending an Educational Institution between 7 and 15 years (2005)	% Persons Benefiting from Social Welfare (12 months prior to survey) (2005)	% of Households Connected to main Electricity Supply (2005)	% of Households with Piped Water (2005)
Western Cape Cape Town	4 745 500 (10%)	129 370 (10.6)	R119.14 bn (14.4%)	R42 884	18.9	98.2	10.9	99.2	92.0
Eastern Cape Bisho	7 051 500 (14%)	169 580 (13.9%)	R112.91 bn (8.1%)	R16 038	29.9	97.4	18.3	66.7	41.6
KwaZulu- Natal Ulundi/Pieter maritzburg	9 731 800 (20.5%)	92 100 (7.6%)	R231.62 bn (16.7%)	R24 004	32.8	97.7	15.4	72.3	62.1
Northern Cape Kimberly	910 100 (1.9%)	361 830 (29.7%)	R30.09 bn (2.2%)	R33 430	24.7	96.3	12.3	88.3	86.8
Free State Bloemfontein	2 958 800 (6.2%)	129 480 (10.6%)	R75.89 bn 95.5%)	R25 704	30.2	97.7	14.0	88.7	88.7
North-West Mafikeng	3 858 200 (8.1%)	116 320 (9.5%)	R87 .13 bn (6.3%)	R16 523	27.4	97.6	13.5	84.6	60.5
Gauteng Johannesburg	9 211 200 (19.4%)	17 010 (1.4%)	R462.04 bn (33.3%)	R51 224	22.8	98.5	7.6	82.7	89.1
Mpumalanga Nelspruit	3 252 500 (6.9%)	79 490 (6.5%)	R94.45 bn (6.8%)	R29 332	26.9	97.8	16.2	82.1	67.1
Limpopo Polokwane	5 670 800 (12.0%)	123 910 (10.2%)	R93.19 bn (6.7%)	R16 523	30.1	99.0	18.6	82.4	36.4

Source: AFRICAN PEER REVIEW MECHANISM REPORT NO.5 of September (2007).

The enrolment data for primary education is clearly encouraging. The only concern here is that almost a third of the two percent of learners who do not attend school stay away due to lack of funding. This is confirmed in the said survey, which reports that among those aged 7 to 15 who are not attending school, 29, 7 percent cite reasons of having no money to pay school fees (APRM, 2007:249). Notably, South Africa does not have an explicit policy of universal free public education for all primary school learners. However, as stated by the Minister of Education during the Country Review Mission (CRM) (APRM,2007) in policy and practice, no child should be turned away from school due to lack of funding. According to the Department of Education (APRM, 2007), there are mechanisms in place to exempt under-resourced households from paying school fees. There are over 9000 “no fee schools”, which obtain that particular status by virtue of being in a community falling below a predetermined poverty index (the different quintiles). According to Statistics S.A’s 2005 General Household Survey (Statistics S.A’s 2005); secondary schooling is not given much attention in the Country Self-Assessment Report (CSAR). However, the figures from the 2005 General Household Survey are not very encouraging for higher age groups. Between the ages 16 and 20, about 29 per cent were not attending any educational institution (APRM, 2007:249-251). Children of uneducated mothers are claimed to be more than twice as likely to die or be malnourished than children of mothers who have secondary or higher education. Women represent half of the 40 million people worldwide who are infected with HIV, but 57% of HIV positive adults live in the Southern Africa (Preece, 2006 148).

For purposes of this research it is of vital importance to focus on the extent of poverty in South Africa. According to an investigation by the Southern African Regional Poverty Network (SARPN) quoted in Poverty-Wikipedia (2009), a number of assumptions about poverty and its effects on people’s lives have been identified. The first assumption is that poverty in South Africa is structural in nature rather than being caused by individual laziness or lack of agency or self-initiative. Poverty is the result of the unequal distribution of resources, skills and income sources, and is exacerbated in many cases by both gender and spatial dynamics. The second assumption is that social grant income represents the single source of regular income in many poor households. The third assumption is that despite this, poor people in general have not developed a ‘dependency’ on social grant money, but continue to try to generate income from other sources. It is on the basis of the second assumption that this investigation is pursued.

With the demise of apartheid in 1994, expectations and aspirations for improvement in livelihoods among ordinary South Africans have been raised to phenomenal levels. Despite the status of a middle-income country, poverty and inequality are still widespread in South Africa and manifest themselves in high rates of unemployment, extreme land hunger and lack of access to basic human needs. In both urban and rural areas, the majority of the population continues to experience conditions of severe deprivation and squalor (APRM, 2007:275-276). A significant number of South African households continue to be poor or vulnerable. Poor South Africans perceive poverty to include: alienation from the community; food insecurity; crowded homes; use of unsafe and inefficient forms of energy; lack of jobs that are adequately paid and/or secure; and fragmentation of the family. Women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities bear the brunt of poverty (*ibid.*). The APRM (2007) report further argues that the distribution of income and wealth in South Africa is among the most unequal in the world. Many households still have unsatisfactory access to education, healthcare, energy and clean water despite concrete progress made in redressing the inherited backlog since 1999, (see Table 2.3). Furthermore, fuelled by high levels of unemployment, poverty provides the bedrock for HIV and AIDS. The APRM (2007) report further notes that poverty is not just about the income of the poor; it is also about people's lost creativity and potential to contribute to society. It is about the denial of access to opportunities and choices to lead a decent life, achieve a better standard of living and have more freedom, dignity and self-respect (*ibid.*).

2.3 THE EFFECTS OF POVERTY ON LEARNING

In most cases, secondary school learners display particular learning barriers which can directly be associated with poverty. It is important to highlight some of these learning barriers and consequences thereof. To a greater extent, the effects of poverty on learning are as a result of the socio-economic backgrounds from which most impoverished learners come. Consequently, learners end up being psychologically affected and therefore fail to fulfil the necessary academic requirements. The subsequent section will give an insight on the socio-economic and psychological effects of poverty on learning.

2.3.1 Socio-economic effects

Research from Poverty-Wikipedia, (2007) has found that there is a high risk of educational underachievement for children who are from low-income housing circumstances. This often is a process that begins in primary school for some less fortunate children. In the US educational system, these children are at a higher risk than other children for retention in their grade, special placements during the school hours and even not completing their high school education.

Most of these impoverished learners are from families that find themselves poverty-trapped. *Poverty trap* means the persistence of poverty, when poverty increases instead of decreasing over time. Because of the poverty trap, these learners find it difficult to further their studies and are therefore debarred from joining the employment field because they lack the necessary skills or qualifications. They run the risk of remaining unemployed like their uneducated parents and will find it difficult to actively participate in their society. Following their predicament will be social exclusion and pervasive poverty. Teachers that have such learners often wish that these be removed from their classroom (Kamper, 2008:4). Kamper further states that many of these learners ultimately remove themselves as they drop through the cracks in the education system. These high school dropouts cause an increase of crime levels in our communities because they end up losing the sense of purpose. Another problem among these learners is false identification, i.e. a learner disowning his/her parents' background to associate himself or herself with a better-off family. Concurring with Kamper (2008), Checchi (2006) contends that the poor start with a very low level of capital per person, and find themselves trapped in poverty because the ratio of capital per person declines from generation to generation. Checchi (2006) in Library thinkquest (2009) analyses this problem by using the concept of intergenerational persistence. She argues that it could be concluded from empirical evidence that the children of educated parents are more likely to acquire an education. She further points out that this may be due to parent imitation, but in most cases it happens because of induced educational choices. According to Checchi (2006), the intergenerational persistence derives from liquidity constraints. For example, if access to education is limited by family financial resources and acquired education provides access to higher-paid jobs, this opens the door to a *poverty trap*. Poor families are prevented from investing in the education of their children by lack of financial resources and the inability to

access financial markets. Children from these families remain uneducated and poor and they are unable to invest in their grandchildren (*Ibid*).

Many studies show a correlation between poverty and academic achievement. Poverty, pure and simple, prevents the genes involved in academic intelligence to express themselves (Turkheimer, Haley, Waldron, D'Onofrio & Gottesman, 2003, in Berliner, 2006:969). It is important to note that poverty is especially a scary phenomenon that carries with it a feeling of insecurity and vulnerability for an impoverished secondary school learner in a rural school. In the rural secondary schools, learners are often not given an opportunity to learn. For instance, these learners do not have enough learning time, insufficient ameliorative measures for those who lag behind, and they receive poor quality teaching because the more qualified teachers avoid these rural schools and settle for schools with better infrastructure (Berliner, 2006).

Among the school-going youth from poor communities, certain behavioural patterns associated with socio-economic backgrounds can be observed; these include lack of respect, smoking, substance abuse and vulgar language use. Discussing the effects of poverty on learning, Berliner (2006) says, "The effects of smoking, alcohol and other drugs, lack of adequate dental and medical care, increased residential mobility, fewer positive after-school groups in which to participate, and many more factors all take their toll on the families and children of the poor". There are indeed many explanations why impoverished learners tend to drop out of school. For children with low resources, risk factors are high delinquency and teenage pregnancy level, and the economic dependency on their income parent or parents (Berliner, 2006).

Poverty effects in turn can have negative consequences in that affected young adults could grow up with deficient education and find it difficult to move out of poverty. The concentration needed in the classroom can be impeded due to a number of factors the impoverished learner is subjected to; these include fatigue resulting from long distances he or she travels to school, lack of food security and other socio-economic circumstances. This is the reason why Bracey (2004:260) says "poverty is not an excuse; it is a condition. Like gravity, it affects everything". Alexander and Wall (2006:303) state that the concentration of low-income children in a school or classroom can influence the learning environment and the

prospect for each child to attain an appropriate level of achievement. On the other hand, a healthy childhood environment supported by adequate family economics is an amalgam of many factors, stability in feelings of security, quick medical attention when needed, high quality child care, access to books and exposure to rich language usage in the home (Berliner, 2006). This contrast is shown in table 4 below:

Table 2.5 Likelihood of school drop-out among adolescents from poor and non-poor households

Household type	% Drop-out	Pearson Chi-Sq.	p
Poor	20.8	61.4	0.000**
Non-Poor	8.9		
Ultra-poor	23.4	53.1	0.000**
Non Ultra-poor	12.2		

* $p \leq 0,05$

** $p \leq 0,01$

Source: Poverty, shocks and school disruption episodes (Hunter & May, 2002)

As can be seen from table five, more of the poor and the ultra-poor adolescents than the non-poor dropped out during this period, and they are more likely to do so than those who are not poor. Moreover, almost half (48 percent) of those that dropped out of school as opposed to 42 percent of those that have not, came from households that had experienced one or more shocks during the period, and the difference between these two groups is significant. Therefore adolescents that experience spells of drop-out are more likely to come from a poor household and from one that has experienced a household shock. (Hunter & May, 2002: 21).

Even if some impoverished learners do persist at school, they may still be faced with enormous challenges at home in an environment of vulnerability and coping responses, a condition that is likely to compromise their ability to function to their full potential at school (Hunter & May, 2002). This is clearly indicated in Table 1 which shows that socio-economic conditions existing in their households are not favourable for academic persistence.

Hunter & May (2002) claim that there are two different kinds of school disruption episodes among adolescents in South Africa, these are *dropping out of* school and *dropping behind* school. They describe the first definition to mean leaving school before finishing matric, e.g. male adolescents leaving school forever to join the world of labour and females leaving school because of early pregnancy. This commonly occurs in poor households. The latter definition means repeating one or more grades, e.g. because of falling pregnant during the year or any other disruption.

Findings here suggested that adolescents that come from poor households are more likely to experience school disruption episodes than those from non-poor households.

The analysis of the 1996 Census (Stats SA 2001) shows those in every age group (12 to 15 years, 16 to 25 years, and 26 years and over) women who have given birth are less likely to be studying than those who have not had children (Stats SA 2001). Further, Maharaj, Kaufman and Richter (2000) note that 43 percent of African girls in South Africa have been pregnant at least once by age 19, and that for African girls under 19, about a third of those who have had at least one birth are also attending school. These authors use this finding to conclude that education continues to play an important role for girls, even after the birth of a child at a young age.

Looking at the poor matric results in our rural secondary schools, one is prompted to investigate the causes of such a catastrophe. A general conclusion is that one of the causes is socioeconomic factors which affect the teaching and learning processes (Umdibanisi, 2007). Of these factors, poverty is a prominent phenomenon. Literature has revealed that poverty has always been the source of grave learning deficiencies that need to be addressed in formal education (Umdibanisi, 2007).

As has been mentioned earlier, one of the manifestations of poverty is irregular school attendance by impoverished secondary learners. In most instances this absenteeism results from health-related problems. Engle *et al.* (2007) as referred to by Maile (2008) posit that health and education are intertwined and one cannot be considered without the other. For scholars, they argue, focusing and investing in advanced education programmes may have no

significant impact where poverty is rife. Children's "home activities, preferences, mannerisms" must align with the world and in the cases that they do not, these students are at a disadvantage in the school and most importantly the classroom. Therefore, it is safe to state that children who live at or below the poverty level will have far less success educationally than children who live above the poverty line. Poor children have many healthcares and this ultimately results in many absences from the academic year. Additionally, poor children are much more likely to suffer from hunger, fatigue, irritability, headaches, ear infections, flu, and colds. These illnesses could potentially restrict a child or student's focus and concentration (Poverty-Wikipedia, 2007).

Another serious problem is the high rate of pregnancy amongst teenage girls. Most of the teen mothers do not attend classes regularly. Literature has shown that poverty is one of the major determinants of teenage pregnancy in rural schools. In addition, the 2010 ECDoE EMIS statistics indicate that in the Eastern Cape rural secondary schools rates of teenage pregnancy remain unacceptably high. Teenage fertility is the result of a complex set of varied and inter-related factors, largely associated with the social conditions under which children grow up. Influencing factors include the following:

- When young people drop out of school early, often due to economic barriers and poor school performance, the risk of early pregnancy is significantly higher.
- When they grow up in residential areas where poverty is entrenched (informal areas and rural areas), they are at risk of experiencing an early pregnancy.
- When both parents, and in particular, the mother, is present in the home, risk of early pregnancy is decreased.
- When stigma about adolescent sexuality abounds, few opportunities exist for open communication about sex with parents and partners, and access to judgment-free health services is constrained.
- When young women are involved in relationships where power is imbalanced, men generally decide the conditions under which sex happens. All too often, this involves coerced or forced sex.
- When young women struggle to meet immediate material needs, they make trade-offs between health and economic security. Reciprocity of sex in exchange for material goods leads to young women remaining in dysfunctional relationships,

engaging in multiple sexual partnerships and involvement with older men. Under such conditions, there is little opportunity for them to negotiate safe sex and the risk of pregnancy is increased.

Pervasive poverty in SA stacks these overlapping sources of risks among some young people, offering them limited information to make optimal choices and few incentives to protect themselves against pregnancy (2010 ECDoE EMIS).

Parental illness resulting from the effects of HIV and AIDS also has a serious impact on their children's education. These learners are sometimes left to be child minders and experience loss of school contact time. Moreover, in rural areas and other poor South African communities, this adult illness may be taking a toll on the education of older children. As a result of their parent's illness, the children's school performance declines and their own emotional distress also interferes with the academic progress (May & Hunter, 2002).

Undoubtedly, mobility is a symptom of poverty; poor children may live in places that their parents rent by week or by day. This condition results from the fact that parents are constantly in search of jobs. This job insecurity causes impoverished learners to move from town to town with parents who are in search of employment. The conditions these learners live in and their day-to-day life experiences can have a significant effect on their education and achievement. This unpleasant mobility, combined with other issues, has an impact on emotional, social and cognitive development (Pellino, 2007).

Childhood development is a very critical global challenge, and one of the factors that impacts negatively on the challenge is malnutrition. This statement clearly links education to a particular socio-economic status. It assumes that educated people are catered for in the labour market because they have skills and, as such, they occupy a better position in society (Jolly 2007, in Maile 2008). Development, it is argued, can only be successful if it is driven by education. This is especially true in the developing world. Development not driven by education in the developing countries, they argue, cannot be sustainable (Jolly 2007, in Maile 2008). South Africa is classified as a country that it is characterised by pervasive poverty. It is in the context of these key arguments that the South African School Nutrition Programme (SNP) was conceptualised in September 1994 (Tomlinson 2007). Globally nutrition

programmes have yielded rich informative and mostly positive data on their impact in the classroom. According to (Del Rosso, in Maile, 2008: 107) here are some of the impacts of the SNPs on education:

- Alleviating short-term hunger and improving cognition.
- Increasing enrolments and improving attendance.
- Addressing micronutrient deficiencies and improving learning.
- Improving community participation and ensuring synergy in educational matters.
- Making school attractive to children, and thus improving the education of the nation.

In a number of instances globally the programmes have led to increased volumes of learners, longer attention spans and improved performance in school work (Maile, 2008:105). Education and learning depend on good nutrition and health. The SNPs should be viewed as means to an end to hunger for learners (Maile, 2008: 106-107). The HSRC's 1996 findings in Kwa-Zulu Natal Province revealed that the SNPs have brought about improvement of intellectual capacity, decline in school dropout, decline in absenteeism and general improvement in health (Bhorat & Kanbur, 2006).

The effects of poverty on education of learners have not gone unnoticed. The National Department of Education, the Eastern Cape Department of Education in particular, has made considerable endeavours to deal with poverty effects in this regard. In 2008 the Department of Education decided to extend the feeding scheme to include the impoverished secondary school learners. This National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) targeted all Quintile 1 secondary schools in all provinces including the Eastern Cape. The NSNP was introduced in 1994 by the government as part of the Reconstruction and Development Programme of the newly founded democratic Republic of South Africa (National Department of Education, 1994) .The programme has since covered only learners in primary school. The 2006 survey by the Fiscal and Finance Committee (Division of Revenue, 2008/09) confirmed that there was a need to extend the programme to secondary schools. In October 2008 the Minister of Finance announced a budget for the inclusion of secondary schools in the programme (NSNP guide (2009:2). According to the NSNP guide (2009:3) this programme aims to:

- contribute to improving the learning capacity

- promote self supporting school food gardens and other production initiatives
- promote healthy lifestyles among learners.

The rationale behind National School Nutrition Programme is to provide meals to needy learners. Food provided at school is intended to give energy for mental and physical activities, for the body and brain to function and to make learners alert and receptive during lessons. Furthermore, the Minister of Education declared the implementation of the ‘No Fee’ schools policy which was implemented in an effort to cater for schools serving poorer communities with greater number of deserving learners (Fiscal and Financial Commission, 2007: 11-12). In addition to the endeavour, the Norms and Standards for Schools Funding (NSSF) followed a similar provision by the South African Schools Act (SASA) (No. 84 of 1996) which allows parent of learners from poor households to apply for exemption from paying school fees (Maile 2008: 170).

The South African government proposed the extension of the Child Support Grant to children up to 18 years (Thabo Mbeki opening speech, 2008). These are some of the government’s programmes that are meant to relieve the negative impact that poverty has on learning. Recognising the poverty challenge, Kiviet (2010) in the Eastern Cape State of the Nation Address said: “We realise that the abject poverty faced by a significant portion of our learners often militates against effective learning”. Preece (2006:152) further argues that if schooling is not provided free of charge, the poor are unable to attend.

2.3.2 Psychological effects

Poverty often drastically affects children’s success in school. As a result of poverty, there is a considerable level of truancy amongst impoverished secondary school learners, concentration in the classroom is impeded, they experience low self-esteem and lack of self confidence, and there is an increase in the school dropout rates. Current literature has identified several learning difficulties that plague poor children, including a greater likelihood of learning disabilities and low test scores (Missouri Kids Count Data Book Online, 2004). It has been pointed out earlier that impoverished learners frequently drop out from school. Considerable attention has been given to explanations for school dropout, and a number of reasons for early school leaving have been found (Ekstein & Wolpin, 1999; Tanner, Krahn & Hartnagel, 1995;

Roderick, 1993). Among these are lower school ability and/or motivation, and signs of disengagement from school. Further, those youths who are permanently making the transition to adult roles, through work or through parenting are also likely to leave school early. On the whole poverty and remoteness combined with poor instructional conditions usually result in poor learners repeating the grades; it is such repetition that sometimes leads to these learners dropping school (Ekstein & Wolpin, 1999; Tanner *et al.*, Roderick: 1993).

2.4 SCHOOL MANAGEMENT MEASURES TO DEAL WITH POVERTY

Fullan Michael (2001) has, in his book (Leading in a culture of change), offered a series of strategies to reshape the culture and context of leadership but has not targeted the principals of schools with high poverty rates. Extensive literature has unearthed a number of school managerial measures to deal with poverty in an effort to improve education for the poor. It is on the basis of these findings that this study aims to develop measures that are designed to assist school managers in dealing specifically with challenges facing impoverished learners in rural secondary schools.

From what the researcher has experienced, quite a number of rural secondary school principals in the Eastern Cape have been subjected to fierce criticism based on their incapacity to manage and produce good matric results. This study strives to embark on a detailed investigation of school management measures to deal with poverty-related problems in the Mount Fletcher district in the Eastern Cape. In the previous section, indications point that poverty does have an impact on the learners' academic progress.

Good leadership is not innate (Fullan, 2001). The main leadership challenges facing principals today are organisational. Leaders must be able to explicate expectations regarding the norms of teaching and learning for all members of the learning community while building organisational systems to support them and maintaining a professional climate that encourages practitioners to continue to learn. Leadership today requires the ability to mobilise constituents to do important but difficult work under conditions of constant change, overload, and fragmentation. This requires ongoing professional development opportunities to help principals update their leadership knowledge and skills on a continuing basis.

The study by Fullan (2001) lends support that rural principals are concerned about the leadership needed for school improvement. The study states that these principals need more professional development in order to meet the new expectations of their role. From the investigation, it became clear that a large proportion of the principals perceived themselves as lacking the skills to build the collaborative learning organisation that is so critical to successful school improvement. Clearly, principals need to be provided with quality professional development if schools are going to successfully serve every student. What is not so clear is the best way to deliver the professional development (Gold, 2000 in Fullan, 2001). Recent research on professional development programs for rural principals suggest that technology may be a potential solution for providing professional development to administrators in geographically isolated schools, but questions remain about the effectiveness of this type of training (Arnold, Newman, Gaddy, & Dean, 2005).

The true impact of poverty on the provision of education is evident from the following synopsis of learner, teacher, parent, and environmental conditions that a principal of a highly impoverished school typically confronts (Kamper, 2008:2).

A considerable number of learners from poor homes have unique educational needs, such as lacking language proficiency and parental support. They engage in a process of frequently changing of schools. These learners are also confronted with barriers such as funding, isolation and bad neighbourhoods. Parents on the other hand are mostly illiterate, unemployed and sick. Teachers are mostly beginners, are often under-qualified, have low self-esteem, low work motivation and low learner expectations, show lack of respect for learners and their parents, practice “drill and kill teaching”(“poverty pedagogies”), often work in rundown classrooms; and have to cope without proper tuition resources (Cole-Henderson, 2000:86; Haberman, 1999:3-5;11; Acker-Hocevar & Touchton, 2000c:335-341 as referred to by Kamper (2008:2). Some principals, however, overcome these barriers to success through effective leadership. It is evident that there are measures that principals need to take in order to deal with challenges concerning the impoverished learners. To be more pragmatic, the leadership challenges can best be phrased as questions:

“What leadership styles could the principal of an extremely poor secondary school implement to achieve effective teaching and learning?, What structures (learners, parents,

community) could this leader implement to establish the relationships necessary for unimpeded teaching and learning?''.

In order to deal with challenges that face the impoverished learners at school, affected principals have to follow certain leadership styles. According to Preece (2006) these are: Invitational leadership (Stoll & Fink 1996 in Kamper, 2008: 3-4) and Collaborative leadership (Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour, 2002 in Horst 2007).

Challenges facing impoverished learners are unique and therefore require a manager who is willing to invite all interested parties to be actively involved for positive results. Stoll & Fink 1996 in Kamper (2008: 3-4) came up with what they termed as *invitational leadership* which was discovered to be more appropriate for studying school leadership in high poverty contexts. Subsequently the invitational leadership model was developed (*ibid.*:4). This model uses the metaphor of invitation to describe positive self-concept and positive inclinations towards others. Invitations, therefore, are messages communicated to people which inform them that they are able, responsible and worthwhile'' (*ibid.*:4). In the case of the impoverished secondary learners this means that they be listened to, their learning efforts be acknowledged and credit be awarded whenever it is due. The four basic premises of invitational leadership are optimism (constituted in the belief that people have untapped potential for growth and development); respect (manifested in courtesy and caring) trust (the cornerstone of "civil society within a school"); and intentional care (intentional provision of growth opportunities) (*ibid.*:4). Any principal who can employ these basic premises (*optimism, respect, trust and intentional care*) of invitational leadership will be able to deal with challenges facing impoverished learners, and consequently teaching and learning can yield progress. Kamper (2008:4) postulates that invitational school leadership theory therefore appears to constitute the ideal conceptual framework for studying the role of school leadership in dealing with the impact of poverty on learning (*ibid.*:4).

Invitational leadership welcomes the sharing of ideas and suggestions on how to improve the school (The teacher, 2011:14).

According to Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour, (2002) as referred to by Horst and Martin (2007); *Collaborative Leadership* is another leadership style that could be used by principals of

impoverished secondary schools. The collaborative spirit in which teams develop could bring about positive relationships amongst members of the staff, parents and learners. Through this collaboration the principal could build teaching and learning teams that would yield positive results and beat the effects of poverty among learners. Using collaborative leadership, the principal could easily inculcate positive relationships in and outside school premises. Collaborative leadership enhances relationships because stakeholders are afforded an opportunity to work together, to understand each other and to embrace one another's achievement or challenges. These relationships could then turn out to be a magnet that will attract both learners and parents to school. A visionary principal would also realise that schools have an opportunity to help students and their families; he/she will form collaborative relationships with public and private agencies that could provide family support services. These relationships may include partnerships with public health and human services agencies, local businesses, higher education systems, youth serving organisations, and religious, civic, and other community-based organisations (Barrera & Warner, 2006:73).

Managerial measures to deal with poverty at school do not only require certain leadership styles, but these styles (invitational and collaborative leadership) need to be augmented with certain leadership qualities. It is in the interest of this study to explore some of these qualities in an effort to assist the principals of the schools in high poverty areas.

Findings from an empirical investigation by Kamper (2008) discovered that schools in rural areas and townships in South Africa have unique poverty-related challenges that require specific leadership qualities. From this investigation it was established that there are specific leadership qualities needed to ensure effective teaching and learning in schools located in high poverty areas. These qualities include: *compassion, commitment and support (ibid.:11)*. In elaboration, principals are expected to show compassion for the poor and passion for advancement of the poor through quality education. Compassion involves identification with the survival struggle of the poor, respect for human dignity, and personal interest in the individual learner. Related to compassion is absolute commitment to the task at hand *en route* to educational excellence. The principal should model the commitment through self-discipline, punctuality, neatness, energy, visibility everywhere and teaching himself/herself. The ideal school leadership style requires essentially a supportive role player namely, the principal as a facilitator of learning (*ibid.:11-12*).

It would be helpful for the impoverished learners, their parents and the community if the principal would show a strong sense of ownership and taking pride in the school. The impoverished learners in rural and poor communities need a principal with passion for advancement of the poor, who strongly believes in the poor learners' potential to excel personally and academically. Miller and MacIntosh, (1999) postulate that poor children who achieve academically tend to have high self-regard, are independent and have a positive view of their backgrounds.

From case studies conducted, Kamper (2008) has consolidated a profile of the requirements for effective leadership in (South) African schools with high poverty rates. For the benefit of this study, the profile will form a vital part in providing managerial measures to deal with impoverished learners in these schools.

Following is a summary of an ideal profile of a principal catering to an extremely poor community. The qualities will be discussed under two headings, *personal profile* and *capability profile* (Kamper, 2008:14-15).

The personal profile

According to Kamper (2008) the successful principal of a school in a very poor area has a strong social conscience and is passionate about the advancement of the poor, shows respect for the human dignity of the poor, is knowledgeable about the poverty situation and poverty alleviation measures in South Africa, and identifies fully with the survival struggle of the poor. He/she adheres to a 'can do' ethos and believes strongly in the potential and capabilities of each learner, whatever his/her home background, to excel academically, as well as in the potential of the school to provide high quality teaching, and in his or her own capabilities of leading the school to sustained success.

He/she will strive to avoid all forms of labelling and views every learner as an asset to the school, will also accept no compromise regarding high expectations, learner achievement goals and standards of excellence. He/she believes that every learner, teacher and parent deserves to have growth opportunities and accepts that the school is essentially a learning organisation where everybody, from the principal to the illiterate parent, has ongoing

opportunities to learn. He/she shows commitment to empowering teachers to engage in excellent teaching, learners to achieve optimal success, and parents to participate as much as they can; will be willing to accept the school's role as a support, care and advancement centre for the community. He/she also has a firm conviction that school success depends very strongly on teamwork and collaboration, trusts others with decision-making; models an invitational disposition, commitment, hard work, punctuality, accountability, neat personal appearance, and effective classroom teaching. He/she is strong and articulate in religious belief, is innovative and courageous in tackling seemingly insurmountable problems; and is energetic and radiates enthusiasm and bravery for the tasks at hand.

The capability profile

Regarding the capability profile, Kamper (2008) states the following: the principal of a school with impoverished learners must in particular be a person who is able to think and act like a visionary with a strong foresight regarding the future of his institution. He should be capable of inculcating an inviting school environment; furthermore, this principal should tirelessly acquire what the school needs for effective care-giving and quality tuition by opportunistically exploring every possible source and by establishing a support network for the school.

The same principal must be capable of inspiring teachers both as educators and in their roles as counsellors and caregivers to learners under their control. He/she must be able to establish a culture of teacher leadership through delegate decision-making and allow teachers to be innovative and even take risks where necessary. In close consultation with the teachers, he must be able to monitor learner progress meticulously, constructively and individually. He/she must prioritise creation of a sense of family in the school. The principal should be capable of overcoming feelings of desolation and self-pity in the event of a lack of support from, or even smothering measures on the part of provincial and district education authorities (*ibid.*:15).

In conclusion, it is crucial that the school principal and his/her staff understand that poverty should not become an excuse for them to expect less from the impoverished learners. These learners should come to them with numerous issues and challenges that interfere with their

learning. The principal and the staff should focus on their learning, find ways to help them overcome these challenges and gain the most they can from their education. It is the same education that is likely to be the only chance to break the poverty cycle and enable escape. It should be known that, just because they are poor does not necessarily mean that they cannot succeed; actually, it is one of the best reasons for them to succeed.

The sole responsibility of a principal who heads a school with impoverished learners is to provide them with an effective education that will foster awareness, respect, and acceptance. Educators also need to work to foster resilience in learners, focusing on traits, coping skills, and supports that help learners survive in a challenging environment (Kamper, 2008).

The Eastern Cape Department of Education has established social support services through the initiated Care and Support of Teaching and Learning programme (CSTL). The programme has been piloted in about 400 schools especially in the public schools in rural and the informal settlements. This programme aims at enabling and protecting access to education for children in greatest need (DoE Eastern Cape, 2010). This programme has culminated in turning schools into community development centres, especially in the rural areas where there is poor infrastructure.

There are several reasons why schools are suitable to be used as community centres especially in poor rural areas:

- Schools are potentially a conduit, not just to the children who attend the school, but also to their families and the communities in which they live. The provision of services at school helps foster positive links between school and the surrounding community and helps to promote a community that supports and values the school.
- Schools are permanent institutions which can help to sustain operations of organisational structures and support services in the long term. Moreover, schools have human resources which can provide, or facilitate access to services.
- Schools have infrastructure, often superior to that found in the surrounding area, which can be used to facilitate access to services.
- Schools are often centrally located within the community they serve and, particularly in rural areas, are often the most well-known and accessible government building.

- Schools can provide children with a safe environment, the emotional support and supervision of adults and the opportunity to learn how to interact with other children and develop social networks.

Many care and support services and programmes are already implemented at schools, for example the school nutrition programme, and it makes sense to facilitate access to various services in one location (DoEEC ESSS, 2010 in 2010 ECDoE EMIS).

2.5 SUMMARY

In summary of this chapter, the following can be stated: Poverty has been defined as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. Its attributes can be captured in a myriad of images ranging from malnutrition, lack of education, inadequate shelter, vulnerability and an absence of voice and powerlessness in society. The effects that it imposes on learners are immeasurable. Poverty has always been the source of grave learning deficiencies that need to be addressed in formal education. As a result of poverty, learners from poor communities have been negatively affected with regard to learning. The chapter has highlighted socio-economic and psychological effects of poverty on learning. Socio-economic effects of poverty on learning can be identified when an impoverished learner's family background becomes unfavourable for learning, for example, lack of study space, inadequate or poor lighting facilities, overcrowding and noise. Literature on poverty has disclosed that families and society who neglect to invest in the education and development of less fortunate children reap adverse results. It has also been uncovered that poor families are susceptible to what is termed as poverty trap, which means the persistence of poverty. It is this poverty trap that finally affects the learner, resulting in him/her losing hope in improving his/her own future. Because of the social effects of poverty, certain behavioural patterns associated with socio-economic backgrounds could be observed among school-going youth; these include lack of respect, smoking, substance abuse, and vulgar language use.

In rural areas and other poor South African communities, adults are faced with poverty-related illnesses such as HIV/AIDS. These adult illnesses may be taking a toll on the education of their children. As a result of their parent's illness, the children's school

performance declines and their own emotional distress also interfere with the academic progress.

The conditions these impoverished learners live in and their day-to-day life experiences can have a significant effect on their education and achievement. Unemployed parents from the rural areas, who are forced to continuously move from one area to another with their children looking for employment, are negatively affecting their children's education. The unpleasant mobility, combined with other issues, has an impact on emotional, social and cognitive development.

Poverty also has a psychological effect. There is a considerable level of truancy amongst impoverished secondary school learners, concentration in the classroom is impeded, low self-esteem, lack of self confidence and the increase on school drop-out incidences are evident. Current literature has identified several learning difficulties that plague children who live in poverty, including more likelihood of learning disabilities and low test scores. As it has been alluded to earlier, impoverished learners frequently drop out from school. Considerable attention has been given to explanations for school drop-out, and a number of reasons for early school leaving have been found. Among these are lower school ability and/or motivation, and signs of disengagement from school. Further, those youths who are permanently making the transition to adult roles, through work or through parenting are also likely to leave school early.

In an effort to live up to the poverty-related challenges faced by secondary learners, there are leadership styles and leadership qualities that principals of the impoverished schools could employ, namely, invitational and collaborative leadership. A principal with certain leadership qualities will be able to manage well in these schools. Such qualities include respect for the human dignity of the poor, the ability to create a sense of family in the school, the capability to act as a role model and having the interests of the impoverished learners at heart. Finally, for him/her, the whole idea is to educate these learners beyond their poverty and give them the intellectual and social skills needed to succeed in life.

This chapter has focused on the literature review of poverty, its effects on learning and managerial measures principals could employ in dealing with impoverished learners in their

schools. The managerial measures discussed above have been general, based on the investigations made by a number of researchers. For this research, an empirical study is considered necessary to focus specifically on some targeted schools in the Eastern Cape, and in the Mount Fletcher district in particular. Through personal observation it became clear that there are managerial strategies and personality traits that can have a great impact on assisting impoverished learners to 'beat the odds' and become as academically successful as those learners who come from affluent households. Only through this intended investigation can these personality traits, strategies and measures be identified for use by principals of highly impoverished schools in Mount Fletcher.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter two the literature review provided a theoretical foundation on managerial measures that could be employed by principals of secondary schools with indigent learners. This chapter intends to bring about the context in which and purpose for which the collection of data will take place. The chapter therefore provides an account of how the qualitative investigation was designed and conducted. It also covers the method of investigation that includes data-gathering techniques and the design of the research.

The chapter also provides the research design in which the procedure for conducting the study is explained. The research design includes the statement of subjectivity, selection of informants, transcription of data, analysis of data, reliability and validity of the study and ethical measures considered during the research proceedings. The role of the researcher will also be detailed in this chapter in order to clarify ethical research proceedings.

The information was gathered in order to actualise the objectives of the research and to determine the perceptions of participants on the challenges that face the impoverished learners. It is imperative to establish the meaning attached by the participants to the effects of poverty on the process of learning. The information gathering included individual interviews with principals of the school under investigation, and interviews with Life Orientation teachers and parents.

3.2 RATIONALE FOR EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The researcher has been teaching in one of the selected schools and is also resident in the same community as the impoverished learners. The rationale for choosing empirical research is that data was collected using various data collection methods and such data was augmented with both observation by and experience of the researcher.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design refers to the plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer research questions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006:22). The design describes the procedures for conducting the study, including when, from whom, and under what conditions the data will be obtained. In other words, design indicates how the research is set up, what happens to the subjects and what methods of data collection are used. The purpose of a design is to provide the most valid, accurate answers possible to research questions. Bogdan & Biklen in Du Plessis (2005:148) also add that design refers to the researcher's plan on how to proceed in the research.

This research is qualitative in nature and was conducted in a natural setting. This implies that there was no manipulation of variables, simulation or extremely imposed structure on the situation. The research was intended to begin with a planning phase (Hoberg, 1999:77) in which general research questions, the kind of the site and types of participants needed were identified in accordance with McMillan and Schumacher (2006:322-323). For this particular study the researcher decided to conduct one-on-one interviews with principals, Life orientation teachers and focus groups for parents. These interviews were conducted in order to capture their perspectives of how to deal with problems of impoverished learners at school. Questions were semi-structured and open-ended to provide the participants with every opportunity to describe and explain what is most salient to them. Verbatim words and phrases from the interviewees were then analysed and used as data to illustrate findings.

For this study a qualitative approach was suitable as it would provide the necessary information to achieve the objectives of the research, namely, to investigate managerial strategies that principals could use in dealing with problems of the impoverished secondary school learners in the Mount Fletcher district of the Eastern Cape Province.

A qualitative approach was selected as suitable because the purpose of the study was to determine the perceptions of participants on applicable managerial measures in dealing with impoverished secondary learners. Mothata (2000:136) describes qualitative research as a research technique used to collect and present data in the form of words rather than numbers. According to Bazeley (2007:2), qualitative methods are chosen in situations where a detailed

understanding of a process or experience is wanted, where more information is needed to determine the exact nature of the issue being investigated, or where the only information available is in non-numeric form.

Hoberg (1999:76) postulates that qualitative research is based on naturalistic inquiry where researchers use multi-method strategies to gather data. Qualitative researchers focus on individuals' social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions. In this approach data are collected through interacting with research participants in their natural settings such as schools and there is no manipulation of variables, simulation or externally imposed structures in the situation.

The use of interviews in qualitative research is usually characterised by three features of ethnographic interviews (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997:40). These, as applied to this study, are the following:

- Interviews are conducted with individuals and small groups of people to capture participants' perceptive of impoverished secondary learners and their problems.
- Semi-structured and open-ended interviews are used to provide participants with opportunities to describe and explain the most salient issues affecting the impoverished secondary learners.
- Verbatim words and phrases from the interviews are analysed and used as data to illustrate the findings.

According to Denscombe (2003:267), qualitative research is an umbrella term that covers a variety of styles of social research. It is any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of quantification. It may refer to research about peoples' lives, stories, behaviour and organisational functioning, social movements or interaction and relationships.

3.3.1 The role of the researcher

In any study, it is important to explain the role of the researcher for clarity and role identification purposes. The researcher is expected to ask for permission to conduct interviews on the identified sites, in this instance, from the departmental officials and school

principals. In qualitative research, the researcher is directly involved in the setting, interacts with people, and is the “instrument” (De Vos *et al.*, 2002:359). In this research, the researcher talked to the principals, Life Orientation teachers and parents in schools, observed, read documents together with written records and began to record this information in field notes or journals. Walliman (2001:96) states that the researcher is interested in how the subjects of the research talk about their experiences and views rather than imposing views from outside. The researcher, therefore, is expected to have the research skills that enable the research process to produce reliable and valid information. Patton, in Du Plessis (2005:154) supports this statement by maintaining that validity in qualitative methods hinges to a great extent on the skills, competence and the rigour of the person doing the field work.

It is the duty of the qualitative researcher to establish a good relationship with the participants so that they feel free to communicate their experiences. In addition, Goddard and Melville (2001:49) point out that the researcher must remember that the subjects are individual human beings, and should treat them with appropriate respect. The qualitative researcher should strive to build a relationship of reciprocal trust and rapport with the subjects. The quality of data therefore depends on this rapport in so far as it increases the likelihood of participants sharing authentic knowledge of their life world. According to Walliman (2001:241), the researcher should avoid leading questions, excessive guidance and other factors which may cause distortion. The researcher collaborates with the participants in a professional manner in order to acquire the required information.

According to Hoberg (1999:83), the researcher is a curious learner who comes to learn from and with the research participants. The researcher is not expected to go to the field as an expert or a figure of authority. In the case of this research, the researcher should be confident, and actively interact with participants in different ways to solicit information about the principal’s role in managing impoverished learners in the school. The researcher is also expected to develop an interview guide with topics that will facilitate discussion with the participants. McMillan & Schumacher (1997:447) recommend that the interview guide topics should be selected ahead of time but that the researcher decides on the sequence and wording of questions during the actual interviews.

3.3.2 Statement of subjectivity

Qualitative research should respond to concerns that the natural subjectivity of the researcher will shape the research (Marshall & Rossman, 1995: 145). The researcher is mindful of the fact that he/she should gain some understanding and empathy for the research participants in order to gain entry into their world. The success of qualitative research depends on the willingness of the participants to participate. Thus, the researcher endeavoured to gain the trust and confidence of the participants. In addition, Glense and Peshkin in Mazibuko (2003: 46) say trust should be developed before people are willing to release certain kinds of information. The researcher was able to find rapport with all participants before and during the interviews. During the interview process, the researcher gave participants freedom to express their views without fear of any kind of judgment. The opinions of the participants were respected and trusted. Guiding questions put to participants were only meant to elicit elaboration on a piece of information. Any kind of personal influence from the side of researcher was avoided at all costs. The researcher stated that she also understood the difficulties the Life Orientation teachers were going through as she also was once in their situation for three years in one of the selected schools. Finally, the researcher's intention to respect confidentiality and anonymity was emphasised.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODS

3.4.1 Selection of participants

Qualitative research uses small samples of people nested in their context and studied in depth (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:401). Hoberg (1999:58) agrees that in qualitative research, a small, distinct group of participants should be investigated to enable the researcher to understand the problem in depth, as is the case with this study. For purposes of this study, judgment sampling was applied in selecting the informants. Judgment sampling involves a deliberate choice of informants on the basis of specific qualities which endow them with special knowledge that the researcher values. For purposes of this study, Life Orientation teachers were specifically selected because of the specific work that they do with learners which includes among other things looking after the wellbeing of learners. As McMillan and Schumacher (1993:413) postulate, the researcher may select a participant on the basis of age,

position in an organisation, or some other characteristic. In the case of this research, the principal was selected because of his/her position in the institution.

Two senior secondary schools were selected because of their rural nature, type of learners (mostly impoverished secondary school learners) and proximity to the researcher's place (cf.1.6.1). One of the reasons for selecting these schools is that both of them draw their learners from the same community but offer different academic streams. One of these schools produces reasonably good matric results and the other one does not perform well. Furthermore, both these schools have been rated as quintile 2 schools which means they have been declared as 'no fee' schools by the Eastern Cape Department of Education. The researcher selected the principal, Life Orientation teacher and a few parents from each of the two schools identified. The participants were selected on the basis of a set of criteria outlined below:

Principals must

- have been the principal at the school for more than a year
- be willing and capable to provide valuable information for the research to proceed.

Life Orientation teacher must

- have been in the school for a year or more
- provide learner guidance
- be willing to participate to the interviews.

Parents must

- reside in the school vicinity
- have or recently had a child as a learner in the school
- show interest in the school as a community centre.

Participants as selected above can also be labelled as key informants. Key informants are individuals who possess special knowledge, status or communication skills and are always willing to share that knowledge and skills with the researcher.

3.4.2 Data collection strategies

Data collection strategies are selected taking into consideration the focus of the research and desired timeframe of the study. The researcher identified individual interviewees and focus group interviews for the purpose of this study. Goddard and Melville (2001:49) postulate that the advantages of interviews are that the researcher can ask the participants to clarify unclear answers and can follow up on interesting answers. According to Hoberg (1999:77), data collection and analysis are interactive research processes that occur in overlapping phases.

The phases are as follows:

- Phase 1: Planning

The researcher describes the kind of setting or site and the kind of interviewees or documents that would seem logically to yield information about the problem. In this phase the researcher locates and gains permission to use the site, a network of persons or an archive of documents.

- Phase 2: Beginning data collection

The researcher establishes rapport, trust and reciprocal relations with the individual and groups to be observed. The researcher obtains data primarily to become oriented to the field and to gain a sense of totality of the setting for purposeful sampling. In this phase the qualitative researcher organises a way to develop codes and retrieve collected data for analysis that takes place in phase five.

- Phase 3: Basic data collection

The researcher begins to hear, see and read what is going on rather than to just listen, look around or scan documents.

- Phase 4: Closing data collection

The researcher gives more attention to possible interpretations and verification of the emergent findings with key informants, the remaining interviews, or documents. The researcher senses that further data collection will not yield any more data relevant to the problem.

- Phase 5: Completion

The researcher starts with formal data analysis and construction of meaningful ways to present data. The researcher reconstructs initial diagrams, time charts, network diagrams, frequency lists, processes figures and other information to gain a holistic sense of the totality and the relationship of parts to the whole.

3.4.2.1 Interview schedule

According to De Vos *et al.* (2002:302) a questionnaire written to guide interviews is called an interview schedule or guide. This provides the researcher with a set of predetermined questions that might be used as an appropriate instrument to engage the participant and designate the narrative terrain. De Vos *et al.* (2002:302) further emphasise that providing a schedule beforehand forces the researcher to think explicitly about what he/she intends the interview to cover. It forces the researcher to think of difficulties that might be encountered, e.g. in terms of question wording or sensitive areas.

McMillan and Schumacher (1997:447) further argue that, in the interview guide, topics are selected in advance but the researcher decides on the sequence and wording of the questions during the interview.

After much contemplation and with reference to the research aims and objectives (see section 1.4), the researcher drew up an interview guide that would assist in reaching the intended conclusions of the study. The main themes in the interview guide were the management role of the principal in dealing with challenges facing the impoverished secondary school learners,

possible strategies to be employed by the principal and the teachers, especially the Life Orientation teachers, in assisting impoverished learners and lastly, the role, contribution and involvement of parents in the scenario. The interview guide is provided as an appendix (see Appendix D). To cater for the focus group, i.e. parents, an open-ended questionnaire was also prepared (see Appendix E).

3.4.2.2 Individual interviews with the principals

Hoberg (1999:79) identifies three types of specialised applications of interview strategies, namely key informant interviews, elite interviews and career and life history interviews. For this study, the researcher chose the key informant interviews mentioned above with the principals of the selected schools. Key informant interviews are in-depth interviews of individuals who have special knowledge, status or communication skills and are willing to share that knowledge with the researcher (*ibid.:79*). In the interest of this study, the researcher conducted individual interviews with the two secondary school principals as the key informants and as people who are most knowledgeable regarding the managerial matters in the school.

Both participants and the researcher agreed on the date, time and venue for the interviews. They both agreed to be interviewed in their own offices on the arranged date and time. From the outset informants were informed about the following:

- The purpose of the research
- The presence and purpose of the scribe (colleague of the researcher)
- The confidentiality of the information given
- That the interview would be recorded and video-taped
- The use of language suitable to the informant
- The procedure to be followed during the interview

Hoberg (1999: 78) asserts that qualitative interviews may take several forms, such as informal conversational interviews, the interview guide approach and standardised open-ended interviews. The researcher used the interview guide approach in which topics were selected in advance, but during the interview the researcher alternatively sequenced questions

and wording in a more conversational manner. This strategy was opted for because the researcher wished to obtain people's perceptions of activities, roles, feelings, motivations, concerns and thoughts about possible managerial strategies that could be put in place to deal with problems faced by impoverished secondary learners at school. Hoberg (1999:78-79) further argues that selection of the interview strategy depends on the following context and purpose:

- To obtain future expectations or anticipated experiences
- To obtain the present perception of activities, roles, feelings, motivation, concerns and thoughts
- To verify and extend information obtained from other sources
- To verify or extend hunches and ideas developed by the participants or interviewer.

The interview technique has advantages because of its flexibility and adaptability (Walliman 2001:240), but it also has disadvantages. Interviews also have the potential for bias, subjectivity, high costs and time consumption. Depending on the training and expertise of the interviewer, the participant may sometimes be uncomfortable during the interview and unwilling to reveal true feelings. In a bid to overcome these negative aspects, the researcher should strive to be perceived as a natural medium through which information is exchanged.

Interviews were recorded with the principals using the traditional tape-recorder. One principal did not honour the first appointment and suggested that the interview be conducted with the deputy principal. The researcher did accept to conduct the interview with the deputy principal. The deputy principal was able to respond to all questions which were initially meant for the principal. This information was regarded valuable by the researcher as the participant formed part of the management team. The information gathered from the deputy principal did not form part of the major findings of the study; instead it became part of the general understanding about the school for the researcher. The researcher further appealed for another appointment with the same principal and was successful. Prepared questions were used only as a guide as the interviews were mostly flowing naturally and not as pre-planned. These interviews were later transcribed.

3.4.2.3 Individual interviews with the Life Orientation teachers

Life Orientation teachers were individually interviewed as they work closely with learners academically and their social well-being. The interview guide was used but it was evident that Life Orientation teachers were so emotionally attached to their work or to learners that they could get carried away in narrative responses. The participants were very cooperative and the interviews proceeded very well.

3.4.2.4 Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews are used to elicit data from a group of people on a specific topic or theme, (Denscombe, 2003:169). Focus groups are generally regarded as a useful way of exploring attitudes on non-sensitive, controversial topics. They can elicit contributions from interviewees who might otherwise be reluctant to contribute and, through their relatively informal interchanges; focus groups can lead to insights that might not otherwise have come to light through the one-to-one conventional interviews (*ibid.*). Open-ended questionnaires allow respondents to write a free response in their own terms, to explain and qualify their responses and avoid limitations of pre-set categories of response.

Schumacher (1997: 433) regards the focus group interview as a strategy for obtaining a better understanding of a problem or an assessment of a problem. This type of interview can concern a new product or idea by consulting a purposefully sampled group of people rather than each person individually.

The researcher, with the help of the principal, identified a group of six parents from one school and eight from another who participated in the interviews. The interviews were conducted with a group of parents who were attending regular parent meetings. The groups of parents selected were those who had shown interest in the school as a community centre, those who resided in the immediate community, and /or recently had one or more children as a learner in the school. The principals explained the purpose of the interview to the groups. The researcher also gave an explanation of the purpose and the procedures to be followed at the beginning of the interviews where there would be a questionnaire to be answered by each of the parents. Parents were allowed to discuss questions amongst themselves, but

encouraged to give their honest individual responses. The researcher distributed an open-ended questionnaire to the groups of parents to work on for 30 minutes. For this type of study the less structured open-ended questionnaire was used. According to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000), when a site-specific case study is required, then qualitative, less structured, word-based and open-ended questionnaires are appropriate as they can capture the specificity of a particular situation. The questionnaire had an English and IsiXhosa version for those who could not read English (Appendices E & F). Most parents asked for the one written in their home language (IsiXhosa). This semi-structured, open-ended questionnaire was subdivided into section A and B. Section A consisted of questions seeking the general information about the schools' contribution to the lives of both learners and parents. In this section parents' views about the school were elicited. The responses were to be rated from agree to strongly disagree. In section B respondents were to provide information and general opinions about the school and the management. This was a free response and comment section which provided an opportunity for respondents to add any additional information (Salazar, 2007). Further clarifications were made by the researcher on some of the questions during the session. Some parents could not read and write but did understand the questions and were willing to respond. They were helped by other parents to write their responses and the researcher continued to clarify whenever possible.

The main function of this questionnaire was to allow those parents who might otherwise be unable to actively participate during the group interviewing. The questionnaire would provide them with an opportunity to elaborate on some issues that might not be covered by the researcher's interview guide. This exercise would also play a vital role during the verification stage as the responses from the questionnaire would be compared with the recorded responses from the interview guide.

The researcher is familiar with the language used in the community and has since taught in one of the selected schools as an HOD for fourteen years. The researcher therefore understands the dynamics and politics of the community in which these schools are situated. As a result, the participants were able to freely discuss issues with the researcher lucidly without any language barrier.

After completion of the questionnaires the researcher collected all the questionnaires from the respondents. The researcher began to use the interview guide prepared for parents to further ask questions in order to steer the interviews with parents and also get a sense of what they thought of their school. The questions were verbally asked and parents were expected to answer randomly without following any particular order. Some parents were not comfortable knowing they would be tape-recorded as requested by the researcher. At some stages the researcher had to disconnect the tape-recorder to facilitate the participants' contribution. Only field notes were taken during this time.

According to Williman (2001:238), face-to-face interviews can be carried out in a variety of situations – at home, at work, outdoors or while travelling. The interviewer is in a good position to be able to judge the quality of the responses of the subjects, to notice if the question has not been properly understood and to reassure and encourage the respondent to be sincere in his/her responses.

The interviews for this study were conducted at school in the classroom in one school and in the school hall in another. Use of field notes had to feature at the time. Not all parents were equally responsive but generally they all cooperated well. According to Mazibuko (2003:44), the researcher should guard against a situation whereby one person dominates the interview by intervening and asking others to voice their opinions. The participants were interchangeably requested to respond whenever possible. Hoberg (1999; 146) warns that group members may ask irrelevant questions, thus requiring the interviewer to keep the discussion focused. Some participant indeed veered from the course of the interview by asking irrelevant questions and in such cases the researcher would steer the discussions towards relevance.

The qualitative data, gathered from interviewing principals, Life Orientation teachers and parents from the selected schools, are particularly powerful in illuminating and communicating key educational insights. Wagner, Kegan, Lahey, Lemons, Garnier, Helsing, Howell and Rasmussen (2006: 134-135) state that seeing the faces and hearing the stories, hopes and opinions of those in education in our community moves us (researchers) emotionally, reminds us of the imperative behind our work and enables us to see the information as living in three dimensions instead of just one. The stories, the faces and the

voices of the participants remain with the researchers with an insistency that numbers can rarely inspire. This has indeed been the experience of this researcher.

3.4.3 Data processing

3.4.3.1 Transcribing the data

Bazeley (2007:44) supports the idea that transcribing involves translating from an oral language, with its own set of rules, to a written language with another set of rules. Transcripts are not copies or representation of some original reality; they are interpretative constructions that are useful tools for given purposes. According to Bazeley (2007:45), there is always the danger that transcribed words may lose some meaning as tone, volume, emotionality and accompanying facial and body gestures and disposition cannot be portrayed.

Having conducted the pre-arranged interviews, the researcher transcribed all tape-recorded interviews verbatim immediately after the interviews had occurred. The transcription was done by the researcher herself in order to retain the form and style of the participants' expressions. The aim in transcribing the data was to be as true to the conversation as possible, yet very pragmatic in dealing with the data. A journal was also kept to record any body language accompanying them during and immediately after the interviews.

Bazeley (2007:45) provides suggestions which could be kept in mind when transcribing the data:

- A full transcript will include all 'ums', 'mmms', repetitions and the like. Repetition communicates something about the thinking or emotion of the interviewee.
- In the same vein, do not correct incomplete sentences or poor grammar: it is important to capture the form and styles of the participant's expression.
- Note events which create interruptions to the flow of the interview, for example, tape off or telephone rings. Note also other things that happen which may influence interpretation of the text.
- Record nonverbal and emotional elements of the conversation, such as (pause), (laughter), (very emotional at this point). Emotional tone and the use of rhetoric are

important to record. For example, something said sarcastically, if simply recorded verbatim, may convey the opposite of the meaning intended.

- If one of the speakers (or interviewer) is providing a non-intrusive affirmation of what another is saying, one option is to record that affirmation simply by placing it in parentheses or square brackets within the flow of text [Int:mmm], rather than beginning a new paragraph and unnecessarily breaking up the text flow.
- Digressions from the topic of the interview are a controversial issue. The decision about whether or not to include that text centres on whether there is any meaning in the digression. Unless there clearly is significance in what was said, it is usually sufficient to skip the detail of that part of the conversation.

The researcher did apply most of the above-mentioned measures especially during the individual interviews with the Life Orientation teachers and the group interviews with parents.

3.4.3.2 Analysis and interpretation of the data

Data analysis is a process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data (De Vos *et al.* (2002:340-341). Qualitative data is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data. McMillan and Schumacher (1993:480) explain qualitative analysis as a process of interim discovery analysis, developing coding topics and categories that may initially come from the data or are predetermined, and pattern seeking for plausible explanations. According to Hoberg (1999:131), the researcher initially reads the transcripts and the notes repeatedly in order to gain familiarity with them. Marshall and Rossman (1995:113) add that reading, reading and reading once more through the data forces the researcher to become familiar with those data in intimate ways.

The researcher listened to all recordings of the interviews, at the same time confirming the accuracy of the transcriptions. Responses from the semi-structured, open-ended questionnaire was collated and compared with responses from the interview. There were many similarities noted.

The researcher further searched through the data for regularities, patterns and topics in the data and wrote words and phrases to represent these topics and patterns. Data was then divided into manageable topics or categories. The emergent patterns or categories were colour-coded. The emphasis on emic categories in data collection was preferred. Emic categories are explanations of what the phenomenon means to the participants (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993:493)

3.5 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

McMillan and Schumacher (2006: 324) describe validity of qualitative designs as the degree to which the interpretations and concepts have mutual meaning for the participants and the researcher; the researcher and the participants should agree on the descriptions and meanings of different events. Shimahara in Mazibuko (2003:44) maintains that validity and reliability of the research are crucial in all social research regardless of disciplines and methods employed. Collected data must be accurate, authentic and representative of reality. Regardless of the form research takes or the end to which it is directed, researchers want research to be valid, (Wiersma in Mazibuko (2003:45). Davies and Mosdell (2006:27) refer to the concept of internal validity. They state that internal validity means making sure that findings are as reliable as they can be by eliminating all possible sources of error in the way the study is designed. In an effort to increase the internal validity of the study, the researcher used the following strategies:

- The researcher revisited the schools for comparison and corroboration in order to refine ideas and to ensure the match between the research-based categories and the participants' reality. The researcher attended the parents' meeting in one of the selected schools (school A). These meetings are scheduled for each school term; this was the meeting for the second term. Although not all participants were present at the meeting, three parents were able to verify their responses as they were made available to them. The same corroboration was done regarding both the principal and the Life Orientation teacher.
- The language used in the interviews was familiar to the participants which increased common understanding.

- Interviews were conducted and observations made in the natural setting of the schools to accurately reflect the reality of life experiences.
- The researcher guarded against subjectivity by keeping a memo that would alert her during data analysis. During and immediately after the interview, the researcher scribbled notes which included emotions, gestures, levels of emphasis and any kind of sensitivity displayed by participants.

Marshall and Rossman (1995) assert that using a combination of data type increases validity as the strengths of one approach can compensate for the weakness of another approach. Bearing this in mind, the researcher opted for the use of multiple data types. The researcher collected data through tape recordings and also jotted down notes as participants responded. In one of the interviews, the researcher was fortunate that a colleague agreed to do the jotting down of notes as she did the interviewing and recording. Combination of the types of data ensured reliability and validity of the information collected. The researcher deems it important to discuss the reliability and validity of the research in order for it to qualify as scholarly research. Reliability in qualitative research refers to the consistency of the researcher's interactive style, data recording, data analysis and interpretation of participant meanings from the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993: 181).

In addition, Denscombe (2003:273) maintains that the criterion of reliability is whether the research instruments are neutral in their effect, and would measure the same result when used in other instances. In this study the researcher herself was an integral part of the research instrument. In pursuit of reliability, the researcher provided an explicit account of the aim of the research and its basic premise, how the research was undertaken, and the reasoning behind key decisions made in relation to aspects such as sampling (selection of informants). With this information, it is believed that there is a high possibility that another researcher would come up with the similar findings. Denscombe (2003: 273) further states that measures to enhance reliability involve a complete description of the research process, so that an independent researcher may replicate the same procedure in comparable settings. This includes a delineation of the physical, cultural and social contexts of the study, a statement of the researcher's role in the research setting, an accurate description of the conceptual framework of the research and a complete description of the methods of data collection and analysis.

The researcher gained considerable knowledge of data collection and analysis strategies in order to ensure the validity of the research. As suggested by McMillan and Schumacher (1993:386), the researcher used a range of techniques in a single study to corroborate findings for reliability, including the use of mechanically sophisticated methods of recording, transcribing and analysing. After the parents gave responses to the distributed questionnaires, these were collected and all 13 of them were returned. McMillan and Schumacher (1997:404-406) maintain that qualitative researchers commonly use a combination of strategies to enhance reliability in data collection. Thus, the researcher used a combination of strategies to ensure that data were reliable. These strategies included verbatim accounts of conversations, transcripts and direct quotations which were used as data, mechanically recorded data using a tape-recorder, and low-inference descriptions such as concrete, precise descriptions from field notes and interview elaborations. The researcher also requested the participants' reviews of a synthesis of the data obtained from them. The participants were asked to modify any misrepresentation of meanings derived from the interview data.

3.6 ETHICAL MEASURES

In any kind of research there are ethical guidelines which have to be adhered to. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993:397) these guidelines include informed consent, avoiding deception, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, avoiding harm to subjects, and respecting privacy. In compliance with the said guidelines, the researcher requested permission to conduct her research from the District Director and after this was granted the same was done with the school principals (Appendices A and B). In the request, the purpose and process of the study was clearly explained. Each participant was provided with a consent form, (Appendix C) in which the participants were assured of the safeguarding of their confidentiality and anonymity, as well as the intended use of data for research purposes. The researcher gave participants the guarantee that all recorded data would be permanently destroyed after at least three years after the investigation. They were also assured that after the data analysis, they would be afforded access for verification.

3.7 SUMMARY

This chapter deals with research methodology and provides information about how the research was conducted. The chapter covers the use of a qualitative approach to research, and it describes the methods used to obtain and analyse research data with adherence to requirements of validity, reliability and ethics.

In the next chapter the focus is on the practical conducting of the interviews, the interpretation of the data, and the presentation of the results and findings.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the data gathered during individual interviews with two principals of the selected schools, individual interviews with Life Orientation teachers from each school and group interviews with parents who have shown interest in the two schools respectively. There is also an expert opinion from an exclusive interview with Professor Jonathan Jansen, Vice Chancellor of the University of Free State. The data are presented and discussed according to the research aims (see 1.4). The main research aim is to investigate managerial strategies that could be used in dealing with problems of the impoverished secondary school learners in the Mount Fletcher district in Eastern Cape, in view of problems experienced by them. The research aim stimulated topics in the interview guides which prompted participants to discuss strategies that educational managers can use in dealing with the school-related impact of the problems experienced by the impoverished secondary learners and to explore different experiences of educational managers in managing the problems of in their schools.

The biographical data characteristics together with experiences of the participants are firstly discussed in this chapter. It should be noted also that these discussions will not, in anyway compromise the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity guaranteed to the participants during the interview process.

The chapter explains the processes that were followed during the research activities. These processes included the following: how the research schools and research participants were selected, the rationale for such a selection, the type of the interview guides that were used, and general ethical procedures followed during these processes. Data collected are analysed and interpreted. Findings are presented through discussions categorised into the following themes: effects of poverty on learning, school management measures to deal with poverty related challenges; and the positive impact of schooling on impoverished rural communities.

4.2 RESEARCH PROCESS

Two secondary schools were selected (see 1.6.1) for this study. These schools were selected because of their rural type of learners (mostly impoverished secondary school learners) and proximity to the researcher's domicile. Another reason for selecting these schools was that both of them draw their learners from the same community of lower socio-economic families. Parents here are doing odd jobs, others are unemployed. Some families are child-headed due to migrant labour and also as a result of sick and dying parents. Most community members here are uneducated and are still afraid to access the school for any assistance unless summoned for their learners' misdemeanours. One of these schools is known to produce reasonably good matric results and the other one does not perform well. Furthermore, both these schools have been rated as Quintile 2 schools which means they have been declared as 'no fee' schools by the Eastern Cape Department of Education.

Firstly, the researcher sought permission to conduct research from the District Director, which was given (see Appendix A). Secondly, the researcher selected the principal, Life Orientation teacher and a few parents from each of the two schools. The participants were selected on the basis of a set of criteria outlined below (see 3.4.1):

Principals must

- have been the principal at the school for more than a year
- be willing and capable of providing valuable information for the research to proceed.

Life Orientation teacher must

- have been in the school for a year or more
- provide learner guidance
- be willing to participate to the interviews

Parents must

- reside near the school vicinity
- have or recently had a child as a learner in the school
- show interest in the school as a community centre

There was a challenge in securing an appointment with the principal from school B; the available head was the Deputy Principal who was willing to assist. After repeated efforts, the principal was interviewed. Initially the researcher targeted eight parent participants per school to constitute a focus group but only a maximum number of six could be achieved from school A and only five from school B.

There were two interview tools used for this study, namely; an interview schedule and an open-ended questionnaire. Firstly, an open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix E) which was prepared in English had to be translated into isiXhosa (see Appendix F) which is the indigenous language for all the members of the community. This type of a questionnaire was preferred by the researcher as it would allow parents to elaborate on all three themes that have emerged from the study, namely; effects of poverty on learning, school management measures to deal with poverty related challenges; and the positive impact of schooling on impoverished rural communities. In response to the semi-structured questions in the questionnaire, parents interacted with each other in a group. The main function for this questionnaire was to allow those parents, who might otherwise be unable, to actively participate during the group interviewing. The questionnaire provided them with an opportunity to elaborate on some issues that might not be covered by the researcher's interview guide.

Secondly, in order to steer the interviews with parents and also get a sense of what they thought of their school, an interview guide was used by the researcher (see Annexure D). After collation, findings were that the parent's responses to the questionnaires and those from the interview guide did correspond and were somewhat similar. From this comparison there were indications of respondents' honesty.

In their responses, parents from school A indicated high involvement in the school activities. In contrast to this, parents from school B replies indicated dissatisfaction, especially complaints that they were not so much involved in some of the decision-making processes at the school. The questionnaire made it easier for the researcher to collect a large amount of information within a short period. Working with parents as a focus group was challenging because one had to refocus the discussions now and again as parents would easily fall into the trap of discussing other school related issues. Consequently the interviews went very well.

Table 4.1 Participating schools

Schools	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B
Location	Rural	Rural
School hall	Available	Not available
Enrolment	580	280
Number of parents employed at the school	04	05
Frequency of SGB meetings	Once a month	Once a quarter
Frequency of parents meetings	Quarterly	Quarterly
Register for parents visits	Available	Not available

Table 2.1 indicates that both schools draw their learners from a rural setting.

More parents have been employed at school B, reasons being that there are a number of practical subjects done at this school. These subjects are Consumer Studies and Agricultural Science. There is a difference in the frequency in which SGB meetings are held. Meetings are held monthly in school A and quarterly in school B. Another clear difference is the availability and control of the parents' visit registers in school A and none in school B. From these registers the researcher could deduce whether parents do attend school meetings or not. The attendance register for parents is an important tool that the researcher used to measure the involvement of parents in the school's decision-making processes. It also assisted the researcher to see whether parents do have interest in the school or not. From such registers, the researcher was able to find out the various reasons for their visit at school. From this kind of information indications were that most parents visited the school because they were called either by the principal or the SMT member.

4.3 DATA ANALYSIS

4.3.1 Biographical data

4.3.1.1 The school principals

The researcher found it relevant to tabulate biographical information about the two principals who were participants in this study. This information is necessary in order to understand the background of the participants in relation to their responses. Such detailed information is portrayed in Table 2.2.

Table 4.2: Principal data

PRINCIPALS	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B
Age	45	49
Gender	Female	Female
Academic qualifications	B Ed	BA
Professional qualifications	HED	HED
Number of years of experience as a principal	05	08
Training as an instructional leader	Yes	Yes
Training in management and governance	Yes	Yes

Table 4.2 indicates that both principals are well qualified. They have more than three years of experience as principals. They have attended essential training such as in instructional leadership and management and governance. Most of this training was offered as in-service training by the Department of Education at the Provincial training centres.

4.3.1.2 The Life Orientation Teachers

The researcher deemed it necessary to tabulate the biographical information of the Life Orientation teachers as they form part of a vital research field that is detailed in chapter 3 (see 3.4.2.3). The information is displayed in Table 4.3 below:

Table 4.3 Life Orientation teacher data

LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHER	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B
Age	38	47
Gender	Female	Female
Academic qualifications	BA	Matric
Professional qualifications	HDE	STD
No. of years teaching LO/ Guidance teacher	05	05
Attended formal training for LO	Yes	Yes
LO teacher who forms part of the SMT	No	Yes

4.3.1.3 Parents as focus groups

The researcher interviewed eleven parents subdivided into focus groups A and B representing each school respectively. The biographical information for these parents is tabulated in Tables 4.4 and 4.5.

Table 4.4 Parent data - School A

PARENTS	1	2	3	4	5	6
Age	54	40	61	63	50	46
Gender	M	F	F	M	F	F
Child as learner presently/past	Presently	Presently	Past	Past	Past	Presently
Attended school	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Employed	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Employed at school	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Member of SGB	No	No	Was	Yes	Yes	No
Attends all parents meetings	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

The focus group in school A consisted of two males and four females with ages ranging between 40 to 63 years. Although some of these parents no more have children at the school, they continue to show interest in the school. Amongst these parents there was a former member of the SGB. Two were parents who formed part of the existing SGB. As shown in the table, 50% of parents were employed by the school and another 50% were unemployed. The employed parents were only fortunate to be employed at the school, although a minimum wage was sometimes not enough to meet their family needs including schooling for their children. Two of these parents were employed as a cooks and the other as a caretaker.

Table 4.5 Parent data - School B

PARENTS	1	2	3	4	5
Age	34	41	50	36	61
Gender	F	F	F	F	M
Child as learner presently/past	Presently	Presently	Presently	Presently	Presently
Attended school	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Employed	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Employed at school	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes

Member of SGB	No	No	No	Yes	No
Attends all parents meetings	No	No	No	Yes	Yes

The focus group in school B consisted of one male and four females with ages ranging between 34 to 61 years. All of them have children or a sibling enrolled at the school. One male parent is a chairperson of the existing SGB. Most would be counted as unemployed if the school did not offer to employ them. The school employed two of the parents as cooks and the other as a caretaker at the school.

4.3.2 Analysis procedure: interview data

The researcher carefully read through all the transcripts to get a sense of the whole. ‘Carefully’ means to read and re-read the transcripts and listen and listen again and again to the tape recording of the interviews in order to formulate reality from them (Brown 2004:104).

From the readings, the researcher identified ‘units of information’ that served as the basis for defining or representing categories. A ‘unit of information’ refers to a sentence or paragraph that has the following two characteristics: (a) is aimed at the understanding that the researcher needs to have, (b) is the smallest piece of information about something that can stand by itself (Brown 2004: 104).

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:461), qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organising the data into categories and identifying patterns among the categories. In this study the data was managed manually using predetermined categories. The researcher coded all units identified and placed them into major categories which were later grouped as themes. Three major themes emerged from the interviews, namely the effects of poverty on learning, school management measures to deal with poverty related challenges and the positive impact of schooling on the impoverished rural communities.

4.4 DATA INTERPRETATION

The transcripts of the interviews were read very closely by the researcher. Three major themes emerged from the interviews, namely the effects of poverty on learning, school management measures to deal with poverty-related challenges and the positive impact of schooling on the impoverished rural communities. The following table (Table 2.6) indicates the themes and the related categories. The themes are subsequently discussed in the sequence as indicated in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Themes, categories and respondents

MAJOR THEME		CATEGORY	
1.	The effects of poverty on learning	1.1	Social effects
		1.2.	Psychological effects
2.	School management measures to deal with poverty related challenges	2.1	Time management
		2.2.	Parent involvement
		2.3	Invitational and collaborative leadership
		2.4	Compatible management strategies
		2.5	Networking and visibility
		2.6	Academic competition
		2.7	Strong personality
3.	Positive impact of schooling on impoverished rural communities	3.1	School as a community centre
		3.2	Community upliftment

4.4.1 Effects of poverty on learning

In most cases, secondary learners affected by poverty display particular learning barriers (see 2.3). The barriers include fatigue, hunger, and irritability which lead to shorter concentration spans amongst the impoverished learners. These learners often experience learning disabilities, feelings of insecurity, de-motivation and further show signs of disengagement from school. This emotional distress has a tendency to interfere with the learners' academic progress (May & Hunter, 2002). Irregular school attendance, school-related costs such as proper uniform, poor language proficiency and falling pregnant also present barriers to

learning affecting the impoverished secondary learners. Theron and Dunn (2006) argue that teenage childbearing may be associated with a syndrome of failure – failure to remain in school, since teen motherhood is disruptive when it comes to school attendance.

From the interviews with Life Orientation teachers and the principals of the selected schools A and B, it became clear that some of these learning barriers are a direct consequence of poverty faced by the secondary school learners in the rural schools.

After the interviews had been conducted, coding was done in order to categorise these into socio-economic and psychological effects.

4.4.1.1 Social effects

- (a) The principal from school A has observed that some of the learners here come to school without having had breakfast. These learners, she argued, would show signs of drowsiness, late arrival, lack of concentration and unwillingness to cooperate with the teacher.

She stressed that some of their learners come from child-headed families and therefore are unable to cope with the academic demands of the school and teachers. Another serious problem is the high rate of pregnancy amongst teenage girls. Most of the teen mothers do not attend classes regularly. Their academic performance is usually below average resulting in very few succeeding in their matric (final school examinations). The principal of school A commented as follows:

“I would say the success rate is not very high because they seem to lose the motivation. With the baby around they can’t really cope. They really can’t get down to study, so, you find out that the success rate is low because most of them are not really ready for the school work or examinations.”

“The time they fall pregnant, they have to miss some classes. For some time when they come back it will be a lot for them to deal with, it is quite

involving to be a mother and at the same time, go to school. It is quite a big challenge.”

The principal explained that these girls sometimes become pregnant deliberately with the intention of accessing the Government Social Grant which they claim, assists them in having their hair done and acquiring other related luxuries. They also engage in dating older men whom they refer to as ‘sugar daddies’, who function as their temporary financial providers. According to the principal, these misdemeanours expose them to becoming victims of social ills; they subsequently drop school before finishing the secondary phase (see 2.3.1).

“What is bad is that their parents do not attend school meetings. They do not come even for disciplinary meetings when summoned.”

- (b) The Life Orientation teacher from school A said that most learners are living without parents; as a result they do not perform well academically. Their parents have gone to the big cities looking for employment. They are expected to take up social responsibilities including looking after the welfare of their siblings.

“Some of the learners who come from the child-headed families miss quality school time when they sometimes are forced to mix schooling with work”.

An example here is the case of two siblings who take turns to go to work and to school. One of them is doing grade 10 and the other grade 12. They are temporarily working at the local Spar Supermarket interchangeably to make ends meet, she explained.

- (c) The focus group of parents from school A cooperated very well. Those who agreed to participate in the study positively responded to questions. They highlighted that some learners at times do not fully inform them of what the school requests from them. One parent told the group how she was told not to respond to the school letter inviting her to school, only to discover later that the invitation was due to her

child's misconduct. Unemployment was the major cause of their impoverishment. Parents are sometimes forced to ask their children to assist in providing for the family. In trying to assist their parents, these learners lose focus at school and finally lose interest and drop out. Some parents complain that after boys have undergone circumcision rite of passage, they have to take up the adult responsibilities and drop out of school. Some of the demands such as school tours put financial burdens on the unemployed parents. As a result parents encourage learners to take up part-time jobs to meet such demands. Learners who pass grade 12 in the community and do not find employment discourage some parents who claim that letting your child finish school is a waste of time these days.

- (d) The principal from school B explained that some of their learners are orphans, they are parents themselves.

“On the Social Grant day these young parents do not attend school, instead they will join the queue for their children's Social Grant.”

On the other hand, the parentless learners are unable to access social grants as they do not possess the required green identity document, she explained. For these learners school life is very challenging and demanding. They easily lose focus and see schooling as an impediment to their employment efforts and finally drop out. An example of a grade 12 girl learner who lost both parents and stays with her grandmother. She does not possess an ID and is expected to register to write NSC examinations.

Most of parents here are illiterate and poor; they are unable to assist their children with schoolwork. Learners who come from poor homes have a problem with language, i.e. English as it is used as the Language of Teaching and Learning.

- (e) The Life Orientation teacher from school B responded by explaining that the impoverished learners lack basic necessities such as proper clothing (see 2.3.1). They sometimes commit crime in search of food and luxuries.

“Girls have a tendency of cohabitante with older working men for financial security and acceptance.”

The unemployment scourge has forced most parents to leave these learners alone to go to big cities such as Johannesburg and Cape Town. The language barrier is one of the challenges faced by our learners especially when they are expected to express themselves in public.

- (f) The focus group for parents from school B indicated a weak interest in school related issues when asked to identify challenges that affect their children at school.

Their involvement in the school matters revolved around issues of discipline. A parent displayed a concern at the vulnerability of their young girls being so attached to some male teachers who sometimes seem to provide them with money. From the findings above, there seems to be an information gap between parents and the school. Some parents have little interest in what is happening at school. They lack information such as the pregnancy policy that would assist them deal with their learners when faced with such a case. From the responses, the poor parents are unaware of the contribution they could offer to make up for the dues they cannot pay.

- (g) Discussion

Responding to the interview questions, the participants shared with the researcher a number of problems experienced by impoverished learners in their schools. These problems include late arrival, poor concentration and focus in class, language barriers, poor academic performance, lack of school necessities such as proper school clothing, malnutrition, pregnancy and early parenthood, criminal activities and lack of support from unemployed parents. The participants’ responses confirmed that learners faced with poverty challenges do not do very well academically. It is also clear that these learners are a challenge to the teachers. Teachers that have such learners often wish that these be removed from their classroom (Kamper, 2008:4).

He further states that many of these learners ultimately remove themselves as they drop through the cracks in the education system. These high school dropouts cause in an increase of crime levels in our communities because they end up losing their sense of purpose. Ekstein & Wolpin (1999) and Tanner *et al.* (1993) further concur by mentioning that those youths who are permanently making the transition to adult roles, through work or through parenting, are also likely to leave school early. This finding therefore calls for managerial intervention that would create an acceptable climate for these learners to cope at school.

4.4.1.2 Psychological effects

- (a) The principal from school A said learners who are psychologically affected most at their school are those who carry the burden of becoming orphans and have to fend for themselves. One case of a child who was reported by his former school (junior feeder school) is an orphan who was unable to cope with school work and seriously required a psychological intervention, which this school provided from March to August 2011.

“His school attendance and academic performance have shown improvement since the intervention.”

- (b) The Life Orientation teacher from school A disclosed that learners are highly sensitive to classroom topics that would in any way expose their vulnerability.

“Most of these impoverished learners have fallen victims of rape, physical and emotional abuse by those who claim to be providers.”

- (c) The focus group of parents from school A explained that parents whose children have been motivated by achieving good results show a high sense of appreciation. They see the school as contributing to poverty alleviation because some of the parents are employed by the school. Learners associate schooling with attaining better jobs in future. Parents have confidence that the school will assist their children to achieve their goals.

- (d) The principal from school B said that there is a high level of substance abuse (e.g. dagga smoking) especially by boys. With further investigation, the school has discovered that these boys have poor family backgrounds.

“They have a tendency of substituting hunger with dagga and some became addicts. Some are smoking to suppress the personal problems they have and feel the society is ostracizing them, they smoke because they are seeking acceptance.”

“The girls are becoming pregnant early because they lack sense of belonging and seek comfort, especially those who have lost parents and are now poor.”

The principal made it clear that the challenge is that orphans or needy learners constantly hide their status from teachers and the other people who might assist. For example, a grade 12 girl stopped coming to school because she was provided food by the teachers of the Consumer Studies class. It seemed to be too embarrassing for her. Another problem among these learners is false identification, i.e. a learner disowning his/her parents' background to associate himself or herself with a better-off family (see 2.3.1).

- (e) The Life Orientation teacher of school B explained that migrant labour has resulted in children losing the natural parent-child bond which is necessary for the emotional attachment and stability in a child. The teacher revealed that their learners stay alone while parents seek employment in the cities. She further testified that girls tend to replace that missing bond by forming bonds with other parents and corrupt male teachers who abuse them. This abuse, according to the Life Orientation teacher, affects their academic progress and they lack self-confidence. These learners end up less motivated and display low self esteem. For such learners, dropping out of school becomes the only option.

(f) Parents who formed part of the focus group for parents from school B indicated that they are overwhelmed by fear when they have to go to school, either per invitation or to share problems they have regarding their children at school. Most parents underestimate their capabilities in assisting their children with homework. Parents sometimes refuse invitations to visit the school thinking that they would be asked for the dues that they are unable to pay.

(g) Discussion

Lack of employment opportunities in the rural communities has shown to have far-reaching effects on impoverished learners. Children are left alone to run homes as their parents leave to seek jobs in the cities. These learners become victims of emotional abuse, lacking self-esteem and continually searching for social acceptance. Girl learners tend to replace the lack by forming bonds with other parents and corrupt male teachers who abuse them. This abuse affects their academic progress and they lack self-confidence. These learners end up unmotivated and display low self-esteem. For such learners, dropping out of school becomes the only option. Most parents also lack self confidence when they are expected to assist their children with school work. Since their education level is far less than their children's, they feel intimidated by school work that is brought home by the children.

4.4.2 School management measures to deal with poverty related challenges

(a) The principal from school A shared with the researcher the following management strategies crafted and implemented at school:

- Awareness on the importance of time management. This was done at the parents meetings by the SMT members for both parents and learners.
- A policy on late arrival at school was crafted by the SMT and the SGB. The policy is meant to curb late arrival by learners.
- The RCLs (representative council for learners) are fully engaged in putting measures in place concerning late coming

“Their duty includes learners who continually arrive late at school, if such an act continually occurs for three days and more in a week, the culprit is sent to the SMT for further investigation and intervention. Intervention further involves the culprit’s parents, Life Orientation teacher and the SGB.”

According to the principal, this policy has worked wonderfully to reduce late arrival at the school.

“In an attempt to address poor parent attendance in school meetings, we have a clause in the school policy that says there should be 30 days notice for a general parents meeting, a week before parents are expected to sign reminders sent to them through learners. Attendance registers are also signed on the day of the meeting.”

A follow-up meeting is said to be arranged for all parents who failed to attend the first one. Presently most parents do attend the parents meeting in their numbers to avoid being invited for the follow up meeting. The researcher has attended one of these meetings on the 26th of July 2011. Attendance was excellent.

To assist the unemployed parents, the school has employed four parents from the community. These parents are employed at the school to do the following: cleaning, catering, gardening and others are serving caretakers. Their involvement in the school has promoted ownership among members of the community as well.

Touching on the aspect of personality traits required by the principal of a secondary school in an impoverished community, the principal of school A had this to say:

“In order to be able to deal with the challenges that impoverished learners face, one has to be a good listener. She/he has to establish a working relationship with these learners by having a class and work directly with them”.

According to the principal, good communication skills and flexibility will enhance the relationship that has been established.

“Make an effort to know the family backgrounds of these learners, this will assist.”

The principal was happy to divulge the information that they have developed a questionnaire (School Leadership Programme) which helps the management to get to know these learners better, and this in turn, will assist in more efficiency in working with them. This questionnaire assists learners to choose their personal mentor and tutor leader from the staff members. The questionnaire, the principal explained, also assists in inculcating honesty and other life values. A copy of this school leadership questionnaire could be accessed on request from the school.

“As these learners will come to you as the principal to seek advice or assistance, try to create an element of trust by endorsing confidentiality. Show some kind of empathy when necessary,” she said.

The principal believes in instilling confidence in learners by making them compete with learners who are enrolled in the former model C-school in the district.

“Our school has produced good results over the past three years; we have been able to get between 80 and 100% grade 12 results. This has made us to be amongst the top three best schools in the district, the preceding two schools being the former model Cs”.

This kind of achievement has managed to build academic confidence amongst the learners, parents and the community at large.

The principal told the researcher that early in 2010 a pregnant grade 12 learner came to the principal for advice as she was contemplating abortion because she came from a poor background.

“I asked her if she has ever thought that the child she wishes to abort could be the president of a country one day. The learner began to think about alternatives to abortion. The same learner has managed to pass well and received a scholarship and is pursuing a degree as a Social Worker.”

High teacher involvement in learner welfare issues is prioritised at school A. There is a welfare committee which deals directly with learners whose academic performance is affected by the family’s socio-economic situation. The principal is a member of such a committee and the Life Orientation teacher acts as coordinator. This committee also assists in giving referrals to our sister departments whenever possible.

Because these learners come from poor family backgrounds, the school organises bursaries for all excellent performing learners to help them with financing their further education so as to be able to break the poverty cycle in their homes, (copy of the application letter is available at school). Many learners in the community have benefited from this effort; one is already working as a Social Worker in Maclear. She continues to organise bursaries for other learners as well and constantly visits the school for motivation and mentorship.

Some parents do come to school for advice with poverty-related issues, and helping them shows good results because they gain confidence and begin to see school as a community asset, the principal explained. As far as the principal is concerned, high parental involvement helps the school and its organisation to grow.

- (b) The Life Orientation teacher from school A is in possession of a record of learners’ reports about themselves, their challenges, and bad experiences. This is done for reference and intervention procedure.

“It is important to organise motivational talks from motivational speakers and sister departments. These talks have opened doors of communication between the learners and teachers, especially the Life Orientation teachers. From these talks our learners ask a lot of questions and the

responses they receive often assist them in dealing with their social and psychological problems. They also find it easy to ask questions from people coming from outside than they would with their teachers.”

In order to have control of learner challenges, the school has established a learner welfare committee which constitutes a parent member, the president of the LRC, the principal, teacher coordinator for pastoral care and the Life Orientation teacher as a coordinator. This committee meets once a month to discuss challenges faced by learners in relation to their welfare, facilitates referrals, organises relevant talks, and creates space for special reports by learners in need and other learner related matters. As the coordinator of the learner welfare committee, the Life Orientation teacher works closely with the School Management Team on matters relating to learner challenges. She also seeks cooperation with the Education and Social Support Services section in the District Department of Education. At school, all Life Orientation teachers are aware of the manner in which they are expected to handle learners facing challenges that affect their learning progress. Teachers in other subjects are also requested to make observations and bring forward the challenges faced by the learners.

Some learners’ challenges call for home visits by the Life Orientation teacher or any other relevant staff member. The Life Orientation teacher from school A told the researcher about a learner who had to choose between parents, a difficult situation that affected her concentration and focus at school. This was one of the learner challenges that called for a home visit by the teacher.

“It takes a special personality to be a Life Orientation teacher. One must be able to understand and move from the learner’s world during times of need.”

According to the Life Orientation teacher from school A, one must be a good listener who treasures confidentiality and honesty. She/he must be able to portray an image that will have a positive influence. She/he should be able to laugh, cry and have fun with them. To those who seek attention, she/he should openly say that

she/he loves them, but also be brutal when telling the truth about the wrongs the learners might have done.

“When learners tell lies to get your attention, as a Life Orientation teacher, you must exercise patience until they tell the truth which will lead to their assistance”.

The Life Orientation teacher has to provide counselling whenever possible to these learners. It is important that the Life Orientation teacher exercises consistency, display positive values and reliability.

- (c) The focus group for parents from school A shared that most parents appreciate their involvement in the school affairs. They feel that they are a valuable asset to the school. They give their full support to the SMT and they support the learners and the bigger community. Some parents assist the SMT by reporting learners who sometimes bunk school and hang about. Most local parents have accommodated the grade 12 learners who are expected to attend a number of extra classes including evening classes. These parents always work closely with the SMT and the Life Orientation teachers in addressing challenges faced by the impoverished learners.
- (d) The principal from school B said that working together with the police has helped them to deal with substance abuse at the school. The school’s secure fence has also improved control over learners; they are kept at school most of the time. Parents and SGB members also play an important part in disciplining the misbehaving learners. Showing a special bond with her learner, the principal shared with the researcher that,

“As a principal, learners rely on your confidentiality and compassion. Teach them to share their problems to avoid loneliness. Try to come down to their level in trying to understand their plight.”

Poor learners who pass grade 12 with good symbols are unable to further their studies due to financial constraints at this school. The principal from school B

recommended that these learners be provided for by the government through the ESSS (Education and Social Support Services).

- (e) The Life orientation teacher from school B told the researcher that her role includes the following,

“The principal should be able to mix an academic with social approach in his/her management style. He/she should understand the type of people in the community he/she is working at. He/she should make an effort to further understand the prevailing circumstances that the impoverished learners are faced with”.

In addition, she emphasised that the principal, together with the Life Orientation teacher should forge relationships with sister departments, namely; the Department of Correctional Services, Department of Health , Department of Home Affairs and Department of Social Development. This endeavour could be achieved if the principal works closely with the Life Orientation teacher.

- (f) Parents forming the focus group for parents from school B appreciate the assistance the school provides especially in organising and hosting government Departments such as the Department of Home Affairs which helps them to access the identity documents required for social grants applications. Their wish is to see the school playing a significant role in the identification of the needy learners and make recommendations to the relevant Departments for help. Parents also appeal to the school to facilitate financial assistance that is required for those impoverished learners who pass with good marks. They also have shown interest to become highly involved in the academic choices including subject choices or academic streams for their children. They appreciate that preference is given to the community members when there are employment vacancies at school.

(g) Discussion

From the responses above it is evident that there are measures that principals need to explore in order to deal with challenges facing the impoverished learners. To be more effective in such schools, the principal should adopt certain leadership styles. The principal of an impoverished secondary school need to adopt an invitational and a collaborative leadership style (Preece,(2006); Stoll & Fink 1996 in Kamper, (2008: 3-4); Eaker , DuFour, & DuFour, 2002 in Horst (2007)). Challenges facing impoverished learners are unique and therefore require a manager who is willing to invite all interested parties to be actively involved for positive results. Stoll & Fink 1996 in Kamper (2008:3-4) coined the term *invitational leadership* which was discovered to be most appropriate for school leadership in extremely poverty contexts.

Using collaborative leadership, the principal could easily inculcate positive relationships in and outside school premises. Collaborative leadership enhances relationships because stakeholders are afforded an opportunity to work together, to understand each other and to embrace one another's achievements or challenges. These relationships could then turn out to be a magnet that will attract both learners and parents to the school. A visionary principal would also realise that schools have an opportunity to help students and their families; he/she will form collaborative relationships with public and private agencies that would provide family support services. These relationships may include partnerships with public health and human services agencies, local businesses, higher education institutions, youth-serving organisations, and religious, civic, and other community-based organisations (Barrera & Warner, 2006:73).

As highlighted by the principal from school A, and the Life Orientation teacher from school B, the principal who can best manage an impoverished school has to possess certain personality traits. These traits include compassion and empathy. Findings from an empirical investigation by Kamper (2008) discovered that schools in rural areas and townships in South Africa have unique poverty-related challenges that need specific leadership qualities. From such an investigation it was established that

there are specific leadership qualities needed to ensure effective teaching and learning in schools serving very poor communities. These qualities include compassion, commitment and support (Kamper, 2008:11). In elaboration, principals are expected to show compassion for the poor and passion for the improvement of their plight through quality education. Compassion involves identification with the survival struggle of the poor, respect for human dignity, and personal interest in the individual learner. Related to compassion is absolute commitment to the task at hand *en route* to educational excellence.

The sole responsibility of a principal who heads a school with impoverished learners is to provide them with an effective education that will foster awareness, respect, and acceptance. According to Life Orientation teacher from school B all teachers in the school should contribute towards making the school a centre of hope for the needy learners. They are expected to identify learners who are faced with poverty-related challenges for prompt action. Educators also need to foster resilience in learners, focusing on traits, coping skills, and support that help learners survive in a challenging environment (Kamper, 2008).

4.4.3 Positive impact of schooling on impoverished rural communities

Focus groups have clearly indicated that schools in their communities are an important facility that could be utilised in an effort to alleviate poverty and bring improvement in the lives of the poor people. What became very distinct from the interviews was that the principals of schools in impoverished communities have a special responsibility, that of creating a strong bond between the school and the poor communities they are serving. For such schools the principal's vision should go beyond school improvement to community improvement. His/her plans should include social responsibility as one of the priorities. This kind of responsibility means inviting and hosting the sister departments such as Social Development, Home Affairs Department, Health Department for public awareness and advocacy on health issues, accessing relevant documents, e.g. identity documents and accessing social grants. Where a school owns a school hall or a less used classroom, the principal should encourage the community members to use it for the gatherings that are

meant for community development and improvement. This gesture could assist in defusing the fears that other uneducated parents have about visiting the school.

More parents will develop a strong sense of ownership and this could naturally lead towards protecting the school. The principal's management strategies should be directed towards turning the school into a beacon of hope for the poor community. It would be advisable for the principal to include the social responsibility item in regular staff meetings. In this item the Life Orientation teacher (as coordinator for learner welfare) will be expected to report on the impoverished learners' challenges, actions taken to address such challenges, and also the progress reports in general.

It is even more valuable when some members of the community are willing to show gratitude after benefiting from attending the school. As the principal from school A explained during the interviews, a former learner who has succeeded in life also has shown some compassion by ploughing back into the community and the school by arranging motivational talks and educational financial assistance to the needy learners. She has continuously organised scholarships, bursaries, and helped in arranging study loans for best achievers who come from the needy families. She has further assisted school leavers to join internships and volunteering.

The focus group from school A has displayed a high level of appreciation of the school's efforts of constantly striving for academic excellence and maintaining positive working relations with the members of the community. This positive atmosphere has encouraged community members to open their homes to all the grade 12 learners who live further away from the school. They keep them at their homes like they are their own children. At this school these learners are expected to attend afternoon, evening, weekends and holiday classes as if they are in a boarding school. These community members do help a lot in keeping order during these extra classes including monitoring them. This shows how parents appreciate the presence of the school in their community.

4.4.4 Expert opinion

In an (not originally planned) exclusive interview with Professor Jonathan Jansen, Rector and Vice Chancellor for the University of the Free State (Jansen 2011a), the researcher gathered valuable information that gave answers to some of the questions regarding challenges facing principals of poverty-stricken secondary schools in South Africa. The interview was basically meant to seek Prof. Jansen's expert opinion and advice on how these principals could be assisted with strategies that they could adopt in order to deal with challenges facing impoverished learners. Prof Jansen's personal experience of tuition and leadership in poor schools prompted the researcher to request this interview. The interview was even more relevant to the study since Prof Jansen has also written extensively on the subject. From the interview with Prof. Jansen, five distinct themes developed, namely;

- the principal's personality, knowledge, leadership style;
- schools as community centres;
- traditional culture of teaching and learning;
- the effect of political decisions on school leadership;
- the state of education as a de-motivating factor for teachers.

According to Prof Jansen, the challenge of managing impoverished secondary learners and making them achieve in life on an equal scale to those who come from affluent families cannot be under-estimated. In order to achieve this, one needs to have a personality that encompasses compassion and support. The principal should model commitment, discipline, punctuality, neatness and energy. Personal involvement and visibility by the principal plays a big role in entrenching a good relationship amongst teachers, learners and parents. Prof. Jansen also believes that it is important to be allocated a class so as to keep in touch with the learners and other minor events in the school and community.

“Just before you came... I was with the students outside to plant a tree honouring the Arbour Day” ...1st September (2011). I have also requested one of the students to render a graduation speech during the coming graduation ceremony”.

The principal managing a school with impoverished learners should strive towards supporting these learners in many ways, he/she should see them becoming successful people one day; that alone will give them hope and confidence.

The principal should be able to inspire and motivate teachers. In the staff room or meetings the principal should initiate and engage in motivational pep talks. It is important to show support to the teachers at all times, but to be strict where a teacher has not done very well. One should be frank to say:

“...if you keep on doing wrong, do not expect me to support you”.

As some of the impoverished learners are faced with emotional insecurity; it will help if the principal could inspire teachers both as educators and in their roles as councillors and care-givers to learners for whom they are responsible.

Knowledge and competence also play a pivotal role in earning respect, confidence and trust from the teachers, learners and the community. Jansen in Mbeki (2011:107) argues that the majority of public schools in South Africa have a knowledge problem. That is, teachers and principals lack the various kinds of knowledge required in a professional setting like a school in order to influence change. Jansen in Mbeki (2011) asserts that the national and provincial governments in their own budgets plan amply for teacher and leadership training. According to Jansen, training inputs are generous, but they do not address the knowledge problem; typically, such training is geared towards information transfer on a generic basis, rather than according to knowledge needs of teachers. Here different kinds of knowledge are at play: knowledge of the subject matter (content knowledge); knowledge of teaching (pedagogy); knowledge of learners (psychology); knowledge about knowledge (epistemology); knowledge of communities from which the learners come (anthropology, sociology of learning); knowledge of classroom organisation and discipline (managerial knowledge); and more.(Jansen in Mbeki, 2011:107).

In an attempt to close the knowledge gap, it is advisable that the principal of an impoverished secondary school possesses the capacity to learn. He/she should be prepared to copy good managerial practices from other colleagues and adapt the good strategies to his/her context. A

principal who is feels his/her knowledge is sufficient can become static and his/her vision could also die.

“...mix your vision with what you have learnt from other people”.

“As professionals we have to do research and produce information in order to contribute to the society, assisting them to make correct decisions, without our contribution society might make wrong decisions”.

In order to build trust within the community he/she is serving, the principal of a very poor secondary school has to adopt a specific leadership style, e.g. an invitational leadership style. Parental involvement will be enhanced through this leadership style. Parents should form part of the decision-making body. This will assist in formulating school management policies such as homework policy and others.

“Illiterate parents have a tendency to get intimidated by the school....it is the duty of the principal to draw them closer by making policies that will highly involve them.”

Prof Jansen agrees with the notion that schools should be regarded and used as community centres, but cautions that demands of schools on principals are harsh.

“(If) we add the burden of social programmes, this might compromise the effort meant for the core business, i.e. teaching and learning.”

Concerning this “core business”, he made reference to the statement once made by the former Minister of Education, Professor Kadar Asmal, who recommended that schools could function well if they could be provided with relevant personnel such as nutritionists, social workers and psychologists.

Instilling a culture of teaching and learning is the basis on which the principal of the secondary school providing for very poor learners can build the academic performance of the learners. Jansen, in Mbeki (2011:105-106) postulates that some fail to introduce systematic routines and rituals. These include the following: school starting on time and ending on time;

daily attendance of teachers and the principal at school; class attendance is monitored and reported; homework is issued regularly and on a planned, school-wide basis; regular tests are scheduled and parents informed in advance, feedback on tests and assignments is swift; disciplinary codes are enforced and disciplinary cultures are not questioned; absence from school is a serious matter, and dutifully recorded and explained by the absent learner; errant teachers and learners are promptly confronted about their behaviour, and corrective measures put in place. Awards should feature prominently in the annual school calendar, and the culture of achievement from academic excellence to sports to arts is instilled in every classroom.

Politics and trade unionism have a negative effect on the efficacy of the principals. Many of these principals are unable to take action against errant teachers, such as latecomers or early leavers, for fear of being targeted by the militant teachers' union (Jansen, in Mbeki 2011:110). Concurring with what he has written in his book, Prof. Jansen had this to say during the interview:

“Politics is not the problem; the problem is the lack of relevant knowledge. In most of the South African rural schools principals are chosen by the members of the community, the capacity of which is questionable at times.”

The school should educate people in the poor communities about the importance of making the right choices. It must be emphasised that their choices for a principal should be based on moral convictions not political association, on knowledge not popularity.

As an experienced former principal of a rural school in the Eastern Cape, Prof. Jansen has this to say to all the principals of the poor communities:

“ strive for excellence and high productivity, but also expect some backsliding that might occur on your journey, that is the nature of an organisational change, be firm; have a clear moral code; love people you lead unconditionally and have a deep understanding of the rural people you are working with.”

The poor image of teaching as a profession also poses a challenge in South Africa. Poorly paid teachers are easily de-motivated and find it difficult to nurture the impoverished secondary learners. Poor or inadequate training results in poor knowledge of subject matter and poor pedagogical skills. Principals should not succumb to the ailing education system;

“they should try to focus on their vision that these learners be the ones who would break the cycle of poverty in their homes”

Examples of the teaching profession being held in high esteem do exist, and serve as benchmarks. Unlike in South Africa, Finland’s education system is commendable. According to Frysh (2011: 4) the teaching profession in Finland is regarded as ‘*the most honourable of all professions*’. In that country, it is a tremendous honour to be a teacher, and teachers are afforded a status comparable to that of doctors, lawyers and other highly regarded professionals. In addition, like other professionals, teachers gain seniority and tenure primarily on the basis of training and experience, and teacher unions have a strong voice in shaping education policy. The profession is held in such high regard that competition to acquire teacher training is fierce. All school teachers here must hold a master’s degree in addition to four or five years of undergraduate training to be permanently employed (Frysh, 2011).

Management at many South African impoverished schools needs to be improved. Unfortunately, this might not be achieved in a short term, but on a long term basis all stakeholders in education have to make an effort towards a positive change.

4.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The chapter presented the analysis and interpretation of biographical and interview data. A brief profile of the participants was firstly presented. The data interpretation focused on the effects of poverty on learning, and categorised these as socio-economic and psychological effects. The school management measures to deal with poverty-related challenges were then discussed in detail. The principal of a school with highly impoverished learners is expected to adopt and possess certain leadership styles and specific personality traits which have been dealt with in the chapter. From the parents’ perspective, the chapter discussed the positive

impact that secondary school learning has on the impoverished communities in the rural areas. The chapter concluded with the expert opinion of Professor Jonathan Jansen, in which he emphasised the importance of management through visibility and adopting an invitational leadership style that is enhanced by sound moral values.

To the researcher, conducting the interviews provided a very satisfying experience. There was empathy displayed by each of the participants as they described some of the spiritually touching cases of some of their learners. For example, the sense of pride displayed by one of the teachers when she was highlighting some of the achievements made by their previously impoverished learners through the support by the school was impressive.

Chapter five concludes the research with an overview of this investigation, synthesis of significant findings and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarises and highlights the major findings of this research. Meaningful issues which came to light from the literature review and the empirical evidence are summarised. The research question is restated and answers provided. School leadership and management recommendations are stated, starting with those directed to the national Department of Education up to what has to be done at school and community level. In the closing remarks, the researcher provides personal reflections on the study, and states the importance of the study and the need for further research on the topic. The chapter also presents themes for further research.

5.2 SUMMARY

5.2.1 Literature study findings

After a comprehensive literature survey, the following themes were highlighted: The poverty concept, the scope of poverty and its impact on the provision of education, socio-economic effects of poverty, psychological effects and school management measures to deal with poverty. These are discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

5.2.1.1 The concept of poverty

Based on literature findings, the poverty concept is not easy to define. Due to its complexity, the definition of poverty has been an ongoing debate. In an attempt to understand the concept, some important categories therefore have been discussed. These are: *absolute poverty*, *relative poverty*, *acute poverty* and *ultra poverty*. *Absolute poverty* and *relative poverty* have appeared to be the most relevant for this study (see 2.2.1).

From the literature review, findings revealed that there is also a social aspect of poverty which may include lack of access to information, education, health care, or political power.

Poverty may also be understood as an aspect of unequal social status and inequitable social relationships, experienced as social exclusion, dependency, and diminished capacity to participate, or to develop meaningful connections with other people in society (see 2.2.1.1). People with limited access to income are more likely to have poor health, be more socially isolated, and have fewer opportunities for early childhood development and later education (see 2.2.1). Therefore, a schooling system which does not provide liberation from poverty condemns children to perpetual poverty.

Literature has also revealed that a cycle of poverty is a phenomenon where poor families become trapped in poverty for generations. Because they have no access to critical resources, such as education and financial services, subsequent generations are also impoverished. Poverty reduces educational attainment, which in turn reduces opportunity to escape poverty. This is very clear with families who cannot provide their children with educational necessities such as a school uniform and stationery. In the Eastern Cape, poor rural communities struggle to have access to secondary schooling. The fact is that the poor people are poor not only because they have few assets, but also because they are constrained in their ability to effectively accumulate, protect and utilise the assets that they do have, including the human capital present in the household. Lack of assets such as houses and money contribute towards persistent poverty and create a *poverty trap* from which poor households are unable to escape. In the absence of assets, it is difficult for the household to protect itself against external poverty shocks, which in turn means that children may be forced to leave school as part of a household coping strategy (see 2.2.2).

5.2.1.2 The scope of poverty in South Africa and its impact on the provision of education

Findings from literature have shown that most primary learners do attend school, almost all children in South Africa complete primary schooling, but of mainly Black learners, only a few complete secondary school (see 2.2.3.2).

There are mechanisms in place to exempt under-resourced households from paying school fees. There are over 9000 “no fee schools”, which obtain that particular status by virtue of being in a community falling below a predetermined poverty index (the different quintiles) (see 2.2.3.2).

From the literature it has emerged that there are a number of assumptions about poverty and its effects on people's lives. The first assumption is that poverty in South Africa is structural in nature rather than being caused by individual laziness or lack of agency or self-initiative. Poverty is the result of the unequal distribution of resources, skills and income sources, and is exacerbated in many cases by both gender and spatial dynamics. The second assumption is that social grant income represents the single source of regular income in many poor households. The third assumption is that despite this, poor people in general have not developed a 'dependency' on social grant money, but continue to try to generate income from other sources. It is on the basis of these assumptions that this investigation is pursued (see 2.3.1).

5.2.1.3 Socio-economic effects

Based on literature survey, there are several indicators that most of the impoverished learners are from families that find themselves poverty trapped. *Poverty trap* means the persistence of poverty, when poverty increases instead of decreasing over time. Because of the poverty trap, these learners find it difficult to further their studies and are therefore debarred from joining the employment field because they lack the necessary skills or qualifications. They run the risk of remaining unemployed like their uneducated parents and will find it difficult to actively participate in their society. The result of their predicament will be social exclusion and pervasive poverty. Teachers that have such learners often wish that these be removed from their classrooms. Many of these learners ultimately remove themselves as they drop through the cracks in the education system. These high school dropouts result in an increase of crime levels in our communities because they end up losing their sense of purpose. Findings have suggested that adolescents who come from poor households are more likely to experience school disruption episodes than those from non-poor households (see 2.2.1.).

Another problem among these learners is false identification, i.e. a learner disowning his/her parents' background to associate himself or herself with a better-off family. In the rural secondary schools, learners are often not given an opportunity to learn. For instance, these learners do not have enough learning time, insufficient ameliorative measures for those who lag behind, they receive poor quality teaching because the better qualified teachers avoid these rural schools and settle for schools with better infrastructure (see 2.3.1).

Among the school-age youth from poor communities, certain behavioural patterns associated with socio-economic backgrounds are typical. These include lack of respect, smoking, substance abuse and vulgar language use. Many impoverished learners tend to drop out of school. This is caused by various factors. For children with low resources, the risk factors are similar to those for high juvenile delinquency rates, higher levels of teenage pregnancy, and the economic dependency upon their low income parent or parents (see 2.3.1)

Looking at the poor matric results in our rural secondary schools, one is prompted to investigate causes for such a catastrophe. A general conclusion is that it is caused by socio-economic factors which affect the teaching and learning processes. Of these factors, poverty stands out. Literature has revealed that poverty has always been the source of grave learning deficiencies that need to be addressed in formal education (see 2.3.1).

According to literature findings (see 2.3.1); one of the manifestations of the effect of poverty is irregular school attendance by impoverished secondary learners. In most instances this absenteeism occurs because of health-related problems. Health and education are intertwined and one cannot be considered without the other. Focusing and investing in advanced education programmes may therefore have no significant impact where poverty is rife. A child's home activities, preferences and mannerisms must align with the world and where this is not the case, these students are at a disadvantage in the school and most importantly the classroom.

The literature survey also revealed that parental illness resulting from the effects of HIV/AIDS also has a serious impact on their children's education (see 2.3.1). These learners are sometimes left to be child minders and experience loss of school contact time. Moreover, in rural areas and other poor South African communities, this adult illness may be taking a toll on the education of older children. As a result of their parent's illness, the children's school performance declines and their own emotional distress also interferes with their academic progress.

In an effort to minimise the effects of poverty, the government introduced school nutrition programmes nationally and provincially. The NSNP was introduced in 1994 by the South African government as part of the Reconstruction and Development Programme of the newly

founded democratic Republic of South Africa. Previously the programme covered only learners in primary school (see 2.3.1). In 2008 the Department of Education decided to extend the feeding scheme to include impoverished secondary school learners. This National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) targeted all Quintile 1 secondary schools in all provinces including the Eastern Cape. Globally these nutrition programmes have yielded rich informative and mostly positive data on their impact in the classroom (see 2.3.1).

5.2.1.4 Psychological effects

According to literature, poverty can prevent the genes involved in academic intelligence to express themselves (see 2.3.1). Therefore, it is safe to state that children who live at or below the poverty level will have far less success educationally than children who live above the poverty line. Poor children are mostly deprived of proper healthcare and this ultimately results in many absences during the academic year. Poor children are much more likely to suffer from hunger, fatigue, irritability, headaches, ear infections, flu, and colds. These illnesses could potentially restrict a child's or student's focus and concentration (see 2.3.1).

From the literature review it became clear that extensive attention has been given to explanations for school drop-out amongst the impoverished secondary school learners, and a number of reasons for early school leaving have been identified. Among these are lower school ability and/or motivation, low self confidence, lack of concentration and signs of disengagement from school. Furthermore, those youths who are making the permanent transition to adult roles, through work or through parenting, are also likely to leave school early. On the whole, poverty and remoteness combined with poor instructional conditions usually result in poor learners repeating the grades. This class repetition sometimes leads to these learners dropping out of school (see Table 2.5)

5.2.1.5 School management measures to deal with poverty

According to literature, a considerable number of learners from poor homes have unique educational needs such as language proficiency and parental support (see 2.3.1). They engage in a process of frequently changing of schools. These learners are also confronted with barriers such as funding, isolation and a bad neighbourhood. Their parents are mostly

illiterate, unemployed and in poor health. Teachers in extremely poor schools are often beginners and under-qualified; have low self-esteem, low work motivation and low learner expectations, show lack of respect for learners and their parents, practice “drill and kill teaching” (“poverty pedagogies”), often work in rundown classrooms; and have to cope without proper tuition resources (see 2.4).

In order to deal with challenges that face the impoverished learners at school, principals in schools with a high rate of poverty should ideally have certain leadership styles: preferably invitational leadership and collaborative leadership (see 2.4). Challenges facing impoverished learners are unique and therefore require a leader who is willing to invite all interested parties to be actively involved for positive results. Invitational leadership in particular has been identified as the most appropriate theoretical framework for studying school leadership in high-poverty contexts (see 2.4).

Collaborative leadership is another leadership style that could be used by principals of impoverished secondary schools. The collaborative spirit in which teams develop could bring about positive relationships amongst members of the staff, parents and learners. Through this collaboration the principal could build teaching and learning teams that would yield positive results and overcome the poverty effects among learners. Using collaborative leadership, the principal could effectively inculcate positive relationships in and outside school premises. Collaborative leadership enhances relationships because stakeholders are afforded an opportunity to work together, to understand each other and to embrace one another’s achievements or challenges. This discovery ties up with the literature finding that the principal should be capable of overcoming feelings of desolation and self-pity in the event of a lack of support from, or even smothering measuring on the part of, provincial and district education authorities (see 2.4).

It became evident from the literature survey that schools in rural areas and townships in South Africa have unique poverty-related challenges that need specific leadership qualities. From this investigation it has been concluded that there are specific leadership qualities needed to ensure effective teaching and learning in schools with a high poverty rate. These qualities include compassion, commitment and support (see 2.4).

5.2.2 Empirical findings

The researcher conducted interviews with the principal, Life Orientation teacher and a few parents from each of the two schools under investigation. Data were collected and analysed (see 3.4.3.2). From the empirical findings, it was found that various themes surfaced clearly; these include socio-economic and psychological effects on learning, school management measures to deal with poverty-related challenges, the impact of schooling on impoverished communities, and finally the general findings from the opinions of an expert.

5.2.2.1 Socio-economic effects on learning

From the participants' responses, the discovery was that there are a number of problems experienced by impoverished learners in their schools. These problems include late arrival at school, poor concentration and focus in class, language barriers, poor academic performance, lack of school necessities such as proper school clothing, malnutrition, pregnancy and early parenthood, criminal activities and lack of support from unemployed parents. The participants' responses confirmed the researcher's findings that learners faced with poverty challenges are not doing very well academically (see 4.4.1.1).

It was discerned from the data that uneducated parents are intimidated by the school; they come to school only when summoned by the SMT to attend to their children's misdemeanours. Some parents take little interest in their children's learning (see 4.4.1.1). Findings went on to reveal how the impoverished learners are left on their own by their parents who have migrated to big cities in search of employment. Consequently, these needy learners begin dating older men whom they refer to as 'sugar daddies', who turn out to be their temporary financial providers. These engagements expose them to becoming victims of social ills; they subsequently drop out of school before finishing the secondary phase.

It has also been established that impoverished learners lack basic necessities such as proper clothing. As a result, girls have a tendency of cohabitating with older working men for financial security and acceptance.

Data collected from participants have shown that most parents have gone to the big cities looking for employment. The impoverished learners who found themselves in this situation are expected to take up social responsibilities including looking after the welfare of their siblings (see 4.4.1.1).

Respondents have, more than once, indicated that unemployment was the major cause of their impoverishment. Parents are sometimes forced to ask their children to assist in providing for the family. In trying to assist their parents, these learners lose focus at school and finally lose interest and drop out. Orphans are unable to access social grants as they do not possess the required green identity document. For these learners school life is very challenging and demanding. They easily lose focus and see schooling as an impediment to their employment efforts and finally drop out (see 4.4.1.1).

5.2.2.2 Psychological effects on learning

Respondents have further revealed that impoverished learners have a tendency of substituting food with dagga and some became addicts. Some smoke to suppress the personal problems they have and feel the society is ostracizing them; they smoke because they are seeking acceptance. A substantial number of girls become pregnant early because they lack a sense of belonging and seek comfort, especially those who have lost parents and are now poor. Another problem among these learners is false identification i.e. a learner disowning his/her parents' background to associate himself or herself with a better-off family (see 4.4.1.2).

5.2.2.3 School management measures to deal with poverty related challenges

From interacting with principals, it became clear that the poor attendance of school meetings by parents required some level of management. To encourage attendance, the collected data indicated that parent notices for meetings have brought some solution to non-attendance. Parents sign the notices and acknowledge receipt by a written reply to the school. During the meetings, parents are made to sign attendance registers which are kept as school records for reference. Defaulters are made to attend a follow up meeting, specifically arranged for them. Findings show that parents strive to attend the first meeting to avoid the embarrassment of attending a follow-up meeting.

Collected data reveal that personality plays a significant role in leading schools with impoverished learners. The principal should be a good communicator, show commitment and be compassionate, appreciate high moral values, and have good interpersonal relations. He/she should make an effort to know the learners' family backgrounds and also try to understand the type of community people he/she is working with.

During the investigation, principals appreciated that they have a high teacher involvement in learner welfare issues in their school. In one school a welfare committee was established in order to be directly involved with learners whose academic performance is affected by their family's socio-economic situation and other related academic impediments. The principal is a member of such a committee and the Life Orientation teacher acts as coordinator. This committee also assists in arranging referrals to sister departments such as the Department of Social Development, Home Affairs, Health and others whenever learners and their parents face challenges that need the attention of such departments.

The study revealed that most of these learners come from poor family backgrounds. To rescue these learners, the schools organise bursaries for all excellent performing learners to help them to finance their further education so as to be able to break the poverty cycle in their homes. Many learners in the community have benefited from this effort.

Another major finding revealed that one of the participating Life Orientation teachers was in possession of a record of learners' reports about themselves, their challenges, and bad experiences. These records were kept for the purpose of reference and intervention procedures.

From the data collected from the Life Orientation teachers it was discovered that the impoverished learners need some motivation to relieve them from their emotional distress. It was also established that these teachers regularly organise talks with motivational speakers. In addition they regarded cooperation from the Education and Social Support Services section in the District Department of Education was of utmost importance.

With regard to personality, these teachers revealed that a Life Orientation teacher should be a good listener who treasures confidentiality and honesty. Findings also indicated that portrayal of a positive image would have a positive influence on impoverished learners. It inspires them to be able to laugh, cry and experience joy with learners whenever humanly possible. In addition, it is the fundamental role of the Life Orientation teacher to assist learners in making applications for further study and also help them to prepare for their life after school. To address the hunger problem, data revealed that one school has engaged learners in the gardening project. Having a school vegetable garden has proven to bring relief to most of these impoverished learners and the larger community. The garden is used to produce vegetables that are cooked for the school nutrition programme; the surplus is sold to the community to raise funds for seeds and fertilizers.

One Life Orientation teacher emphatically stressed that the school management should create a positive environment that will make it possible for the impoverished learners to learn with minimal or no difficulties. This requires a principal who is broadminded in his/her management style. The principal should be able to mix an academic with a social approach in his/her management style. He/she should understand the type of people in the community he/she is working in. He/she should make an effort to further understand the prevailing circumstances that the impoverished learners face (see 4.4.2).

From the data interpretation process, it emerged that most parents appreciated their involvement in the school affairs. They felt that they are a valuable asset to the school. They have shown full support to the SMT, to the learners and to the community at large. Some parents have offered to assist the SMT by reporting learners who sometimes bunk school and idle away hours in the streets. Furthermore, most local parents have accommodated the grade 12 learners who are expected to attend a number of classes, including the evening classes, conducted by the school. Parents also appreciate the assistance the school provides, especially in organising and hosting government departments such as the Department of Home Affairs which helps them to access the identity documents required for social grant applications. Their wish is to see the school playing a significant role in the identification of the needy learners and making recommendations to the relevant departments for further assistance. They are pleased that preference is given to the community members when there are employment vacancies at school (see 4.4.2).

Some parents do come to school for advice with poverty-related issues, and helping them delivers good results because they gain confidence and begin to see school as a community asset, one of the principals explained. As far as this principal is concerned, high parental involvement helps the school and its organisation to grow (see 4.4.2). The general feeling of parents whose children were motivated by achieving good results at the school was highly appreciative. They see the school as a contribution to poverty alleviation. Some of these parents are employed by the school. Generally, learners from the community associate schooling with attaining better jobs in future. Parents have confidence that the school will assist their children to achieve their goals (see 4.4.1.2).

5.2.2.4 The impact of schooling on impoverished communities

Findings have clearly indicated that schools are an important facility that could be used to alleviate poverty and improve the lives of the poor people in their communities. It was found that the principals of impoverished schools have a responsibility to create a strong bond between the school and the poor communities they are serving. Only a visionary principal could bring about the envisaged community improvement (see 4.4.3). Findings have shown that it is the responsibility of the principal of a secondary school in a poor area to invite and host sister departments such as Social Development, Home Affairs Department and Health Departments for public awareness and advocacy on health issues and accessing relevant documents, e.g. identity documents and documents for social grants. Where a school owns a school hall or a less used classroom, the principal should encourage the community members to use it for the gatherings that are meant for community development and improvement.

From the findings it became very clear that parents from the impoverished communities will develop a strong sense of ownership and feel protective towards the school. It would be helpful for the principal to include the social responsibility item in the regular staff meetings. In this agenda item the Life Orientation teacher (as coordinator for learner welfare) could report on the impoverished learner challenges, actions taken to address such challenges, and also the progress made.

Most parents of the former learners in the impoverished schools have displayed much gratitude after benefiting from good results and bursaries organised by the school. Some former learners who have succeeded in life decided to plough back into the community and the school by facilitating motivational talks and educational financial assistance to needy learners.

From the empirical findings it was evident that most parents displayed a high level of appreciation to the school for striving for academic excellence and maintaining positive working relations with the members of the community. This positive atmosphere has encouraged some community members to open their homes to all the grade 12 learners who stay further away from the school. These community members assist in keeping order during these extra classes, including monitoring them. The findings indicated that parents appreciate the efforts of the school to improve the lives of people in their community (see 4.4.3).

5.2.2.5 Expert opinion

According to the expert opinion as obtained from Professor Jonathan Jansen, vice-chancellor of the University of the Free State and well-known commentator on educational issues in South Africa, it is imperative that the principal of a highly impoverished school be capable of inspiring teachers both as educators and in their roles as counsellors and caregivers to learners under their control (see 4.4.4). He/she must be able to establish a culture of invitational and collaborative leadership through delegated decision-making and allow teachers to be innovative and even take risks where necessary. In close consultation with the teachers, he must be able to monitor learner progress meticulously, constructively and individually. Moreover, the principal must prioritise the creation of a sense of family in the school (see 4.4.4).

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions are stated as answers to the original research question (see 1. 3). The main research question was: How can school managerial challenges related to impoverished secondary school learners be dealt with effectively? In response to the main question, answers will be provided for each sub-question as stated in section 1.3.

- What kinds of problems do impoverished learners experience?
- What experiences do educational managers have in the field of managing schools in rural poor communities?
- What strategies can educational managers use in dealing with the school-related impact of the problems of impoverished learners?
- What recommendations can be made based on the findings?

5.3.1 What kinds of problems do impoverished learners experience?

According to the literature and empirical findings, there are specific problems that are experienced by impoverished secondary learners. Most of these problems are associated with poverty (see 2.3.1). Much evidence from the findings has proven that it is these problems that seriously affect the schooling, academic endurance and academic progress of the impoverished learners. The kinds of problems experienced by impoverished learners can be categorised into physical manifestations, psychological effects, behavioural patterns and socio-economical conditions.

Physically most of the learners who are impoverished display fatigue, hunger, drowsiness and poor health (see 2.3.1).

Psychologically these learners are unmotivated, have low esteem, have low school ability; they are faced with their own emotional distress, they lack self-confidence, in class they lack concentration and are also disengaged from school. They also lack parental support (see 2.3.2). Because of lack of proper parental guidance, these learners usually engage in adolescent misdemeanours such as theft and other criminal activities. The seriousness of these problems is that these learners end up in jail and their academic dreams and goals become shattered. These learners become victims of emotional abuse, lack self-esteem and continually search for social acceptance. Girls who stay alone at home are likely to misbehave and become pregnant at an early age. Sometimes they engage in relationships with older men for financial security and luxuries.

Socio-economic conditions looming over the impoverished learners cause problems such as poor or improper school clothing, poor reading facilities and lack of academic necessities such as funds for tours. Orphans are unable to access social grants as they do not possess the required green identity document. Some of these orphans, especially boys, often engage in substance abuse (e.g. dagga smoking). With further investigation, schools have discovered that these boys come from poor family backgrounds and therefore are substituting dagga for food (4.4.1.1). Sick parents indirectly force the poor learners to make the transition to adult roles such as work or parenting. These kinds of problems result in some learners arriving late at school, cause learner absenteeism and even dropping out of school. Early dropping out of school is often due to economic barriers and poor school performance (see 2.3.2). These are the kinds of problems experienced by impoverished learners.

5.3.2 What experiences do educational managers have in the field of managing schools in rural poor communities?

The findings have indicated that educational managers in poor rural schools have special experiences with regard to the impoverished learners, their parents, teachers, departmental officials, resources and school infrastructure. Principals of highly impoverished schools have many testing experiences in dealing with impoverished learners who are faced with all the poverty-related challenges mentioned in 5.3.1 above. Because of their circumstances, these learners are confronted with barriers such as funding, they often come to school without having had breakfast, they lack parental support regarding school activities, they are constantly called in for disciplinary measures, and they are unwilling to cooperate with teachers. The principals have also realised that some learners come from child-headed families and therefore are unable to cope with the academic demands that the school and the teachers make. This makes it more difficult for the both the principal and teachers. Another problem experienced by principals of very poor schools is the high rate of pregnancy among teenage girls. The problem here is the high drop-out rate resulting in low enrolment, which in turn negatively affects the schools' provincial funding. With the low governmental funding the principal finds it challenging to run and manage the school smoothly as the community is also poor and is unable to boost the school funds.

With regard to parents, the principals of the very poor schools have the following experiences: Parents lack information, e.g. on the pregnancy policy that could assist them in dealing with their children when faced with such a situation. A serious problem is the information gap existing between the school and the parents regarding the pregnant learners. Some parents are unemployed and some are migrant labourers who leave learners alone at home. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that poor parents often show little or no interest in school activities including those that directly affect their children. They do not attend school meetings and they fail to help their children with the school work. The conclusion is that because they are illiterate, they tend to underestimate their abilities to assist their children.

In addition to what has been cited as challenging experiences for the principal of a poor rural school is the type of teachers who are mostly beginners with little knowledge of pedagogy, who often are under-qualified, have low self-esteem, low work motivation and show lack of respect for learners and their parents. The problem is that these teachers find it challenging to manage the impoverished learners. It is even more challenging for the principal who has to make sure that proper tuition takes place for better results. The principals managing schools with impoverished learners also experience pressure from departmental officials who expect them to operate in the same manner as the other principals in better working environments. This is putting pressure on these principals as they are constantly obliged to improve their standards to compete with the so called “former model C” schools regarding the matric results. What is even more challenging is the lack of resources such as laboratories, rundown classrooms, and poor sporting facilities that exist in these rural schools.

5.3.3 How can the school managerial challenges related to impoverished secondary school learners be dealt with effectively?

After analysis and interpretation of the literature and empirical findings, it is safe to conclude that there are effective ways to deal with school managerial challenges related to impoverished secondary school learners. In order to overcome the challenges and experiences listed in 5.3.2, principals have to adopt recommended leadership styles and also enhance special qualities and personality traits. The invitational and collaborative leadership styles are the most relevant leadership styles. The nature of challenges facing impoverished learners are

unique and therefore require a principal who is willing to invite all interested parties to be actively involved for positive results. To be able to deal as a principal with the challenges facing impoverished learners, the learners are to be listened to and parents, teachers and other stakeholders should also be highly involved in the decision making processes. A principal who employs the four pillars of the invitational leadership namely: optimism, respect, trust and intentional care will be able to deal with challenges facing impoverished learners. Consequently teaching and learning can yield progress.

Collaborative leadership will also assist principals of poor secondary schools because the collaborative spirit in which teams develop would bring about positive relationships amongst members of the staff, parents and learners. Through this collaboration it would be easy for the principal to build teaching and learning teams that aim to yield positive results and beat the poverty effects among learners. The conclusion is that collaborative leadership could inculcate positive relationships on and outside school premises. These relationships could then turn out to be a magnet that will attract both learners and parents to the school.

In order to deal effectively with the poverty-related challenges of the impoverished learners, the principal needs to acquire specific qualities and personality traits. These qualities include compassion, commitment and support for all those he/she has vowed to serve. The conclusion is that it is important that the principal models the commitment through self-discipline, punctuality, neatness, energy, visibility everywhere and teaching in one of the classes in the school. For the principal, creating a sense of family in the school will yield positive results. In addition, being a visionary, providing clear rules and maintaining strong discipline based on sound moral values will make a principal in a poor area an effective leader.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made on managing schools with impoverished secondary learners in South Africa.

5.4.1 Recommendation 1

The National Department of Basic Education should acknowledge differentiated circumstances under which school principals operate and pay specific attention to highly impoverished communities when national principles are laid down.

5.4.2 Recommendation 2

The Provincial Departments of Education should facilitate processes that will make it possible for the in-service training of the newly appointed principals. During such training the individual principals should be made aware of the differentiated circumstances that they will be faced with as individuals. Different leadership styles, personality traits and the person's capacity to learn should be prioritised.

5.4.3 Recommendation 3

The Provincial Departments of Education, especially in the Eastern Cape, should strengthen the social support services through the initiated Care and Support of Teaching and Learning programme (CSTL). The programme should be implemented in all schools especially in the public schools in rural areas and informal settlements. This programme aims at enabling and protecting access to education for children in greatest need (DoE Eastern Cape, 2010).

5.4.4 Recommendation 4

District officials should play an important role in the appointment of principals especially in secondary schools serving a very poor community. Academic achievement should not be the only determining factor in the appointment, but all other qualities and capabilities mentioned in the study should be taken into consideration.

5.4.5 Recommendation 5

District officials (CMs) should organise induction workshops for the newly appointed principals. During the induction sessions, the district officials should

- emphasise the development of trust through the practice of shared responsibility and collegiality (working in collaboration with the LO teacher).
- assist principals in transforming existing authoritative management and leadership styles.
- encourage principals to strive to become inspirational leaders who are strict in fostering a culture of excellence among teachers and learners.

5.4.6 Recommendation 6

District officials should make an effort to understand the circumstances in very poor schools by personally visiting and working closely with these principals. They should provide the necessary support and expose these principals to excelling schools in similar contexts in their districts.

5.4.7 Recommendation 7

The education authorities should make an effort to constantly and consciously acknowledge endeavours and achievements by principals working with impoverished communities. These efforts should not be taken for granted as this can act as a de-motivating factor that can hinder their efforts in future.

5.4.8 Recommendation 8

Rural districts like Mount Fletcher where more than 70% of secondary schools have enrolled impoverished learners, special programmes such as leadership and management seminars should be piloted by education officials, teacher unions, higher institutions, business people and NGOs. This activity can educate school leaders effectively with less or no costs.

5.4.9 Recommendation 9

Principals should encourage community involvement in the school activities and further strive to understand the communities they are serving. They should attend community activities such as cultural events, funerals and commemorations. They should mobilise resources through collaboration with various stakeholders including; business people, NGOs and special individuals within the school community. In addition, the involvement of and working closely with other relevant Government sister Departments such as the Department of Social Development, Department of Health, Department of Home Affairs, SAPS and SASSA is imperative. All these aforementioned departments can play significant roles in the community where poverty is rife.

5.4.10 Recommendation 10

It is highly recommended that the principals of the impoverished communities adopt management strategies that are home-grown, the products of their own problem-solving efforts. These principals should identify successful schools, learn the right lessons and replicate success (City Press: 2011). Such a process would produce solutions that are locally appropriate, relevant and sustainable. They should also set high standards for themselves by competing with the affluent schools in learner academic achievements.

5.4.11 Recommendation 11

The study recommends that a principal in a school serving a poor community should focus on the management strategies that will assist him/her to achieve the following: intensive teaching and learning, learner retention at school (as opposed to high learner drop-out), reduction of absenteeism, reduction of risky behaviour, increased parental involvement, increased access to education by community members and community advancement.

5.4.12 Recommendation 12

Very poor schools in particular should apply working strategies to increase parental participation in their children's education and school activities. These strategies include

making parents more aware of the need to improve education for their children, providing them with full information whenever possible and also engaging them in the decision-making processes at their school. Principals should take cognisance of the fact that the impoverished parents are less likely to promote parental school involvement. They need information on how to promote achievement in their children. Parents should be afforded full recognition by the school and the education authorities.

5.4.13 Recommendation 13

Principals of very poor schools should create a school climate which will allow community members to see the school as a community centre and a beacon of hope, where most developmental services could be rendered, especially in communities where these services are difficult to access. Such services include using the school hall as venue for community developmental meetings and as ABET centre and for the Department of Social Development to bring welfare services to the community, e.g. distribution of food packages to the indigents. The school could act as a computer training centre for the community members, act as host to the Department of Home Affairs to provide and distribute identification documents, and invite the Department of Health for immunisation purposes for both humans and animals. Principals in the poor communities should recognise and appreciate the fact that schools are not just for the children who attend the school, but also for their families and the communities in which they live. The provision of services at school helps foster positive links between school and the surrounding community and helps to promote a community that supports and values the school.

5.4.14 Recommendation 14

Life Orientation teachers in schools with impoverished learners should take all teachers on board on how to handle sensitive issues affecting these learners. All teachers should be reminded about the fifth (of the seven) roles of a teacher which is the community, citizenship and pastoral role. This involves developing a sense of respect and responsibility towards others, upholding the constitution and promoting democratic values and practices in schools. Learners need to be provided with a supportive and empowering environment, including full information about HIV/AIDS. Essential to this role is the development of supportive

relationships with parents and other key people and organisations in the community (ace.schoolnet.org.za retrieved 2011).

5.4.15 Recommendation 15

The Government, Department of Education and policy makers should study this and other related studies in order to bring about necessary support to the struggling school principals in areas with a high poverty rate that are in dire need to improve their management strategies.

5.5 CLOSING REMARKS

Many poor rural secondary schools in the Eastern Cape, in Mount Fletcher in particular, have shown signs of being dysfunctional. This dysfunction has been attributed to poor leadership and weak management by the principals. Little has been done by the education authorities to reverse the situation. What they have expressed is principals' incapacity to produce acceptable matric results. These principals have been subjected to fierce criticism and in some cases they have been removed from their schools by the SGBs, community members, unions, parents, learners and or officials. In most cases the education authorities have found it easy to become judgmental towards these principal without looking at other poverty-related factors that could be attributed to their failure. Data from this study has revealed that a particular kind of a person who has specific traits and capabilities, who has adopted the invitational and collaborative leadership styles, can make a success of a secondary school situated in a very poor area.

The study has endeavoured to answer the main research question, namely 'How can school managerial challenges related to impoverished secondary school learners be dealt with effectively?' (section1.X). It has presented measures to be put in place to assist the principals managing schools with impoverished learners.

It is trusted that the study has made a valuable contribution in the following ways:

- The study has stated clearly how rural schools could bring about community advancement through allowing people to use the school as a community centre and further assist in poverty alleviation.

- Relevant leadership styles and management strategies were identified that could be used by the principals of schools in underprivileged areas to deal with poverty related challenges facing learners in their schools.
- The nature of learners and the circumstances under which the principals operate demand certain personality traits. The study has shed a light on personal qualities required by the principal managing impoverished learners.
- Empirical evidence also revealed that parents can be made to own their school by participating in the school activities and becoming employees in the school; by enabling this, the school changes their lives for the better.
- School principals have been challenged by the study to show their social intelligence as they would be regularly tested by social and environmental circumstances.
- The study has highlighted that the education authorities should offer necessary support and guidance during the induction and in-service training of principals of extremely poor schools.

The Government, Department of Education and policy makers must read this and other related studies in order to bring about necessary support to the struggling school principals that are in dire need to improve their management strategies.

5.6. THEMES FOR FURTHER STUDY

There is a clear need for future research and policy consideration to focus on how to prepare the ground for poverty-stricken schools to be utilised as community centres, and also to provide the principals in these communities with necessary coaching and or training. In relation to discussions and findings from the study, the following themes for further research are recommended:

- Rural schools as community centres for improvement of poor communities
- The role of benchmarking of local managerial successes in very poor schools
- Intensified support and induction of principals in these schools
- A school management strategy to counteract the serious effects of high teenage pregnancy as one of the main causes of learner drop out in impoverished schools.

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APPENDIX A



Province of the EASTERN CAPE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Resource Centre Building * hospital road* Mt Fletcher * Private Bag X1133 *
Mt Fletcher * 4770 * REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA *Ref: Enquiries:
Malobola Z: 0833644183 Tel: 039 2570963 Fax: 039 257 0956

TO : DISTRICT DIRECTOR
FROM : Z.M.MALOBOLA
SUBJECT : **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT
EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH**
DATE : 13-11-2009

Dear Sir

I wish to apply for a permission to conduct research in selected schools in your district. The research will be in fulfilment of a Master's degree in Education Management. The topic of the research is **“SCHOOL MANAGEMENT IMPERATIVES IN ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF IMPOVERISHED SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS IN RURAL AREAS”**.

I further request your permission in the process of conducting interviews with the nominated stakeholders within the identified schools.

It may be mentioned that all interview logistics and ethical considerations will be seriously adhered to as expected.

The research will not disturb the teaching and learning processes since all appointments will be secured outside teaching time.

Thanking you in anticipation

Yours in education

Z.M. Tekete

Prof G D Kamper (Department of Educational Studies, University of South Africa)

APPENDIX B



Province of the EASTERN CAPE

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Resource Centre Building * hospital road* Mt Fletcher * Private Bag X1133 *
Mt Fletcher * 4770 * REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA *Ref: Enquiries:
Malobola Z: 0833644183 Tel: 039 2570963 Fax: 039 257 0956

TO : THE PRINCIPAL
FROM : Z.M.MALOBOLA
SUBJECT : **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT
EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH**
DATE : 13-11-2009

Dear Sir/Madam

I wish to apply for a permission to conduct research in your school. The topic of the research is **“SCHOOL MANAGEMENT IMPERATIVES IN ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF IMPOVERISHED SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS IN RURAL AREAS”**.

It may be mentioned that all interview logistics and ethical considerations will be seriously adhered to as expected.

The research will not be of any disturbance to the teaching and learning processes.

Thanking you in anticipation

Yours in education

Z.M. Tekete

Prof. G. D. Kamper (Department of Educational Studies, University of South Africa)

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

Learners in the rural communities have always perceived education as a means to escape poverty. Unfortunately, these dreams are sometimes shattered when they do not make it at the senior secondary level. The failure to live their dreams is attributed to their socio-economic backgrounds. Impoverished senior secondary learners are faced with challenges which adversely affect their learning process. Such a predicament, in my view, calls for school managers to use specific managerial strategies that will deal with the impediments. The study therefore seeks to make an informed contribution that will promote effective teaching and learning; consequently, the effort can finally yield academic progress in impoverished schools.

For your information, please note the following:

- 1.1 Participation in the interview is voluntary
- 1.2 Participants are free to opt out of the process at any time
- 1.3 All responses will be kept strictly confidential and will only be used for purposes of the study. Audio-cassettes will be destroyed after the research has been finalised.
- 1.4 Anonymity will be guarded at all costs
- 1.5 Your participation and contribution will be regarded as highly valuable.

Name of the researcher: Zoleka

Contact Numbers: Cell- 0833644183, (W) 039 2570960, (H) 045 9321828

Residential Address: No.1 Mill Street, Maclear 5480

Department: Education, Mount Fletcher District

Name of Participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX D

PREDETERMINED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

THE PRINCIPAL

After introductory pleasantries, a verbal confirmation was given once again of the general purpose of the research, the role that the interview would play in the research, the approximate time required, and the fact that the information would be treated confidentially (De Vos *et al.*, 2002).

Questions

- *Are there signs that poverty has effects on your learners?*
- *Is it possible to highlight some of the school management challenges you usually experience ensuing from the impoverished learners, parents and the community?*
- *I have met a number of your ex-students who have succeeded in life claiming that it is because of your management style that they have made a success.
In your opinion, are there any specific personal traits that one must possess in order to be able to deal with school management challenges resulting from impoverished learners, parent and the immediate community?.*
- *Your school is known for its excellent relationship with its community members, what would you put forward as recommendations for creating constructive learning environments for impoverished learners?*

LIFE ORIENTATION TEACHER

- *From your records, is there a noticeable trend of learning barriers that you could attribute to impoverishment amongst your learners?*
- *What do you think is your central role in ensuring that the poverty-related challenges do not affect learners' academic progress at school?*
- *Could you please narrate to me the steps that you usually follow to bring a particular case (poverty related) to the school management for attention and or possible solution?*

- *A Life Orientation teacher has to possess certain personality traits in order to suit his/her professional demands, do you agree?*
- *What would you state as recommendations for creating a supportive learning environment for impoverished learner?*

PARENTS (focus group)

After introductory pleasantries, a verbal confirmation was given once again of the general purpose of the research, the role that the interview would play in the research, the approximate time required, and the fact that the information would be treated confidentially (De Vos *et al.*, 2002).

A Brief demographic or background information of the parents was necessary.

An open-ended questionnaire was given to parents to read and respond to on the same day. The main themes in the questionnaire were structured in a manner that would seek the responses to the following major questions:

- *Do you attend all parents 'meetings when invited?*
- *At your arrival at the school, do you feel welcome?*
- *Do you think that the school has an impact on improving lives of this community?*
- *What can the school management do to assist the impoverished learners to beat the poverty odds?*

APPENDIX E

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

PARENTS' VIEWS ON MANAGEMENT OF HIGH POVERTY SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

Learners in the rural communities have always perceived education as a means to escape poverty. Unfortunately, these dreams are sometimes shattered when they do not make it at the senior secondary level. The failure to live their dreams is attributed to their unfavourable socio-economic backgrounds. The impoverished senior secondary learners are faced with challenges which adversely affect their learning process. Such a predicament, in my view, calls for school managers to use specific managerial strategies that will deal with the impediments. The study therefore seeks to make an informed contribution that will promote effective teaching and learning; consequently, the effort can finally yield academic progress in schools in poor areas. Your views will contribute towards finding relevant management strategies for the principals of these schools.

Answer by ticking in the boxes and also by writing your opinion in the space provided. Do not write your name on the questionnaire. It will take you approximately 15 minutes to complete this questionnaire.

GENDER (X)

MALE	
FEMALE	

SECTION A

KEY: SA=Strongly Agree; A=Agree; NS=Not Sure; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly Disagree

	SA	A	NS	D	SD
Parents meetings are very important for school management purposes					
Parents are always welcome at school					
Parents are able to help learners with their school work					
Parents are called only when learners fail to pay school fund					
Learners are very happy to see their parents coming to school					
Learners are always happy to go to school					
Learners are assisted by the school to access social grants due to them					
Learners and parents regard school as a social centre					
All learners in my community finish the secondary schooling in time					
After secondary schooling, all learners are able to get employment					
After secondary schooling, all learners are able to further their studies					

SECTION B

1. In your opinion, do you think the school has any impact on your community?

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2. Mention a few things that attracts learners to the school

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3. List any three aspects that you would not want to change about the school

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4. What suggestions would you give to teachers towards assisting the impoverished learners to learn more easily?

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5. What can the school management do to assist the impoverished learners to beat the poverty odds?

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR POSITIVE RESPONSES.

APPENDIX F

IZIMVO ZABAZALI NGOKUPHATHELENE NEZOLAWULO KWIZIKOLO ZABAFUNDI ABASWELEYO BEE SEKONDARI.

Abafundi abasemaphandleni bayibona imfundo njengendlela yokuphepha intlupheko nendlala. Amaphupha abo athi angafezeki ingakumbi xa bengaphumeleli amabanga esekondari. Iimeko zamakhaya abo ezingentlanga, zizo esinokuthi zingunobangela wokungafezekiseki kwamaphupha lawo abo. Intlupheko yabafundi ithi ibe negalelo elingelihlanga nelithi libe nefuthe elibi kwizifundo zabo. Kwezimeko zinje, ngokwam ukubona, likhulu igalelo elingenziwa ngabaphathi bezikolo ukuzama ukuncedisana nabafundi. Ngako oko ke esisifundo siligalelo elizama ukuhlangabezana nezimeko abazifumana bephantsi kwazo abafundi khona ukuze imfundo neziphumo ezihle zifumaneke kwizikolo ezihlelekileyo.

Izimvo zakho ke ziyakuba lulutho ekufumaneni izisombululo nasekuncediseni iinqununu zezikolo ezihlelekileyo zasemaphandleni.

Phendula ngokuphawula kwibhokisana nangokucacisa ngakumbi kwimigca enikiweyo. Musa ukubhala igama lakho. Kuyakukuthabatha imizuzu enlishumi elinesihlanu ukugchwalisa le mibuzo.

ISINI (X)

MALE	
FEMALE	

ICANDELO A

IKHI: SA=Ndiyinqina kuyinyani kakhulue; A=Ndiyavuma; NS=Andiqinisekanga; D=Andivumi; SD=Andivumi tu

	SA	A	NS	D	SD
Iintlanganiso zabazali zibalulekile malunga nolawulo lwesikolo					
Abazali basoloko bemkelekile esikolweni					
Abazali banakho ukunceda abantwana babo ngomsebenzi wesikolo					
Abazali babizwa xa bengazikhuphi imali zesikol					
Abafundi bayakuvuyela ukubakho kwabazali esikolweni					
Abafundi basoloko bekonwabele ukuya esikolweni					
Abafundi bayancediswa sisikolo ukufumana izibonelelo zika rulumente					
Abafundi nabantwan basithatha njengendawo yokufumana amancedo isikolo					
Bonke abafundi balaph bawagqiba ngexesha elifaneleyo ibanga lesekondari					
Bayayifumana ingqesho abafundi balapha bakugqiba ukufunda					
Bayakwazi ukudlulela kwimfundo ephezulu abafundi balapha basakuphumelela amabanga esekondari.					

ICANDELO B

1. Ingaba isikolo sinalo igalelo kwintlalo yoluntu ngokubona kwakho?

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2. Chaza izinto zibembalwa ezitsalela abafundi esikolweni

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3. Nika izinto zibentathu ongenakuzitshintsha ngesisikolo.

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4. Cebisa izinto ezinokwenziwa zikitshala ukunceda abafundi abahlelekileyo ukuze bafunde lula.

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5. Yintoni enokwenziwa sisgqeba esilawula isikol ukunceda abafundi abahluphekayo?

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ENKOSI NGENTEBENZISWANO YAKHO.