

**School Management of Learner problems in the
Context of an Impoverished School Community**

by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated teachers' management of learner problems in the context of an impoverished school community. The rationale for the study took into consideration the constant demands placed on learners and teachers by poverty-related issues. By illuminating the factors that affect teachers' work performance in the context of an impoverished school community, it is hoped that all education stakeholders would be motivated to support, assist and guide teachers to overcome the current challenges with regard to poverty in schools, thus enhancing their work performance as well as that of their impoverished learners.

The study employed a qualitative research design. Through a process of purposive sampling, five teachers from a primary school from the Phoenix Ward of the Pinetown District in KwaZulu-Natal were selected. The data were generated by means of semi-structured interviews. The data gathered were coded and organized into themes, categories and sub-categories. Content analysis was used to analyze the data.

The findings suggest that the consequences of poverty at school level are numerous and become even more complex when there is a lack of parental support at community level. Furthermore, they reveal that poverty impacts negatively on learners' academic performance. Factors associated with poor work performance by learners included abuse, parental apathy, the environment, and a lack of resources, to name but a few. Praise and recognition, as well as democratic leadership styles on the part of teachers have a positive influence on learners' work performance. Flexibility, care and visible intervention by teachers and the school have been found to have a positive impact on learners' attitude towards school. The study concludes with a number of recommendations to address and manage the problems experienced by learners in impoverished contexts.

DECLARATION

I, Charmaine Prammoney declare that this dissertation is my own work. All sources consulted for this study have been acknowledged. It is submitted to the Faculty of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Education (Education) degree at the University of KwaZulu Natal (Edgewood). It has not been submitted before for examination in any other university.

BY

Charmaine Prammoney

Durban

November 2012

Supervisor: Professor Labby Ramrathan

3 August 2012

Mrs Charmaine Prammoney 204300071
School of Education

Dear Mrs Prammoney

Protocol reference number: HSS/0426/012M
Project title: School Management of learner problems in the context of an impoverished school community

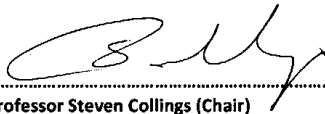
PROVISIONAL APPROVAL

This letter serves to notify you that your application in connection with the above has been approved, subject to necessary gatekeeper permissions being obtained.

This approval is granted provisionally and the final approval for this project will be given once the above condition has been met. In case you have further queries/correspondence, please quote the above reference number.

Kindly submit your response to the Chair: Prof. S Collings Research Office as soon as possible

Yours faithfully



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Inspiring Greatness



DEDICATION

This research study is dedicated firstly to my Higher Power, God Almighty, for endowing me with perseverance, ability, strength and hope during this successful journey.

The second dedication is to my loving husband, Ushendra Prammoney who constantly motivated me to persevere and encouraged me to complete this study, and stood by me during my illness, and my darkest hours.

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I also extend my sincere thanks to all the participants who willingly and enthusiastically shared information that led to the fulfilment of this project. I remain humbled by the realities of your life worlds. The experiences you shared with me are greatly valued. To the principal of the sampled school, thank you for allowing me to conduct this research; to the educators, my heartfelt gratitude to you for participating so willingly in the study.

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CHAPTER ONE

Background and context

“The International Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which South Africa subscribed in 1995, recognizes that every child has the inherent right to life, with Article 3 referring to “the best interests of the child” being a primary consideration in matters concerning children” (United Nations, 2001 cited in Khanare, 2008).

1.1 Introduction

Worldwide, more than 1.4 billion people live in absolute poverty. The prevalence of poverty is much higher in many developing countries than in developed countries. It is estimated that more than 60% of children live in households with incomes that are below international poverty lines (Price, 2009). Jenson (2009) notes that poverty means that families are homeless, and without food and fundamental health care. The functionality of impoverished learners is linked to, and reliant on communication amongst a variety of subsystems, including the family environment, the schooling environment and the neighbourhood (Van Wyk & Lemmer, 2007). Childhood poverty is one of the most critical factors determining learner achievement (Chili, 2006). Its impact is felt from the moment that a child enters school, and it continues to have ramifications throughout the child's educational career. Can this cycle of poverty be broken through educational intervention? Several studies suggest that there is a relationship between education and levels of development; this is supported by the world agenda of Education for All (EFA). However, while there are clear indications that education is a necessary factor in poverty alleviation, several other factors impede this process. Poverty affects a child's ability to pay attention to learning, the priority the learner places on completing schoolwork and the importance the learner places on success (Hunter, 2009). This study, therefore, intends to explore, through a micro analysis using a case study design, the implications of poverty for learners' schooling and more specifically how the school, and by extension the teachers, manages learners' problems in schools within impoverished communities.

Impoverished children live in precarious and often aggressive physical environments. Poverty affects children indirectly by bringing out the worst in parents, who struggle to survive in very difficult circumstances (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2007). Poverty is not a motionless condition and individuals, family units or neighbourhoods may be susceptible to poverty as a result of catastrophes (Chili, 2006). Exposure to poverty is therefore characterised by an inability to devise an appropriate coping or management strategy in times of crisis (Fraser, 1997). For example, learners who are impoverished experience psychological and social challenges which affect their learning development in school (Kamper, 2008). Therefore teachers need to arm themselves with different strategies to help impoverished learners cope with the problems that they bring to the classroom.

Orphaned and vulnerable learners are affected by the circumstances in which they are educated. Bower (2003) points out that, living in profound poverty and in the face of death and social instability, increases children's susceptibility to abuse and neglect. Violence, sexual abuse and stigma (due to HIV/AIDS) that result in a negative sense of self-image put learners in jeopardy (Motala & Smith, 2003). These multifaceted issues make it difficult for schools to provide effective support to learners (Khanare, 2008). This study therefore seeks to explore teachers' responses in managing learners who are poor and underprivileged. The school is a place where learners spend many years as associates of a small social order, which has the potential to impact their holistic improvement (Chili, 2006). This could be even more the case for children who are impoverished. Kamper (2008) refers to a school as a core of care and support for susceptible children. According to Bredekamp and Copple (1997), this leads to the conclusion that learners develop best in an environment where they are protected and respected, their physical requirements are met, and they feel psychologically safe. This study focuses on school management of the problems facing learners in an impoverished school community.

While being underprivileged teaches many lessons, including determination, survival and appreciation, every child is still entitled to an education. Some people are able to compensate for a lack of education, while others are never able to accomplish anything (Roberts, 2011). As Garbarino (1992) observes, today's poor children are all too often tomorrow's poor parents. Therefore this study aims to gain an understanding of how teachers care and support learners who are disadvantaged in order to try and overcome this inequality.

1.2 Focus and Purpose of Study

Poverty is a worldwide problem that has many negative consequences for the social structure as well as the lives of those who are impoverished. Survival becomes the key focus of people who are poor (Thompkins, 2011). According to Schieman and Plickert (2008), education improves an individual's attitude by giving them a greater sense of personal control. Therefore, children need an education that is founded on high standards and high expectations that go beyond test scores and shift the mind of a child beyond his/her impoverished environment (Thompkins, 2011). Education can provide a way out of poverty through improving attitudes, skills, and control over situations which will allow the individual to increase his or her social mobility as he or she increases the ability to control his or her destiny (Claiborne, 2009). Research by Claiborne (2009) indicates that the well-educated have superior access to challenging and enhancing jobs, better monetary rewards and security, and are placed in positions of trust. Obtaining a better education allows an individual to improve attitudes, skills, and control over situations (Claiborne, 2009).

It is estimated that 22 million people (more than 50%) of the population in South Africa live in poverty, that is, on an income of less than R160 per month. Children are recognized as being among the most poor and vulnerable in the country (Du Plessis & Conley, 2007). Given this context, the need for education is greatly magnified. There is thus an inherent need to gain an understanding of the ramifications of poverty within the school context so that learners are better equipped to deal with the problems encountered within impoverished communities.

Teachers have the opportunity to have a huge impact on learners' lives, but this opportunity is accompanied by many challenges. Teachers struggle to find successful ways to teach learners who come from poverty-stricken backgrounds. Many teachers wish that their teacher training programmes had prepared them better for these real classroom issues (Overman, 1999). Recently, primary school teachers in KwaZulu-Natal province complained that they were unable to focus on their official duties due to the problems that they encounter in the classroom (Lubisi, 2005). Studies by Claiborne (2009), Thompkins (2011), Devnarain (2010), Engelbrecht and Eloff (2001), Khanare (2008), Ngidi and Sibaya (2002) as well as Olivier and Venter (2003) assert that teachers are faced with a multitude of learner problems. Learners from impoverished communities are challenged by learner mobility, lack of basic services such as water, parental apathy, health issues (HIV/AIDS), abuse, and poor nutrition,

to name but a few. Many learners in South African schools can be considered at risk in the sense that they are affected by problems that impact on their present and future well-being and holistic development. Research is needed in these school environments to understand how these problems manifest themselves, as well as to provide insight into micro managing these problems so as to alleviate the effects of poverty in the school context. This study aims to uncover these broad problems, and understand how teachers manage learner problems in the classroom.

1.3 Problem Statement

The aim of a problem statement in qualitative research is to offer a rationale or requirement for studying a particular issue (Creswell, 2007). In my 22 years of teaching I have communicated with teachers of diverse race groups, age and gender from urban and rural areas. In my informal conversations with teachers in the district, I have discovered that the problems that learners face, especially as a consequence of their impoverished social contexts, are one of the greatest obstacles to effective teaching and learning. In undertaking this study, I believe that those of us who entrusted with teaching defenceless and impoverished children must provide care and guidance. My personal experience as a teacher has encouraged me to think of ways of supporting children in their learning and development, especially those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. As a class teacher I became aware that learners' background and circumstances influence their learning, motivation and well-being. I realised how important it is to know about each learner's circumstances and to think of ways that I, as a teacher, can support him or her. The studies that I have reviewed reveal that the problems that learners face pose a major challenge for teachers and hinder their delivery in the classroom (Claiborne, 2009; Thompkins, 2011; Devnarain, 2010; Engelbrecht and Eloff, 2001; Khanare, 2008; Ngidi and Sibaya, 2002; Olivier and Venter, 2003; Du Plessis and Conley, 2007; Ravichandran & Rajendran, 2007; Badcock-Walter, Gorgens, Heard, Mukwashi, Smart, Tomlinson & Wilson, 2005; Carr-Hill, Kataboro & Katahoire, 2000; Desmond & Gow, 2002). One of the main reasons for this is that the social world of school operates by different rules, norms and protocols than the social world that children from impoverished households live in. This hinders their success in school and often in life as well (Leroy & Symes, 2001). This research study, therefore, intends to explore how

teachers cope with the challenge of teaching learners with unique problems in the context of an impoverished school community.

1.4 Rationale for the Study

The rationale for this study is that learners from impoverished social contexts present different problems from learners from other socio-economic backgrounds. According to Wilkinson (2009), in some communities there is an ingrained resentment of schooling. This tends to be the case in economically deprived areas where adults are often unemployed or are in low-paid, unskilled jobs, having left the education system with few qualifications and skills. It can be difficult for parents from this environment to instill the advantages of attending school in their children when they have had a negative experience of school, themselves. Although they may concede that acquiring an education would help their child to accomplish something in life, if they live in an environment which has an embedded culture of mistrust and doubt, it can be hard to be open to the prospects offered by the education system. Furthermore, such parents are often less able to make demands on the school on behalf of their children than their middle-class counterparts (Wilkinson, 2009). Children from impoverished communities generally achieve at lower levels than middle and upper class children. The causes are numerous and relate to both the social environment in which impoverished children live and the education they receive at school (Slavin, 1998). Teachers need to use innovative ways of approaching teaching and learning in order to meet the diverse needs of children in the classroom. As noted above, this study aims to explore some of these problems that poor children face and to establish how teachers manage these problems.

In South Africa there is body of literature on problems that learners encounter in primary schools (Sooful, Surujlal & Dhurup, 2010). Socio-economic problems such as poverty, psychological and health problems have contributed to a large extent to these problems. The HIV and AIDS pandemic has led to scores of children becoming orphans, who are often in the care of extended families, sometimes with little or no support to ensure their continued progress. These children are at a risk of dropping out of or never even entering school (Govender, 2004). Research conducted by Pillai (2008) on the poor performance of learners in schools in South Africa found that it was often due to poverty. According to the AIDS Orphans Report, the loss of a parent to AIDS can have serious consequences for a child's

access to basic necessities (Du Plessis & Conley, 2007). This research study thus aims to gauge the effects of challenges such as HIV and AIDS, and the way in which these are manifested in impoverished societies. This will provide insight into how teachers counter these problems in the classroom, yielding possible policy guidelines or interventions for future reference.

The composition or structure of the family unit has a significant effect on how much education the child acquires and absorbs (Roberts, 2011). Single-parent families have a higher risk of poverty and their children have a higher dropout rate in school. These homes are usually run by the mother. If the father is completely absent in the child's life, the mother has to be extremely perceptive when it comes to disciplining and maintaining the child. Their progress in school depends on these issues as well as the financial situation in the home. If the mother has a good paying job, the child is more likely to achieve. On the other hand, some children who have no contact with their fathers may feel neglected by their mothers, who have to work and take care of everything. Such children become rebellious and their school work suffers. If poverty is present, they will be deficient in many respects. Their brain may be starved of nutritious food and they will be unable to concentrate. Poor nutrition leads to low self-esteem, irritable and aggressive behaviour, poor academic achievement, absenteeism and even obesity in children. Some children are also neglected by their mothers, who use what money they have to maintain their male companions. It is not surprising that such children are rebellious and do poorly in school.

International and local research studies concur that the loss of a parent or parents seriously impacts on children's access to basic necessities such as shelter, food, clothing, health, and education (Du Plessis & Conley, 2007). In many instances, such children are forced to assume the role of parents themselves to care for siblings or chronically ill family members. According to Govender (2004), the Global Campaign for Education concludes that the AIDS pandemic is compromising the opportunity for children to become educated; less education deepens poverty, which in turn increases susceptibility to infection. Such children tend to expose themselves to prostitution and are at greater risk of abuse. However, these conclusions cannot be wholly generalized to South Africa. The effects of HIV and AIDS have been magnified in South Africa, especially given the extreme levels of poverty, inequality and healthcare problems. This study thus posits the need for further research within the specific

circumstances prevailing in South Africa, the results of which may be generalized to other areas that have similar characteristics to the community under study.

Learners raised in poverty are particularly exposed to negative elements such as sexual abuse that challenge school behaviour and performance. For example, girls exposed to abuse tend to experience mood swings in school, while boys exhibit lower levels of curiosity, learning and memory (Zeuna, et al., 2008, cited in Jensen, 2009). Abuse undermines learners' ability to do well in school and participate in positive social interactions. A learner that hails from a stressful environment where he/she has been exposed to abuse tends to direct that stress into disruptive behaviour at school and be less able to build a healthy social and academic life (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002 cited in Jensen, 2009). As a result, teachers are also faced with the challenge of dealing with children traumatised by such exploitation.

Leroy and Symes' (2001) study found that low productivity in impoverished schools in England was the result of problems that indigent learners were confronted with, including high mobility, lack of basic resources such as water, parental apathy, language barriers and health issues such as HIV/AIDS. Learners displayed poor discipline due to lack of parental control after the loss of one or both parents; this inhibited their learning (Edwards, 1997; Elam, et al., 1993). Trockel, et al.'s (2000) research established that poverty and low academic output were highly correlated. In the face of such circumstances, teachers need to counsel learners and attempt to provide the necessary support and where necessary, engage the services of social workers and local health clinics (Bhana, et al., 2006). According to research by Thompkins (2011), Devnarain (2010) and Engelbrecht and Eloff (2001) South African teachers encounter similar problems. However, the resolution of such problems differs vastly from overseas countries, where much research has been undertaken. Further research is required in order to understand how these critical problems are co-integrated with poverty, and how teachers in a particular district manage learner problems.

The literature presented above highlights that the problems that learners encounter in today's world are often related to issues of poverty; if not addressed appropriately, these have the potential to promote a vicious circle of impoverishment. Hence management of these known factors as well as other factors is crucial to break this circle. This study therefore explores how teachers and schools manage learner problems associated with impoverished conditions in order to contribute to a discourse that will assist teachers and schools to provide quality

education to learners despite their impoverished background. Many teachers lack the skills and competence to accommodate diversity in their classrooms and do not have formal training to do so (Bhana, et al., 2006). The problems, duties and responsibilities, as well as the relevant solutions that impact on teaching and learning in the classroom are explored; this makes this study quite different from those mentioned earlier. The value of this research study will lie in its documentation of the various factors that create problems; the mechanisms that can be put in place to assist impoverished learners with their problems will be prioritised. Some of the studies mentioned above have dealt with the problems learners face in the classroom, but they do not necessarily focus on impoverished circumstances and how teachers managed these problems in such a situation. Therefore this research study is unique in that it attempts to fill this gap.

1.5 Key research questions

The following research questions will be posed to serve as a guide in carrying out this research:

- What are the challenges that teachers face in teaching children from impoverished backgrounds?
- How do teachers (and the school) manage learner problems within an impoverished teaching and learning context?

1.6 Research Design and Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach that explores how teachers respond to problems, challenges and confrontations facing impoverished learners. Maree (2007) hypothesises that a qualitative mode of inquiry helps in understanding the social and cultural context in diverse ways. As the researcher, I seek to understand how teachers respond to learner problems in the context of poverty. I utilised a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews to gain in-depth insight into teachers' responses.

In order to achieve the best possible results, it would have been most favourable to survey the perceptions and views of role-players in all the public, impoverished schools in the Verulam District. However, due to time constraints it was decided to confine this to a small-scale study, in the form of a case study of one public school in the Verulam District. According to Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006) sampling involves making decisions about which

people, settings, events or behaviour to observe. For this study purposive and convenience sampling was chosen on the basis that the school which was chosen is situated in an impoverished community. Five teachers were selected as respondents; this means that the researcher made specific choices about which people to include in the sample.

After reviewing possible research methods it was decided that semi-structured interviews were the most suitable research tool to obtain the opinions and insight of key elements. In collecting the data for the study in the selected school, semi-structured interviews were preferred as they are the method most favoured in small-scale research projects. They allow the interviewees to gain confidence and provide freedom and flexibility in terms of the order in which questions are presented and worded; this can be modified to suit the personality and circumstances of the people being interviewed (Neuman, 2000). As the nature of the study requires an in-depth discussion rather than the provision of brief answers, a less formal approach permits the researcher to prompt, probe and elicit a comprehensive response by allowing the respondents to talk at length. Furthermore, the researcher is able to maintain the sequence of the interview questions and there is scope for questions to be repeated or simplified, unlike in the case of a formal interview (Maree, 2007).

A detailed description of the research data production design is presented in chapter three of this dissertation.

1.7. Clarification of Terminology

1.7.1. Educational Leadership

Educational leadership draws upon interdisciplinary literature, generally, but preferably distinguishes itself through the focus on epistemology and human development. In present-day practice it borrows from political science and business. School leadership is the process of enlisting and channelling the talents and energies of teachers, learners and parents toward achieving common educational aims (Chapman, 1990).

1.7.2. School Management

Management in an institution such as a school is the act of getting people together to accomplish desired goals and objectives using available resources efficiently and effectively.

Management comprises planning, organizing, staffing, leading or directing and controlling an institution (a group of one or more people or individuals) or endeavours for the purpose of accomplishing a goal (Chapman, 1990).

1.7.3. Relative Poverty

This occurs when a family's earnings are below the national average. These households live below a certain standard achieved by others in their country and are unable to access certain services, which limits future prospects (Chilli, 2006).

1.7.4. Moderate Poverty

In this situation basic needs are met but the family and individuals are barely able to provide for themselves. In these circumstances, very little opportunity exists to advance towards a better future (Jenson, 2009).

1.7.5. Extreme (or absolute) poverty

This refers to a situation where households and individuals are completely unable to fulfill their fundamental needs such as food, clothing, shelter and clean water. This type of poverty mainly occurs in the rural areas of developing nations (Jenson, 2009).

1.7.6. Learner

The South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996, defines a 'learner' as any person, a child, or an adult, receiving education or obliged to receive education.

1.7.7. HIV/AIDS

HIV stands for the Human Immunodeficiency Virus that weakens the immune system, ultimately leading to AIDS. HIV destroys the body's ability to fight infection and disease, which can ultimately lead to death (UNAIDS, 2007).

AIDS, the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, is a syndrome of opportunistic infections and diseases that can grow as immune suppression deepens along the continuum of HIV infection from primary infection to death (UNAIDS, 2007).

1.7.8. Academic Performance

Academic performance refers to the advancement or retardation of a child at school. Many factors contribute to academic performance, including discipline, the home environment, the school itself, parents' and learners' attitudes, self motivation of learners, etc. (Campbell, 1991).

1.7.9. Socio-economic Status

Wolfe (1981) notes, that the socio-economic status of a family is frequently defined in terms of the parents' line of work. Socio-economic status speaks to the social status and financial position of a family. Thus, one may define socio-economic status as one's position in society as determined by profession, wealth, level of education and social class.

1.7.10. Environmental Deprivation

Pretorius and Le Roux (2000) maintain that environmental deprivation is caused by the following factors in particular: poverty, cultural isolation, geographical isolation, ailments such as HIV and AIDS, and physical deficiencies such as physical handicaps and malnutrition. Another contributing factor is high mobility and displacement of the family because of urbanisation and migrant labour, broken or incomplete, single-parent families; and an environment that offers little or no emotional stability or cultural stimulation.

They further define the concept of deprivation as referring to specific social groupings, educational levels and inferior occupations, unemployment, and limited potential for upward mobility. Some social groupings are caught up in a spiral or pattern of poverty as well as general and cultural deprivation, because they experience environmental paucity and psychosocial disabilities.

This definition and explanation therefore allows for an analysis of the problems faced by impoverished learners and how teachers manage these problems.

1.8 Outline of Chapters

This research study is divided into five chapters.

Chapter one provides a general background and overview of the key aspects of this study. The study is introduced by means of an overview of learner problems in the context of an impoverished community. The focus and purpose of this study; the problem statement; the rationale for pursuing this study; the critical questions; research design and methodology; a clarification of terminology; an outline of chapters and finally; a conclusion, are all presented.

Chapter two reviews the international and local literature on the key focus of this study. The review commences with an introduction, thereafter proceeds to examine perspectives of poverty, followed by a discussion on the theoretical framework of this study. Subsequent to this, an examination of schooling in impoverished contexts and the problems that impoverished learners face at school are discussed. The management of problems faced by learners from impoverished backgrounds is explored prior to conferring about managing the classroom. Finally the conclusion is presented.

Chapter three discusses the research design and methodology adopted for this study. After a brief discussion of the methodological approach to this study, the method used to gather data is presented. The research instrument, sampling techniques and ethical issues pertinent to the study are presented, followed by a brief narrative on the sampling procedures used to select interviewees and the procedure for data collection and analysis. Ethical considerations and a model for ensuring trustworthiness will also be outlined.

Chapter four focuses on the presentation, analysis, findings and discussion of the data gathered from the interviews. The data are presented and thereafter the emerging patterns from the data are discussed. The findings of the study are outlined, interpreted and discussed.

Chapter five presents conclusions and recommendations. It also provides a general overview of the findings.

1.9 Conclusion

This research study aims to develop an understanding of the role of the school in the management of learner problems and its contribution to the alleviation of these problems. This chapter has outlined the background to the study and provided an overview of the key aspects of this study, including the problem statement, the focus of the study, critical questions, the research methodology and an outline of the chapters.

The next chapter provides a literature review.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the background and introduction to this study. The literature review provides a basis for understanding the problem being researched and also builds a logical framework within the context of related studies. In this chapter, I examine the relevant literature that relates to the main research question of the study, expanding on the sub-questions that include an exploration of the concept of poverty and how this concept was used in this study. This chapter reviews existing primary and secondary information about problems related to poverty and how teachers manage these problems at school. The chapter also provides clarification on the terms associated with teaching in impoverished contexts in order to outline the way that I have appropriated their meanings within the study. The key issues examined include perspectives of poverty, schooling in impoverished contexts, problems that impoverished learners face at schools, the management of problems faced by learners from impoverished backgrounds, managing the classroom, the theoretical orientation of this study and finally a brief summary to conclude this chapter.

2.2 Perspectives of Poverty

Poverty is a very relative and complex concept and different individuals have different ideas about what constitutes poverty. What some would deem poverty might be considered by others to be a comfortable lifestyle. Moreover, what is considered poverty in one time period may not be considered so in another (Chilli, 2006). While there was a time when nobody had indoor plumbing or electricity, people forced to live under these conditions today might be considered poverty-stricken (Payne, 2005). Official definitions of poverty exist at the international level, as well as definitions that are context and country specific. The complexity of this concept and its relative meanings are presented in this section of the literature review to demonstrate that it cannot be taken for granted that there is a single meaning of poverty and that poverty means different things to different persons and entities (Chilli, 2006). After having presented the different perspectives of poverty, I make a case for the meaning of poverty that I appropriate for this study.

According to Du Plessis and Conley (2007), poverty is one of the major threats worldwide and in South Africa and it has a devastating impact on the lives of children. They further postulate that poverty can be defined as the incapability of individuals, households or entire communities to command sufficient resources to satisfy a socially acceptable minimum standard of living. Children are recognized as among the most poor and susceptible in society in South Africa. Currently, 66% of South African children live in severe poverty and this situation continues to worsen (Du Plessis & Conley, 2007). The prevalence of preventable diseases and malnutrition in children is increasing and structural unemployment has become persistent. South African children include particularly vulnerable groups, such as those infected and affected by HIV and AIDS, and those living on the streets in urban informal settlements and in rural areas. These children face discrimination, isolation and extreme hardship (Du Plessis & Conley, 2007).

According to the United Nations' World Summit on Social Development, the Copenhagen Declaration described poverty as a denial of alternatives, opportunities and a violation of human dignity (United Nations, 2009; World Bank, 2007). School success is tied to family well-being. The economic health of the family, which leads to income stability, is an important step in improving developmental outcomes for children living in poverty. Employment provides benefits for low-income adults that extend beyond the provision of additional income. However, employment that does not bring income stability for families may actually result in negative outcomes for the children of the family (Haraway, 2004). Long-term, stable employment is essential for families to build a cushion of benefits and savings that can sustain them during emergencies. Employment programmes must integrate basic job training with educational, social, and emotional support targeted at improving low-income parents' prospects for long-term, stable employment (Makapela, 2008). A definition of child poverty should therefore include what children need and their need is for their parent/s to be employed (Khanare, 2008).

Desai (2000) reinforces this notion, stating that poverty is the consequence of tariff reductions that have led to massive job losses across South Africa in the textile, clothing, leather and other industries that are in danger of extinction because they cannot compete against cheap imports. Desai (2000) maintains that instead of taking care of the poor the government is treating poverty as a crime. Rents are rising in a context of unemployment and low wages. In this environment of extensive poverty, the government has attempted to

'punish' those unable to pay rent by evicting them or disconnecting water and electricity, leaving many people homeless. In 1994, this was seen as the last stand of vindictive White officials. However, this pattern of corrective measures continued after Black councillors took office (Desai, 2000).

Campbell (1991) states that poverty can be defined by hunger, lack of shelter, not being able to go to school and not knowing how to read. Furthermore, poverty is not having a job, is apprehension for the future, and living one day at a time. Poverty is hopelessness, a lack of representation and independence. Poverty is losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water. He further emphasizes that poverty is a call to change the world so that all have an adequate amount to eat, adequate shelter, access to health and education, a right to be heard on what happens in their communities and protection from violence (Campbell, 1991). Poor children who don't eat a nutritious, well-balanced breakfast will not be able to pay attention in class, and may become restless and disturb the class. The effects of poverty on the educational accomplishments of impoverished children cannot be addressed by merely providing hungry children with a nutritious meal. Other factors affect a poor child's school education, such as their safety and their home environment (Crain, 2008).

Poverty has generally been assessed in both absolute and relative terms by people's income or by their consumption of certain products (Ngwane, Yadavalli & Steffens, 2001). However, the limitations of such measures have highlighted the significance of recognizing the multifaceted nature of poverty. The potential of individuals and households is deeply influenced by factors ranging from earning a living to the social and psychological effects of poverty. These include people's basic needs, employment at reasonable wages, and health and education facilities, as well as the sense of helplessness that often accompanies financial crisis (Chilli, 2006).

Many definitions of poverty are based on household income and expenditure because, in the society we live in, money provides the power to purchase basic necessities (Khanare, 2008). Any definition of child poverty should therefore include what children need. Fundamentally, poverty may be described as a circumstance denoting severe deprivation of basic human needs, such as food, clothing, water, and shelter; not having a school or health centre such as a clinic; and not having land on which to grow food or a job to earn one's living (Berliner, 2005). When people are unable to eat, go to school, or have any access to health care, they

can be considered to be living in poverty; this implies a lack of the basic capacity to participate effectively in society regardless of their income (Reddy, 2005).

This study inclines towards Campbell's (1991) definition of poverty as the deprivation of basic human needs as this fits the context of my study and importantly, allows an analysis of the problems faced by impoverished learners and how teachers manage these problems.

2.3 Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

This section of the literature review presents the theoretical framework of the study. While several theoretical vantage points could be taken for this study, I made a purposive selection of Choice Theory and Reality Theory. This selection was informed with the purpose of this study, which focuses on teachers' management of learning within impoverished communities. The focus, as well as the literature review presented above, suggests that there is no singular way to manage this phenomenon. Further, teachers, who were the focus of attention in this study, are professionals who make professional choices that they can professionally account for in terms of the decisions they take in their classrooms and schools. Since the decisions taken by teachers in managing their real classroom environment are driven by professional choices, Choice Theory and Reality Theory seemed to be the most appropriate to select as a framing tool for this study. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to unpacking what this theory is about and how it could be used within this study.

2.3.1 Choice Theory and Reality Therapy Theory

The renowned psychologist, William Glasser developed Reality Therapy Theory in the 1960s and Choice Theory in the 1980s. Reality Therapy affirms that every individual is responsible for their own behaviour (Glasser, 2004). Choice Theory claims that all individual behaviour must try to meet five basic needs, which are survival, power, belonging, freedom and fun (Glasser, 2000). Survival refers to the struggle to live and to find food, shelter and clothing. Power refers to people's need to feel important; this need can be fulfilled in various ways, depending on the person. Some individuals may try to find power through educational success, friends, sports, attainment of recognition or money, employment position, etc. Love/Belonging concerns people wanting to feel the sense of being loved by someone and wanting a sense of belonging. In some instances individuals may feel the pain of rejection when the other person does not return their love. We habitually bounce back and are able to

find others who adequately fulfill this basic need. Glasser (2004) postulates that the need for love and belonging is the most imperative need because we are social beings who need constructive relationships to feel completely satisfied. However, this need often conflicts with the need for supremacy because we really enjoy feeling significant and will often forgo our need for others to satisfy the need for power. Freedom deals with people wanting to acquire freedom of choice in their daily lives. It is imperative that people have freedom of choice to choose where to live, what to eat and believe, and to communicate this freedom when we consider it necessary to do so. Having fun is essential for individuals to function optimally and is also very effective in the teaching and learning process. Learners learn best when they enjoy what they are being taught, especially when they are taught by someone they enjoy learning from (Glasser, 2004). Glasser hypothesises that learners work best when they enjoy the work or the challenge and find that what they are doing is not laborious.

Glasser (2000) postulates that by being aware of the five basic needs, an individual is more equipped to select options to improve their quality of life. He affirms that there are efficient methods to handle learner problems successfully. He claims that learners present with their own unique problems and challenges and that there is no right way to handle these problems. Instead, teachers must have two goals; first and foremost, to minimize disruptive behaviour in order to facilitate the culture of teaching and learning and secondly, to assist learners in coping with their problems. In order for individuals to achieve fulfillment in their lives, they must find suitable ways to satisfy their basic needs at least at a bare, minimum level. It is significant that even though the basic needs are the same for all human beings, the desires that satisfy these needs vary from person to person. Learners from impoverished backgrounds have different desires from those that come from middle and upper class homes. It is important for teachers to zone in on these desires in order to manage the problems that these learners may have (Glasser, 2004).

Glasser claims that the classroom atmosphere can be altered to accommodate and assist learners with their problems. Choice Theory is the basis for a quality classroom while Reality Therapy is the technique of communication for problem analysis and solving, and emotionally bonding with learners. Glasser (2000) asserts that a classroom of excellence adopts the Choice Theory as the foundation and employs Reality Theory as the means of communication for problem solving. He further claims that Choice Theory should become a

fundamental part of the teacher's life, both in and outside the classroom. He affirms that Choice Theory should be taught to learners and ultimately to their parents (Glasser, 2000).

From day one, the teacher bonds psychologically with each child. When a learner truly understands her/his association with the teacher, mutual trust is developed. In some instances disorderly behaviour may arise, but will not be consistent and persistent. Using Reality Theory with unruly learners, confrontations are handled in isolation, through open and straightforward communication. The rationale is to establish what is desired to fulfill the basic needs in a more encouraging way. Learners are trained how to resolve occurrences on their own and to ask for intervention or help when required from a teacher or another learner (Glasser, 2000). Reality therapy is firmly based on choice theory and its successful application is dependent on a strong understanding of choice theory. It is considered a form of cognitive behavioural theory (Glasser, 2004). The term refers to a process that is people-centered and has nothing to do with threat or punishment but rather helps people to distinguish how desires can sidetrack them from their choices they control in life. Glasser posits that the past is not something to be dwelled upon but rather to be resolved and moved past in order to live a more gratifying and rewarding life. Reality therapy (RT) is an approach to psychotherapy and counselling. Reality Therapy differs from conventional psychoanalysis in that it (RT) focuses on what Glasser calls psychiatry's three R's: realism, responsibility, and right-and-wrong, rather than indicators of mental disorders. Reality therapy maintains that the individual is suffering from a socially common human condition rather than a mental illness. It is in the unsuccessful accomplishment of basic needs that a person's behaviour moves away from the norm. Since fulfilling essential needs is part of a person's present life, reality therapy does not concern itself with a person's past. Neither does this type of therapy deal with unconscious mental processes. In these ways reality therapy is very dissimilar from other forms of psychotherapy. The Reality Therapy approach, to counselling and problem-solving, focuses on the current actions of the individual and the ability to create and choose an enhanced future. Typically, individuals seek to discover what they really want and how they are currently choosing to behave in order to achieve these goals (Glasser, 2004).

One of the core principles of Reality Therapy is that, whether people are aware of it or not, they are always trying to meet these essential human needs. These needs must all be balanced and met for a person to function most effectively. Reality Therapy holds that the key to

behaviour is to remain aware of what an individual presently wants and make choices that will ensure that goal. Reality Therapy maintains that what really drives human beings is their need to belong and to be loved. One cannot exist without the other. Reality therapy is very much a therapy of choice and change, based on the conviction that even though people are often products of their past, they don't have to be held hostage by it forever. Therefore in a cooperative relationship, such as a school the teacher must create an environment where it is possible for the learner to feel connected to another dependable person that they actually like and would actually choose as a friend in their real life. Reality Therapy holds that we learn and assume responsibility for our behaviour through involvement with other responsible people (Glasser, 2004).

In education, Reality Therapy can be used as a basis for the school's classroom management plan. Reality Therapy has been shown to be effective in improving underachieving learner's internal perception of control. Reality Therapy can be used to help teachers improve learners with emotional and behavioural disorders. Many at risk and alternative schools across the nation have implemented Reality Therapy techniques and methods to improve school functioning and the learning and social environment (Glasser, 2000).

These theories are relevant to my study on the management of learner problems, especially since the learners come from impoverished backgrounds, as they may be adapted or adopted by teachers for their use in schools. Impoverished learners often come from situations where they lack most of the basic needs postulated by Choice Theory, those of power, belonging, freedom and fun. In the absence of these needs the learner's main focus will be on survival. According to Choice Theory, once aware of the five basic needs, an individual is more equipped to select options to improve their quality of life. It is therefore imperative that teachers find suitable ways to satisfy the basic needs of their learners at least at the bare minimum in order for the learners to achieve fulfillment in their lives and be receptive to the teaching and learning process (Glasser, 2004). Learners who come from impoverished situations usually have low self-esteem and educational success may be the only prospect these learners have of developing positive self-esteem (Glasser, 2000). These theories will assist the teacher to exercise control and manage learner problems both in and outside the classroom, where rules are set with learners. The teacher's role in classroom management is emphasized and the use of these theories promotes ways in which the teacher can empower the learners to regulate their own behaviour. Glasser's Theory (2000) accentuates that parents

should be brought on board to help teachers so that their joint efforts will help learners with their problems. He further advises that when teachers use his theories they can better understand learners with problems by bonding with them. He believes that when learners bond with their teachers they trust them and will develop a relationship with open communication. Learners will also try to adjust their behaviour by adopting self-discipline and developing a sense of intrinsic motivation (Glasser, 2000).

2. 4 Schooling in Impoverished Contexts

Poverty entails a desperate lack of capital, resources and hope. It has severe consequences for every aspect of an individual's life. Poverty impacts on school accomplishment, success, and social-emotional performance, with unrelenting poverty having severely damaging effects (Zorn & Noga, 2004). Poverty impacts a child from the moment he/she enters the school system. A child raised in poverty often comes into the system already behind his or her peers. McLoyd (1998) found that income poverty correlates highly with low levels of pre-school ability, coupled with low test scores later in childhood as well as grade failure and dropping out of school. School achievement is most susceptible to the effects of poverty during the pre-school years. Many learners from impoverished homes enter formal schooling considerably behind in the academic, social and physical attributes expected for their age group, putting them at greater risk of early departure from school and referral to special education (Zotis, 2011). A child raised in poverty has often not enjoyed the benefits of preschool (Hunter, 2009). Preschoolers living in poverty need access to education that develops literacy, particularly at an age when so much knowledge absorption and advancement takes place. Bainbridge and Lasley (2002) stress the importance of mental stimulation in the home, as well as a high-protein diet. Impoverished parents frequently have little formal education and cannot offer academic stimulation or appropriate diets (Bainbridge & Lasley, 2002).

In terms of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, a child cannot focus on learning when their whole energy is directed toward the first two levels of the hierarchy. If a child doesn't have safety and security, a place to live and food to eat on a regular basis, they are less able to focus on learning (Hunter, 2009). This can be catastrophic in terms of education. Poverty affects an individual and their family at such a deep psychological level that it may obliterate any sense of purpose and need to achieve potential goals because they seem beyond attainment (Zotis, 2011). Furthermore, if a child doesn't feel loved or cherished, and valued in and of

themselves, which can be the case in a poor household, they spend their energy seeking that love and belonging, which can manifest itself in a variety of ways. Poverty, at this abstracted level, cannot help but have dismal consequences for the schooling of children growing up in an impoverished environment (Zotis, 2011).

Furthermore poor families usually have less ability to access good quality health care, purchase healthy food or provide educational and inspirational experiences for their children. Health issues related to poverty result in higher rates of absenteeism among poor children than children from more affluent backgrounds. Prolonged absenteeism makes it even more difficult for learners who enter school already behind to catch up (Zorn & Noga, 2004).

South African society consists of different racial groups, which were historically ranked according to a power hierarchy. Until recently, Black people occupied inferior positions at the bottom of the hierarchy. The apartheid regime segregated education and prescribed what was to be taught in Black schools through the Bantu Education system. The aim of apartheid education was to ensure that Black people remained in inferior positions (Kartell & Chabilall, 2005). Little research has been conducted in South Africa on poverty and education. Proof of this is the fact that the South African Department of Education has done away with feeding schemes in secondary schools. Secondary school children are as in need as primary school children and they belong to the same impoverished socio-economic class (Khanare, 2008). According to Campbell (1991), poverty is not being able to go to school and not knowing how to read. The situation in other countries is somewhat different from the South African experience.

In late 1980s political change began to challenge segregation and schools began to integrate, allowing Black learners to enrol in formerly White, Coloured and Indian schools. In 1994 the new Government of National Unity brought the various education departments together. This did not however, ensure the equalization of the former White and Black schools. Most Black schools still suffer from gross inadequacies ranging from limited resources and infrastructure, to a lack of school counsellors (Khumalo, 1995). Consequently poverty within Black education has to be understood against this background. In South Africa the absence or dearth of a policy relating to the relationship between poverty and education has meant that many problems that relate to or are a direct result of social stratification are still in the closet and

not discussed. Poverty remains a common feature of Black schools that has severe effects on the educational ambitions and career prospects of learners (Kartell & Chabilall, 2005).

Eighteen years after the advent of democracy and the post-apartheid era in South Africa, teachers, learners and the government all agree that there is still a long way to go in terms of resolving the inequalities in education (MyFundi, 2010). The separate education ministries with their separate budgets for different racial groups vanished more than a decade ago. In 2005 the Department of Education (DOE) announced plans to exempt parents suffering extreme poverty from school fees in an effort to ensure that no child is excluded from the right to education (DOE, 1996). The DOE also introduced legislation to declare certain public schools in poor provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and the Eastern Cape ‘no fee’ schools (MyFundi, 2010). Due to financial constraints, government policy was changed during the final years of apartheid to allow schools to set their own fees (MyFundi, 2010). Many schools experience a lack of funding which resulted in some poor schools becoming even poorer with learners paying no school fees, which schools used to use for basic running costs. Although these schools maybe impoverished, in many cases the education offered is good, even though teachers lack sufficient resources such as textbooks, chalkboards and writing materials (MyFundi, 2010). MyFundi (2010) observes that schools in impoverished communities often cannot afford even basic facilities like clean water, toilets, electricity and telephones. Furthermore, the physical structure and environment of the school is often in a bad state of disrepair. The classroom environment in many instances is not conducive to effective teaching and learning. Some schools are so impoverished that learners are being taught under trees with a total lack of basic facilities (MyFundi, 2010). According to Guy (2008), some extremely impoverished schools have just one brick classroom and some with mud walls; after hard rains, the mud-walled classrooms need rebuilding. These schools have only a handful of desks and when winter rain falls the cement floors become cold and wet; learners have to do their written tasks and even their examinations standing up. Normal days see most of the learners sitting on plastic containers and old, plastic mealie bags.

Classroom environments that are safe, comfortable and trusting can enhance learning. They should be high in challenges and low in threats. Learners from impoverished home backgrounds are the ones who usually attend impoverished schools. The living conditions of poor children create high stress levels and the lack or absence of learning resources adds to

these stress levels. Teachers who teach in these contexts face huge challenges when planning lessons and managing their classrooms (Caine, 2000).

2.5 Problems that Impoverished Learners Face at Schools

The literature on the problems that impoverished learners face at schools is vast and covers issues, amongst others, related to community as a cause, home support and care, abuse, poor academic achievement, language as a barrier to learning, high mobility and contextual realities that impact on learners' lives. These issues will be discussed in this section of the literature review because they present a framework to explore teachers' experience of learners from impoverished communities.

2.5.1 The Community as a Cause

Children who grow up in a poor family often contend with a home environment that is unsafe and not beneficial to learning. These children's lives are often in danger. They are exposed to drug dealers in their neighbourhoods who have no regard for other people and their wellbeing. Children may risk their lives seeking protection if a gunfight breaks out in their neighbourhood. According to Crain (2008), cases have been documented where children have become statistics just by walking home from school or getting off the bus in a violent and drug infested neighbourhood. This daily occurrence of violence causes these children to abandon school or neglect their homework and schoolwork because they live in homes where the parent or parents are often negligent (Crain, 2008). In addition, these children become the masters of their own destiny: they see the desolation around them and become hardened to that lifestyle. This is a type of programming that they go through which has dire consequences for these children of poverty. The girls turn to prostitution and boys become runners for the local drug dealers (Crain, 2008). South Africa loses too many youngsters to gangs, guns and drugs because we have become too unconcerned as a society. When we begin to look at poverty as the adversary, we will begin to see what an impoverished family goes through on a daily basis (Crain, 2008). Working with children from impoverished neighbourhoods, providing positive reinforcements and alleviating some of the stressors through visible policing, will minimize the effects of poverty on their young lives and cause them to become assets to society instead of a burden or more fatally, a casualty (Zorn & Noga, 2004).

2.5.2 Home Support and Care- Parental Apathy

According to Epstein (1991), parental involvement has been defined as parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Factors such as economics, education, time constraints and culture and socio-economic status will determine the level of parental involvement. Good school-family partnerships lead to improved academic achievement, self-esteem, school attendance and social behaviour, which lead to positive changes in the child. Parents are the child's first teacher. They are an invaluable resource. Co-operation and involvement are crucial in most successful learning environments. A lack of parental involvement can lead to frustration on the part of teachers as well as learners.

According to Dekker and Lemmer (1993), the parents are a child's first teachers. They maintain that before a child attends school he/she should have been assisted by his/her parents to learn values. Parenthood can be described as loving fulfilment and the chosen acceptance of responsibility towards a being, which God has brought into the life of humankind (Goodwin, 2000). Landman, Van De Merwe, Pitout, Smith and Windell (1990) further describe parenting in the educational situation as consisting of two instruments, that is, the parent and the child. Firstly, parents show responsibility and a sense of duty towards their children by providing supervision, care and protection. It is necessary that the child feels protected and experiences the support of his/her parents. The child, the second instrument of the family, learns the quintessence of good social conduct such as teamwork, neatness, conscientiousness, punctuality, unselfishness and obedience, as mirrored in the love and responsibility of members of the family for one another. A large number of learners in South Africa have special problems which are often related to poverty and these experiences get in the way of progress towards achieving educational success (Le Roux, 1997). Poverty strikes a family for a multitude of reasons, but one of the significant factors is the lack of education and training received by the parents during their own learning years. Some parents in poverty situations attach enormous importance to educating their children in order that they can rise above poverty. Other parents who have not grasped the value of education often fail to see value in their children attending school. The need to simply survive may override the need to secure the future. Even if they do see some value in education, the needs of the moment can outweigh any hope for a positive outcome in the future. Children in poverty stricken families are often obliged to stay at home to care for younger siblings while parents search desperately

for some form of support or employment (Zotis, 2011). Frequently, children from impoverished homes only have one parent to rely on, placing even more strain on the parent and the child (Zotis, 2011).

Booth and Dunn (1996) maintain that parents play a critical role in both their children's academic achievement and their socio-emotional development. Impoverished children often do not receive the back-up and support they need from family members to find value in achieving in school. Parents, who are struggling to survive, have no time or energy to support their children's educational needs. Pretorius (2000) postulates that, an underprivileged child usually comes from an insufficiently skilled or uneducated family. They may have been brought up by parents or grandparents whose educational background hasn't endowed them with the ability to enrich their life with books and knowledge. The ability to read is the gateway to education and growing up in a family with parents who may only be slightly literate stacks the odds against the child (Hunter, 2009).

Children raised in poverty are often forced to seek some form of employment as soon as they are of reasonable age. This cuts short their educational experience in a society that places high value on advanced education and a significant level of technical skills sets. Poverty is a vicious circle from which it can be difficult to break free. Once a child has left the school system to enter the work force it is less likely they will return to any meaningful educational experience. Life has a way of taking over and an impoverished teenager may become an impoverished parent themselves, setting in motion that same cycle of poverty that leaves yet another generation struggling to find the resources it needs to survive (Zotis, 2011).

Poverty also affects a learner's ability to prioritize and complete homework. This is termed the 'culture of poverty', which is most often seen in families where poverty is generational (Hunter, 2009). These families have an outlook on life that is different from that of a middle class family. Unlike middle class families who focus on the attainment of wealth, goals, and similar objectives; the family below the poverty line or impoverished families often place a higher priority on family, entertainment and enjoyment of the social aspects of life, because they have been conditioned throughout life to believe that there is no hope for them to escape their environment. Consequently, a child living in a culture of poverty will often be unable to complete their homework because the home environment is not conducive to studying (Hunter, 2009).

Tleane (2000) observes that, while some parents show no concern for their children's performance during the course of the year, they expect good results at the end of year. Booth and Dunn (1996) argue that, there is increasing evidence that the quality of parent-teacher associations influences children's school success in particular because high quality associations make it easier for parents and teachers to work together to promote a child's intellectual development. Goodwin (2000) notes, that, parents can assist their children by supervising homework and monetary dealings and by attending school events. Lack of parental involvement frustrates teachers (Sikhwivhilu, 2003).

2.5.3 Abuse

High levels of stress from living in poverty are associated with increased violence towards children, with rates of child abuse being higher among impoverished families (Jenson, 2009). Several studies by Gershoff (2003) document that a parents'/guardians' punitive approach becomes more insensitive as earnings decrease. Impoverished parents are generally more dictatorial with their children. They have a propensity to issue cruel demands and impose physical punishment such as hitting (Bradley et al., 2001 cited in Jensen, 2009). Parents who are drunk or under the influence of drugs, are unable to care for their children; make good quality parenting decisions and control dangerous desires. Jack and Jordan (1999, cited in Jensen, 2009) add that abuse recurs to a great extent when the parents experience an assortment of traumatic life events, use alcohol or drugs or live in dilapidated, crime-ridden neighbourhoods with only partial social support networks.

While accounts of sexual predators are distressing, what is even more frightening is that sexual abuse usually takes place at the hands of someone the child knows and should be able to trust, most often close relatives. Contrary to what many believe, it is not just girls who are at risk. Boys and girls suffer sexual abuse. In fact, sexual abuse of boys may be underreported due to shame and stigma. They feel that they have done something wrong and are loath to report abuse. They may worry that others won't believe them, will be angry with them, or that it will divide their family. Because of these difficulties, false accusations of sexual abuse are not common, so if a child confides in you, take him or her seriously. Don't turn a blind eye! (Smith & Segal, 2012).

According to Smith and Segal (2012), aside from the physical harm that sexual abuse can cause, the emotional element is powerful and influential. Child abuse is highly disruptive to

the development of strong relationships, emotional coping mechanisms and a healthy temperament structure, and leads to social-emotional and psychological turbulence later in life (Emery & Laumann- Billings, 1998).

2.5.4 Language as a barrier to learning

A large number of learners in South Africa have special problems which are often related to poverty; this impedes educational success (Le Roux, 1997). The political changes in South Africa have also brought about changes in the country's educational system, which are reflected at schools and in classrooms. Learners from different cultural and language backgrounds share the same classroom (Myburgh, Poggenpoel & Van Rensburg, 2004). In the South African context, language has been found to have a profound influence on learning outcomes and is also an important predictor of learner achievement (Le Roux, 1997). South Africa is a society in transition with 11 official languages and a new public culture of human rights and remedy which can create instability in a context of poverty and a history of racism that affects interpersonal interactions (Myburgh, et al., 2004). Diversity and multilingualism pose a great challenge to teachers. One of the greatest challenges teachers face is teaching learners in their second language. Second language teaching is not an unfamiliar phenomenon and is practiced across the world (Macdonald, 1991). Bilingualism and the acquisition of a second language are widely debated in educational literature (Myburgh, et al., 2004).

In many schools there is contestation over the use of language, with English being the most common medium of instruction; however proficiency in English is vastly different between first language speakers and second (or third) language speakers. Language proficiency often occurs along racialised lines. First language speakers are likely to insist on the use of English, while second language speakers often speak their own language (in the context of this study, isiZulu (Cummins, 2000).

According to Piper (1993, cited in Myburgh, et al., 2004) most children attain language skills from birth by listening to their parents talk. South African schools are faced with the scenario where learners find themselves in classes where the language of instruction is different from their mother tongue. Schools in transition do not have clear language hierarchies, but English is often the preferred medium of instruction. Although the South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996 provides that the governing body of a school should determine the language of instruction for the school, this language policy may not exclude learners from different

language backgrounds. Parents who prefer their children to be taught in English enroll their children in a school where the medium of instruction is English even though they may have limited proficiency in the language. Schools are thus expected to cater for second language learners (Myburgh, et al., 2004).

Many learners who come from impoverished communities are either second or third English language speakers. However, they aspire to learn English (DOE, 2008). According to Le Roux (1997), learners' flexibility in learning may not be adequately developed due to their impoverished background and this affects their involvement in classroom activities. Owing to their impoverished circumstances learners do not have access to basic resources such as newspapers, magazines, radio and television which facilitate exposure to the English language. This may result in learners becoming frustrated and leaving school or not progressing to the next grade, as they receive little support or supervision of their schoolwork from their poor and illiterate parents who only speak their mother tongue language. Home-school collaboration is an essential component of an effective two-way bilingual programme. Such children's only exposure to English is in schools and this hinders their academic progress (Navarette, 1996). Learners who study in a language which is not their mother tongue confront a number of problems that could impact negatively on their learning and academic performance as well as their ability to complete their learning successfully (Cook, 2001). According to Cummins (2000), when learners do not have basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS), this affects their cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in English. Cummins (2000) further hypothesised that if children are to progress productively through the grades they need to obtain and apply the registers of language efficiently. Navarette (1996) defines the language of teaching and learning as an academic language that should be used for cognitive development. He further emphasizes that there should be a connection between the learner's mother tongue and the language of instruction. Using a second language as a medium of instruction may lead to a lack of understanding because the learner does not use the language as a form of basic communication. The language of instruction is thus not meaningful for the learner. A lack of understanding and the interpretation of the language of instruction also place unwanted pressure on the learner to make sense of the learning process. McLoyd (1998) describes making sense of the learning process as metacognition. This is the ability to understand the aim and purpose of a task.

Le Roux (1997) notes that, in the South African context English is the most common medium of communication because it is widely used in the media. Crawford (1989) highlights the fact that teachers should recognise the differences among learners during the teaching process. Teachers should therefore also take into consideration the language differences their learners have. This poses a problem for teachers because they are unaware of their learners' experience of teaching and learning in a second or third language. According to Thomkins (2011), learners' needs should take preference during the teaching process. He further points out, that learners who are not fluent in the language of instruction are commonly identified as learners with learning disabilities. The emphasis is thus placed on the learners' language proficiency rather than their learning capability.

2.5.5 Poor Academic Achievement

Du Plessis & Conley (2007) postulate, that, poverty often drastically affects children's success in school. Children who live in poverty generally achieve at lower levels than children from the middle and upper classes. Factors such as the quality of learners' learning behaviours, the home environment in which poor children live, and past experiences of education are among the many influencing learner achievement. A child's home activities, preferences, and mannerisms must align with the world and, where they do not, learners 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 achieve far less educational success than children who live above the poverty line (Du Plessis & Conley, 2007).

Research has found that there is a high risk of educational underachievement among learners who are from impoverished circumstances and who often display unruly behaviour in school (Martin & MacNeil, 2007). Discipline is one of the most difficult issues teachers face today. Disruptive behaviour results in lost curriculum time as other learners are disadvantaged by their disruptive colleagues. This creates a classroom environment that is not always conducive to learning (Edwards, 1997). Teachers need the support of parents, school administrators and school boards to help them manage problems with discipline effectively. One of the aims of this study is to establish how teachers manage these problems in the school context.

Although I discuss parental involvement later in this chapter, it is sufficiently important to warrant some discussion here as well. Research demonstrates that parental involvement is essential to reinforce children's performance and to communicate high expectations about academic achievement, especially for low achievers (Crawford, 1989; Navarette 1996). Parental guidance and cooperation with teachers is essential for learners' success. However, teachers have a difficult time getting parents involved because many parents lack the skills or stability (due to financial constraints) to help their children to succeed (Makapela, 2008). When parents do not show any interest in a child's schoolwork, and the child is left to fend for him or herself these children often struggle academically and feel demotivated. This poses a major barrier to the learner (Anup, 2011). Anup, (2011) further postulates that certain types of interventions are necessary to develop effective communication among teachers, parents and learners. When parents take an active interest in a learner's academic work, the learner's academic performance improves and is sustained. It also boosts the learner's morale and encourages them to take their schoolwork more seriously because they are aware that their parents are constantly monitoring their academic performance (Makapela, 2008).

The majority of poverty-stricken children are born to poor parents (Makapela, 2008). These children start life at a disadvantage. Poor parents often spend a great deal of time and energy dealing with the baggage that goes with being poor and in many cases pay little attention to the child's scholastic needs. When parents shy away from offering support and interest in their child's education, the child performs poorly and does not value their education sufficiently (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Lack of parental involvement makes the learners' and teachers' burden even more arduous, as learners lose interest in school and play truant more often.

2.5.6 High Mobility

Learner mobility refers to the practice of learners changing schools other than for reasons of grade promotion (Hartman, 2002). Schools with high rates of learner mobility generally have one or more of the following characteristics: a large population of children of migrant workers, a large population of homeless children and a large population of low-income families (Rumberger, 2002). High mobility is a symptom of poverty and its associated social factors, for example, economic and demographic factors such as deindustrialization, residential segregation and migration of residents from outlying areas, constrain economic

opportunities and choices across generations, isolating poor children (Du Plessis & Conley, 2007). Children may move from area to area and live in different places since property ownership is elusive. Learners who habitually transfer between schools during the school year are at greater risk of academic and behavioural problems such as lower achievement levels due to discontinuities in the curriculum between schools, difficulty in developing peer relationships, and a greater risk of dropping out (Rumberger, 2002). Research by Kerbow (1996) indicates that changing schools has a negative effect on learners' achievements and can place them as much as a year behind their peers. Highly mobile learners face the psychological challenge of coping with a new school environment as well as adjustment to new peers and social expectations (Rumberger & Larson, 1999). Mobility compounds the difficulties of making friends, and may lead to hostile behaviour, confrontations and violence, or children might become more withdrawn, etc. (Edwards, 1997).

Mobility not only impacts learners who change schools; it impacts classrooms and schools who must deal with mobile learners. It can also adversely impact non-mobile learners. Hartman (2002) found that schools with high mobility rates reported that test scores for non-mobile learners were considerably lower than those of learners in schools with lower mobility rates. A study of mobility by Rumberger (1999) revealed that school personnel characterized the overall affects of learner mobility as a "chaos" factor that affects classroom learning activities, teacher morale, and administrative burdens—all of which can influence the learning and achievement of all learners in the school. Teachers were adamant that it was disruptive and difficult to teach in classrooms with a constant learner turnover. Similarly, a study by Smyth and Shacklock (1998) found that the pace of instruction was slower in schools with high rates of learner mobility. For learners in a highly mobile school, even though some don't move, the instruction and content is approximately a year behind that of learners in more secure schools (Crespar, 1996). Crespar (1996) postulates that, high levels of learner instability in classrooms tend to augment re-evaluation of materials, which hampers the curricular pace and decreases the prospect of all learners learning, not only those who are changing schools. By reducing the school's curricular pace, mobility lessens the achievement of all learners in a school. Some schools have endeavoured to lessen these effects by keeping highly mobile learners separated from other classes, so that the continual influx and departure of mobile learners do not disrupt the education of other non-mobile learners (Hartman, 2002). Kirkpatrick and Lash (1990) note that each time a learner changes schools, he/she suffers a one month decline in reading achievement.

Research conducted by Rumberger (2002) suggests that differences in learner achievement between non-mobile and mobile learners can also be attributed to learners' background characteristics. The gloominess and lack of achievement associated with mobility is compounded by other related factors such as limited English proficiency, violence, poor housing and a single-parent home. Poverty was also found to be a significant predictor of low reading achievement. According to Haveman & Wolfe (1994) learners from lower income families and lower socio-economic strata were more mobile than learners from higher income families and higher socio-economic strata. Children living with one parent move twice as often and have lower achievement levels than those from two-parent families (Newman, 1988). Not only is learner mobility widespread; it can be detrimental to educational achievement at all levels. Mobile learners experience both social and academic adjustment problems that impact on their academic achievement (Tucker, Marx & Long, 1998). According to Rumberger and Larson (1998), learners who change schools experience lower academic achievement than learners who do not change schools. This results in irregular school attendance and difficulty in establishing and maintaining relationships with teachers and peers. Mobile learners face a number of challenges in adjusting to a new school settings, including the psychological challenge of coping with a new school environment (Payne, 2005), social adjustment to new peers and social expectations (Lee, 2002) and adjustment to new academic standards and expected classroom behaviours (Jason, 1992). Mobile learners are less likely to complete high school than those who remain at one school (Astone & McLanahan, 1994).

Newman (1988) observes that children from poverty-stricken backgrounds may move from one town to another as their parents search for employment or run away from problems such as debt, a violent spouse or a criminal record. They may live in temporary or homeless shelters that only allow short stays. They may even live on the streets. The circumstances they live in and their daily life experiences can have considerable consequences for their education. Moving is a very disturbing event for children. According to Rumberger (2002) adolescence is a time of stress and mobility; moving increases that stress. He adds that when mobile learners enroll in a new school they are faced with the challenge of establishing, from a host of choices, what type of peer group they want to associate with and ways to meet and make the types of friends they want. Combined with a host of other problems faced by homeless and mobile children, the impact on their emotional, social and cognitive development can be overwhelming (Chafel, 1997).

2.5.7 Contextual Realities that Impact on Learners' Lives

A study conducted by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) and the Joint Education Trust (JET) for the DOE on learner absenteeism in South African schools found that socio-economic factors were predominant in explaining absenteeism. These included poverty, transport, illness, lack of water, lack of parental involvement and food insecurity (Weideman, Goga, Lopez, Mayet, Macun & Barry, 2007). Water-related problems at the community level have the potential to impede regular attendance at school, thereby affecting academic performance. The consequences of this are loss of instruction time and absenteeism. The difficulties associated with achieving academic success are intensified by lack of access to water (Devnarain, 2010). This seriously impedes learners' progress at school as they spend a lot of time fetching water for themselves and their families and are either absent very often or get to school late (Khanare, 2008). According to Saholiarisoa (2009), when learners have no access to running water, this results in a lack of hygiene and sanitation. Many learners suffer from recurrent diarrhoea and are obliged to stay away from school. The amount of time spent fetching water discourages many impoverished learners from pursuing an education (Child Labour Programme of Action, 2007). According to Devnarain (2010) several human rights instruments provide for the right to access to water, which is regarded as essential to human growth. The Child Labour Programme of Action (2007) highlights that more than 200 000 South African children spend up to 24 hours per week fetching water. A significant number of South African households further still have limited access to water.

Devnarain (2010) notes, that, the right to plentiful water has been well-established in international and provincial treaties which South Africa is signatory to. She adds that these commitments require that states ensure that continuous development occurs in a socially just way. Together with 189 other countries, South Africa is a participant in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which jointly aim to reduce extreme poverty by 2015 (Devnarain, 2010). The MDGs are pledges made by governments "worldwide to step up their efforts to do more to reduce poverty and hunger and to deal with ill-health, gender inequality, lack of education, lack of access to clean water, and environmental deprivation" (WHO, 2003 p.25).

The Child Labour Programme of Action (2007, p.48) observes that “the amount of water needed by a particular household will tend to increase where it includes someone ill with HIV/AIDS.” The hypothesis is that such circumstances will place a greater burden on children in terms of the amount of time required to fetch water, reducing the amount of time available for school work.

2.5.8 Health Issues (HIV/AIDS)

Poor communities and households are most affected by the spread of HIV/AIDS. Mahadev (2006) maintains that poverty, HIV/AIDS and education together create a circle of hope and despair. Poverty and HIV/AIDS thrive on each other, while education provides some hope for a way out of hopelessness for learners affected by the pandemic and for families overwhelmed by it. However, basic social services such as health, education and social support are disproportionately accessible to the poor. This results in an even larger population that is prone to infection and vulnerable to the impact of the pandemic. Helping to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS among learners is likely to be the most significant determinant of whether spending on education will lead to human and economic growth (Streak, 2002).

Some learners may become orphans due to HIV/AIDS. In South Africa, teachers are faced with the challenge of teaching learners who come from child-headed homes, who are taking care of sick parents, their or who are cared for by their grandparents. Children who have to perform household duties are frequently absent or come late to school; this impacts on their academic performance (Mahadev, 2006).

Impoverished learners often have limited understanding and knowledge of the causes and impact of HIV/AIDS. Their attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of AIDS are twisted and tailored to what they want to believe, which is not necessarily correct (Muvumba & Pharoah, 2008). The human rights approach asserts that their marginal social location and low status in society explains learners’ lack of ability to protect themselves from the virus. Scholars and policy experts have devoted increasing attention to teachers’ role in educating learners about HIV/AIDS (Mahadev, 2006).

Seeing their loved ones suffer and die causes psychological trauma for children (Khanare, 2008). Teachers need to team up with social welfare services to help children in this situation.

If they are orphaned, it might be better for them to be placed in foster care rather than left to their own devices or be exposed and become vulnerable to paedophiles.

2.6 The Management of Problems Faced by Learners from Impoverished Backgrounds

Slavin (1998) proposes that schools can have a powerful impact on the academic achievement and success of all children. A good education is often the only means of breaking the cycle of poverty. Children need an education that is founded on high standards and expectations for all. A precise curriculum and assessments that are aligned with these standards should exist. What occurs in our classrooms has a significant impact on pupil achievement. The curriculum should be challenging in order to prevent decreased opportunities for higher education, which translate into fewer opportunities in life.

The quality of a child's early school experiences has great influence on their development and potential to succeed. Intervention and support processes and programmes should be implemented at an early stage to prevent failure (Slavin, 1998). Schools can successfully minimize poverty-related odds through an unshakable belief in the possibility of success and sheer determination in realising it. In South Africa, whose deep rural areas and township squatter camps and informal settlements exhibit severe poverty, schools can ensure success by providing good leadership and ensuring that effective teaching and learning take place, irrespective of the economic situation (Du Plessis & Conley, 2007). Successful leaders of high-poverty schools generally emphasize the important role that their schools play in community upliftment. They further believe very strongly that the school should also work for the parents and the community; therefore such schools provide adult basic education and training (ABET). Consequently, the positive effects of a successful high-poverty school extend far beyond the school boundaries, and are of real significance in alleviating poverty in South Africa (Kamper, 2008).

In the following paragraph, I provide evidence from research conducted by Crawford (1989) in a primary school in London. Although the work was done in a first world context, its findings resonate to a large extent with my study.

The principal and teachers at this London school successfully managed the problems faced by learners from impoverished backgrounds by creating a safe school environment and by establishing a support network. School leaders offered additional tuition and kept the school

open after school hours to serve as a study centre to improve study methods and reading skills. Teachers took on the role of teachers as well as counsellors and caregivers, thus creating a sense of family in the school. They encouraged active parental involvement in school-related activities and learner support to inculcate a positive culture of teaching and learning (Crawford, 1989). Successful school leaders generally emphasise the crucial role of parental involvement (Navarette, 1996). The first priority is that the school should be an attractive and inviting venue. Against the backdrop of the widespread phenomenon of parental apathy towards school matters in high-poverty communities, the first challenge is to devise measures to attract parents to the schools (Navarette, 1996). One such measure may be handing out learner reports only to the parents or caregivers, who have to appear in person at the school. This can be done on the first day of every school vacation. These opportunities can be utilized to build parents' self-esteem as full partners in the school enterprise and to mobilise their skills and support for the school. Parents may be assured that there is no disgrace in being unable to pay school fees, as they can serve the school in many other ways, such as volunteering to participate in school fund-raising activities (Kamper, 2008).

Du Plessis and Conley (2007) postulate that school leaders can attempt to alleviate learner poverty by ensuring that food is provided (feeding scheme), that clothing and uniforms are sponsored and by assisting learners with basic health care. If the school's Nutrition Programme offers learners a daily meal, this may act as an added incentive for learners living in poverty to attend school, thus discouraging absenteeism. Support and sources for providing for the whole spectrum of learner needs can be mobilised from beyond the school and the surrounding community, e.g. from supermarkets and religious organizations. Religious leaders offer spiritual guidance and basic support to learners, especially those from child-headed homes (Kamper, 2008).

Mahadev (2006) also suggests that nurses from local health clinics be invited to come to the school and provide learners with the necessary vaccinations, medical checkups and health talks, especially with regards to HIV/AIDS issues. Social welfare services may also be engaged to assist a learner's parents to obtain social and child support grants. Child Support Grants will enable households to cover schooling expenses or to improve the learners' nutrition and health (Mahadev, 2006). Education also acts as a source of hope for future employment and a way out of dire poverty (Du Plessis & Conley, 2007).

2.7 Managing the Classroom

Classroom management is the process of governing a classroom through procedures, rules and policies. Although there are many ways to manage a classroom, successful classroom management provides a sturdy framework for learning (Jansen, 2002). There are racial, ethnic and socio-economic differences among learners in schools and establishing expectations for appropriate learner behaviour allows one to create an environment conducive to learning. The increasing numbers of children living in poverty have made South Africa's classrooms more diverse than ever before. This makes both teaching and learning more challenging. This issue can remain a challenge for teachers, as opposed to becoming a problem, if the focus is on learners learning as opposed to teaching learners. Teachers need to be tuned in to the culture of poverty and be sensitive to the vast array of needs that children living in poverty bring to the classroom. They may be poor in addition to being non-English speakers of diverse ethnic, racial and religious group. Social contexts have a significant impact on the development of children (Payne, 2005). The social world of school operates according to different rules or norms from those of the social world in which these children live. The focus should be on forming a harmonious relationship between the values of the learners and the values emphasized in school (Payne, 2005).

The learning content should be of high quality and relevant to the learners' circumstances. A weak curriculum is unacceptable. Teachers are expected to be knowledgeable about the learners' home life so that they can plan effective and engaging lessons. Furthermore, instructional and classroom management techniques that work well with some children don't necessarily work well with poor children. The perspectives and understanding of the children need to be considered (Goodwin, 2000). According to Haberman (1995), teachers should make it their responsibility to find ways to generate and maintain learners' interest and involvement on a consistent basis by making the classroom a safe, accommodating and winning place. By producing lessons that have meaning to these children, teachers are responding actively and constructively to the prior knowledge and understanding of their learners. The use of role playing through drama and group activities can be useful in identifying thoughts that are frequently imprecise and unproductive. This can also help children to persevere at exigent tasks as opposed to simply giving up, resulting in higher levels of achievement (Huitt, 1999; Pajares, 1996). Academic failure is a consequence of the beliefs that children hold about themselves and their ability to control their environment.

Often, learners at impoverished schools will not listen to authority figures, such as teachers, because their peers' opinions mean everything to them. If a learner's peers display disruptive behaviour, they may adopt the same behaviour, as they assume this is acceptable behaviour (Northmore & Potterton, 2003). In order for teachers to overcome some of these behavioural problems they can single out one or two learners in every class who are a model of appropriate behaviour and appeal to them to encourage their peers to adopt a similar attitude. Many learners from economically challenged families have only known negative support, that is, punishment for bad behaviour. The teacher ought to promote classroom control by offering positive reinforcement, such as rewards for good behaviour (Preedy, 1993). Teachers should have learners set behaviour goals each week, and offer items that serve as immediate gratification, such as erasers or stickers for younger learners. For older grades, extra credit can serve as an incentive, bearing in mind that some immature learners may find such a reward too abstract to work towards. A consistent approach to rules is another key in classroom management in impoverished schools. At home, learners of low socio-economic status may have rules enforced inconsistently due to the fluctuating nature of their home life. School needs to be viewed as a safe place where the environment remains the same day after day (Jansen, 2004).

Other factors related to poverty that may place a learner at risk of academic failure are very young, single parents, or parents with a low educational level; unemployment; abuse and neglect; substance abuse; dangerous neighbourhoods; homelessness; mobility; and exposure to inadequate or inappropriate educational experiences. Being able to identify and understand learners who are at-risk is critical if we are to support their growth and development (Leroy & Symes, 2001). In order to do this, warm and caring relationships need to be developed between teachers and learners. This will enable teachers to detect any warning signs that may place learners at risk of failure, interfering with their chances for success in school and life. Academic and behavioural problems can be indicators of impending failure. Among such behaviours are: delays in language development and reading development, aggression, violence, social withdrawal, substance abuse, irregular attendance, and depression. Teachers may also find that the learner does not complete assignments, study for tests, or does not come to school prepared to learn because of poverty-related circumstances in the home environment. Teachers may have difficulty reaching a learner's parent or guardian with regards to assisting the learner to overcome these problems (Leroy & Symes, 2001). In the absence of parental involvement and guidance these learners may be unable to concentrate or

focus. They may be unwilling or unable to interact with peers or adults in school in an effective manner. These issues have a serious impact on poverty-stricken learners' learning (Leroy & Symes, 2001).

As teachers these aspects of poverty make planning and preparation absolutely critical. The learning content needs to be related in varying ways to meet the needs of the diverse learners in the classroom. We have to consider the cultural values of these children as we arrange their learning. Boler and Carroll (2003) argues that children who are culturally deprived come from homes that are not only materially disadvantaged but also culturally disadvantaged in terms of the attitudes and values that were transmitted to them. He adds that sociological evidence drew attention to accounts of child socialisation and to patterns of child rearing. The concept also refers to social groupings that are caught up in a spiral of poverty and general cultural deprivation, because they experience environmental paucity and psychosocial disabilities. Pretorius (2000) argues, from an educational point of view, that the child who finds him/herself in such an environment is situationally deprived. He goes on to argue that the child who experiences serious social culture and educational problems, is not equipped with the pre-school and extramural experiences that are necessary for optimal scholastic achievement. What is important from an educational point of view is the fact that there is a close link between the cultural level of the socio-economic environment and the scholastic achievement of the child (Chilli, 2006).

Constructivism is a key concept in that it respects learners' differences and allows them to use their own prior knowledge and experiences to make connections and learn. It affords learners the opportunity to become active learners by questioning, hypothesising and drawing conclusions based on their individual learning experiences. If there is a limited foundation for learners to draw on, we need to help them develop a base of knowledge and experiences so they have somewhere to start. By providing emotional support, modelling, and other forms of scaffolding, teachers can help learners use their strengths, skills, knowledge, attitudes and values (SKAVs) to develop and learn (Haberman, 1995). Learning experiences and problem-solving based on real-life problems can help learners deal with some of the issues they may be faced with in their lives. Learning by doing gives learners the opportunity to be active and imaginative problem solvers (Jansen, 2002). Thus, diversity actually presents us with a chance to enhance the quality of education for all our learners and provide them with a variety of opportunities to develop into productive citizens. As our schools and nation

become more diverse, the need to understand and accept differences also becomes more important. Our challenge is to provide learners with an effective, multicultural education that will foster awareness, respect, and acceptance. Teachers can help learners to develop caring and sensitivity toward different social classes (Thompkins, 2011).

The literature on poverty and its impact on learners' education are vast and encompass issues that go beyond the school environment. The literature suggests that poverty and education are complex phenomena and that the difficulty in addressing this issue is embodied in the multi-focal attention that it needs. This literature review, therefore, was conducted in a way that provides reasonable scope to manage this research project within the complexities that this phenomenon presents. Hence the literature review is by no means exhaustive. It was selective and purposive and provided a framework that allowed entry into my research for this study. The next section of the literature review presents the selected theoretical framework that guides the research in attempting to both manage the research project, as well as frame the analysis and theorisation thereof.

2.8 Conclusion

The literature review suggests that a lack of prior knowledge, parental involvement, knowledge, and resources; large class sizes; inability to complete the syllabus and teaching at different levels in the classroom are all factors that compound the problems that impoverished learners face at school. As Ben-Peretz (2001) observes, teaching is an impossible task because what one is thought to be doing as a teacher is unclear, ambiguous and laden with uncertainties.

Major concepts relevant to the study, with a brief outline of their mutual relationships were explained in this chapter. The relevant literature was reviewed with a view to providing a framework within which this phenomenon will be explored with the five teachers selected for this study (see chapter three for more details). The chapter ended with a description of Choice Theory and Reality Theory that were used to frame the analysis of this study. The next chapter provides insight into the methodology used to produce the data for this study.

Chapter Three

Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research methods and design that were employed to address and generate answers to the research questions. This study employs a qualitative process which uses various methods of data gathering, data making and data analysis. I provide theoretical justification for the design and indicate how the methods were applied practically in the process of conducting the research.

It is imperative to firstly differentiate between the concepts, 'method' and 'methodology', as different authors and textbooks on research methodology uses these terms differently. In order to be consistent in the use of these terms in this study, a brief overview of these terms will be provided here under. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p.67), expound that "methods refer to procedures used in the process of data gathering which, in turn, is used as a basis for, amongst others, inference, interpretation, justification and prediction". Silverman (2001), on the other hand, affirms that methodology is the assumptions about the research, what is to be studied, and how it is to be studied and also entails theoretical principles and frameworks that provide guidelines about how research is to be undertaken in the context of a particular paradigm. These include the epistemological, rhetorical, ontological, and methodological aspects. The methodology employed in any research study is governed by the paradigm (in this case an interpretive paradigm) in which the researcher views the world (Lincoln & Guba, 1995). Smith and Ashiabi, (2007) suggests a framework wherein a particular world view yields ontological assumptions (that deal with the nature of being, reality and existence); these give rise to epistemological assumptions (a philosophy or theory of knowledge or what counts as valid knowledge). The interpretation of this underlying framework therefore sets out the methodological framework in order to formulate an appropriate research design.

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2010) a research design is a plan of the way in which the researcher will systematically collect and analyse the relevant data required to answer the research question. The underlying discussion will thus outline and justify the research design.

The design presents the various elements comprising the process by which the data were produced, arguing for its significance, consistency and reliability. A rationale which integrates theoretical corroboration and practical application is provided for the research approach selected and the methods of data analysis engaged. Issues relating to the dependability of the research instrument and the credibility of the findings are also discussed.

3.2 The Interpretivist Paradigm

It is imperative to keep in mind that the adopted research paradigm manifests itself as an interpretive social science approach focusing on one school. Interpretive approaches view people and their interpretations, perceptions and understandings as primary data sources. According to Smith and Ashiabi, (2007) paradigms are systems of interrelated ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions. A paradigm informs a researcher's assumptions about the structure of knowledge, the ways in which knowledge can be achieved and communicated to others, who is the knower and what criteria should be used to ascertain the knowledge. The researcher must ensure that there is coherence, meaning that the research question and methods must fit logically within the paradigm in which the researcher is working. In order to ensure this coherence, the interpretive paradigm frames this research.

The interpretive paradigm is useful in understanding a participant's behaviour, feelings, viewpoints, beliefs, understanding and insights. These are things that cannot be easily measured. My intention was to examine and make sense of the situation from the viewpoint of the research respondents (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Rubin and Rubin (1995) claim that interpretative researchers begin with human beings and set out to understand their interpretations of the world around them. An interpretive research designs allow a researcher to interact closely with the respondents in order to gain insights and form clear understandings (Wiersma, 2000). Interpretivism does not rely on 'total immersion in a setting' and can happily support a study which uses interview methods and other methods.

Epistemologically, interpretivism is anti-positivist in nature. Simply put, epistemology is the philosophy or theory of knowledge, certainty and belief; it is also based on the premise that different kinds of settings, situations and interactions reveal data in multidimensional ways, and it is possible for a researcher to be an interpreter or 'knower' in these circumstances

precisely because of shared experience and participation. Given that the social ontology, that is, the natural world, environment and character of interpretivism is extremely subjective, the epistemology is likewise decidedly relativistic and restricted to the persons directly involved in the social activities. Knowledge and understanding can only be obtained by having the same frame of reference as the person; therefore, such knowledge is specifically subjective to the person's reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

In this study I accessed teachers' perspectives regarding their involvement in learner problems and support for learners. Working together with the respondents, I created spaces that enabled respondents to unreservedly voice and communicate their feelings and opinions with regard to learner problems. Merriam (1998) endorses this approach, stating that qualitative data provide specific explanations of situations, actions, people's interaction and practical behaviour, direct quotations from people about their experiences, beliefs and thoughts and excerpts or passages from documents and correspondence.

3.3 Research Approach and Methodology

This section presents a comprehensive explanation of the research approach, the strategies utilised during data production and data analysis to explore teachers' response to the management of learners' problems in their disadvantaged school community. Smith and Ashiabi, (2007) point to other critical issues that ought to be elucidated in the research process. These include a data collection plan, defining and choosing a sample, ensuring the trustworthiness of data and findings, a data analysis plan, ethical considerations and the timeline for the project. These will also be addressed hereunder.

The study comprised of one case study site purposively selected to reflect the context, which is an impoverished school bordering the area of Amouti and Inanda. Five teachers were selected from this primary school in the Verulam district to be the main respondents in this study. The data collection process spanned a period of three months. Case studies provide an intensive, holistic description of a single case (Duff, 2007). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) assert that an intrinsic case study takes place when a researcher wants to better understand a certain case. The teachers provided rich data that addressed the research questions, which focused on factors and situations that were relative to the management of learner problems in the context of an impoverished school community. The results from case studies are, however, not meant to be generalised, but allow for generativity. This is due largely to the nature of the data;

circumstances may be unique to different sample sets, hence leading to different results. The main aim of the research study was to capture the essence of education within impoverished schools. The results may thus be generalised to any other areas which share similar characteristics.

Qualitative researchers are concerned with how things work in a particular context on the basis of rich, nuanced and detailed data (Mason, 2002), thus providing a further rationale for choosing this approach. Berkowitz (1997) disputes that the epistemological (philosophy or theory of knowledge) approach is a process in which the arguments are formed against skepticism. Qualitative research is concerned about the way in which the world is known to us or can be known to us. In this scientific inquiry I interacted with the respondents in a collective quest for answers to questions directed at the resistant character of the provided empirical world under study, that is, the school management of learner problems in the context of an impoverished school community.

In the rhetorical or oratorical (speaking) approach, respondents are regarded as an element of the research paradigm (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010). In this regard, the respondents and I made a practical decision about the language that was utilised in the research paradigm. To promote quality data collection, respondents must have freedom of choice in selecting language. This assisted both the respondents and I to raise and answer the questions. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) maintain that the choice of a common language will help to limit the possibilities of subjective bias in the interpretation and relativity of meaningful quality data collection. I approached data collection in an unorthodox rather than traditional way; that is, I tried to make the respondents feel as comfortable as possible and went about the data collection process in a very casual way so as not to make the respondents nervous. Everything that was considered to be essential was noted. Creative reasoning was employed to obtain new thoughts about the teachers' role in management of learner problems in school (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2002). The results of qualitative research are descriptive and analytic (Flick, 2006). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) refer to qualitative researchers as guests in the private spaces of the world.

3.4 Background of the Researched School

For the purposes of this study, a primary school located within an impoverished community was chosen. The study sought to explore school management of learner problems within impoverished communities, and therefore, a school located within an impoverished

community was a natural selection. The choice of a particular school type and school was guided by three criteria. These included knowledge of schools that are grappling with learner problems, a school that has a diverse learner and teacher population so that different perspectives from diverse cultures and backgrounds can be derived and access to the school. A primary school located in the Verulam district was purposively chosen as the case study school as it provided a case that is set within an impoverished community, has a diverse learner and staff population, and, as a member of staff within this school, knowledge of learner problems and access to this site was relatively easy to obtain. A social inventory of the researched school reveals that the school is situated in the heart of a traditionally poor Indian community with learners coming from mainly middle and working class families. The staff at the school consists of a very dynamic principal, a deputy principal, four heads of departments and 25 teachers. The learner population is 889, of which 449 are boys and 440 are girls. The school has 21 graded class units, each averaging approximately 43 learners, ranging from Grade RR to Grade seven. The majority of learners who seek admission at the school are from the settlements around the area and the surrounding community. There are also a large number of learners from historically disadvantaged backgrounds that travel long distances to attend this school. Access to this school is by public roads that are relatively good. The school is located within a public transportation route.

3.5 Selection of Respondents

The respondents in this study comprised three level one teachers and two level two teachers. Respondents were chosen from the Foundation Phase, the Intermediate Phase and the Senior Phase. Only permanent teachers employed by the Department of Education were selected. Teachers employed on a temporary capacity were not selected as they would not be familiar with the dynamics of the school as well as learners' backgrounds. Purposive sampling was done. According to Cohen et al. (2008) purposive sampling means that the researcher makes specific choices about which people to include in the sample. Thus the researcher targets a specific group, knowing that the group does not represent the wider population; it simply represents itself. The five teachers were, therefore, chosen in terms of the following criteria. They had been permanently employed in the selected school for a period of five years and more, as such teachers would be in a position to provide rich information on learners' problems as well as be able to reflect on the management of these problems and their impact on learners and the school. In addition, teachers who are from different racial backgrounds

and genders were chosen so that a holistic picture could be presented that accounts for racial and gender differences.

3.6 Data generation methods

Methods refer to the rules and procedures that are followed to conduct empirical research (Silverman, 2001). The two main methods that I used in generating data for this study were observation and semi-structured interviews.

Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007) maintain that observational data are attractive as they provide the researcher with the opportunity to gather live data from live situations. Observational research techniques solely involve the researcher making observations because observations are usually flexible and do not necessarily need to be structured around a hypothesis (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Observations allowed me to record a description of what happened in the research site. I documented multiple observations, starting before the school day commenced, and ending in the afternoon after school. Observations were conducted early in the morning and during break times, as well as after school.

During my observations of the school day I took note of as many variables as possible which included learner dress (school uniform, hair and shoes), learner behaviour, teachers' attitudes to learners, learners' attitude to school and the procedures for the school day. All my observations were written into my journal in detail. I included as much detail as possible in order to generate enough data to render a thick description during my analysis. In similar manner, I recorded my observations of episodes at the school over the 3 month research period. These included observations of problems and misbehaviour on the part of learners (in and outside the classroom), possible causes of these problems and how teachers handled these problems. This confirms Cohen et al.'s (2007) postulation that observations enable the researcher to gather data on the physical, human, interactional and programme setting.

I chose observation because the data that I needed to answer some of the research questions that may not be readily available in other forms or ways. Retrospective accounts of interactions would have been inadequate to fully achieve answers because the situational dynamics of the school setting can never be fully reported by people who have participated in them, as they will only have partial knowledge or understanding of them (Mason, 2002). In

order to capture all or some of these aspects of people's lives, more than one method of data collection and analysis was needed (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). Hence the observations provided an opportunity to use observed events, activities, and occurrences during the interviews with the selected teachers. These observations provided points of reference and stimulations on which teachers were able to reflect and enabled them to expand on learner problems and the management thereof during the one-on-one interviews.

Patton (2002) asserts that interviews are a decisive communication between two or more people who are in the process of conversation and negotiation for the specific purposes associated with some agreed subject matter. In order to obtain greater depth, semi-structured, one-to-one interviews with five teachers were conducted in order to explore teachers' perceptions of the effects of poverty on impoverished learners, the problems they presented in the classroom and how the teachers managed these problems. The construction and design of the interview schedule involved numerous drafts and modifications were made until the final research instrument was created. In this regard, Gilham (2000) asserts that a researcher uses a semi-structured interview to gain a detailed depiction of respondents' perceptions of a particular topic.

I prepared questions for respondents before the interviews and the interview was guided by an agenda. I believed that by posing open-ended questions to the selected respondents, they would be encouraged to articulate their opinions on the questions. Semi-structured interviews allow for a researcher to pursue certain interesting avenues that emerge in the interview and for the respondents to provide greater depth to the discussion. Further, by means of probing, respondents were given the freedom and the opportunity to discuss and share their knowledge; they were able to introduce many issues and could clarify or extend their responses to questions related to the phenomenon.

In this study, interviews were used with the aim of providing the respondents with the opportunity to speak about and construct their reality in order to gain deeper insight into the issues relating to the research agenda. Wiersma (2000) maintains that semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility in answering questions. The semi-structured interview was utilised to create a frank, open and interactive mode which allowed for more in-depth discussions. I had the opportunity to probe and ask further questions that clarified the responses.

Interviews as well as observations were good methods of gaining in-depth data from a small number of people. These data generation methods bring different persons and personalities together. The observations were conducted overtly (where everyone knows they are being observed) and directly because of ethical problems related to concealing observations. Direct observations take place when one watches interactions, processes, or behaviours as they occur (Hammersley, 2000).

Creswell (1994) commends semi-structured interviews and observations for providing much more scope for discussion. These views are shared by many qualitative research scholars such as Cohen and Manion (1989), Hammersley (2000) and Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (1996). Permission was sought and prior arrangements were made with the selected school for the interviews with respondents so that they did not affect the normal functioning of the school.

3.7 The processing of the data

The responses to the semi-structured interviews, that is, the open-ended questions were addressed through content analysis. The interviews were taped and transcribed verbatim. The method of member check was adopted, whereby once the data were transcribed, the respondent was given the transcript to confirm, add or delete unnecessary information. This procedure also contributed to the validity and soundness of this study. The transcripts were then subjected to qualitative content analysis by identifying key significant points and then grouping them into themes, categories and sub-categories. The data were then coded for the purposes of acquiring information and significance, as well as reviewed repeatedly and decoded for the actual interpretation. Coding involves breaking up the data in ways that are systematically relevant (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). The authentic 'voices' from the interviews were also incorporated in the study so as to validate the explanations.

3.8 Selection and Data Production Methods

Purposive and convenience selection were used to select the school for participation in the study. It is purposive in the sense that I chose a school which complied with particular, specific characteristics, that is, the context of an impoverished school community (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), purposive sampling is a characteristic of qualitative research, whereby researchers handpick cases to be part of the sample on the basis of their typicality or peculiar characteristics. Purposive

sampling essentially starts with a purpose in mind and the sample is thus selected to include people of interest; those who have in-depth knowledge because of their professional role, power, expertise or understanding; and exclude those who do not suit the purpose (Creswell, 1994). This study was conducted using a relatively small sample size of five teachers drawn from one primary school.

3.9 Recording the Data

The observations were recorded by taking notes. Interviews were recorded using a tape recorder. This meant that an accurate record of the content of the interviews was kept. Secondly, this allowed me to focus on the interview process rather than being distracted by taking notes as the main data capturing technique. Furthermore, interviews recorded on tape may be replayed as often as necessary for complete and objective analysis at a later time (Best & Kahn, 2001). In other words reliability checks can be facilitated. The use of a tape recorder is undoubtedly the most common method of recording interview data (Yin, 2003).

3.10 Process of analysis of recorded data

The true test of a competent researcher in qualitative research is the analysis of the data, which requires methodical craftsmanship and the ability to understand the data in writing (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). In this study, I analysed and interpreted the collected data with the purpose of bringing direction and organization to information (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The data analysis process ensured that the data generated allowed me to produce reliable, valid and trustworthy findings. Data analysis is the process of selecting, sorting, sharpening, focusing and discarding. Once the data was recorded, it was transcribed into written format for qualitative data analysis purposes. This comprised of reading and re-reading the interview transcripts to familiarise me with the content of the interviews and also with a view to identifying codes of meaning. Once codes were created, they were grouped together to form themes. The entire analysis process was done manually; I did not make use of any qualitative data analysis software. This process is generally referred to as content analysis. Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2004) assert that content analysis focuses on identifying themes that might emerge from the data.

Observational research techniques solely involve a researcher or researchers making observations. There are many positive aspects of the observational research approach. Observations are usually flexible and do not necessarily need to be structured around a hypothesis. For example, before undertaking more structured research a researcher may conduct observations in order to form a research question. This is called descriptive research (Merriam, 1998). In terms of validity, observational research findings are considered to be strong. Flick (2006) states, that, validity is the best available approximation to the truth of a given proposition, inference, or conclusion. Observational research findings are considered strong in validity because the researcher is able to collect in-depth of information about a particular behaviour.

My observations of the school setting placed considerable emphasis on the claim that the data occurred naturally or situationally in a contextual setting rather than being artificially manufactured or reconstructed. I conceptualised myself as active and reflexive in the observation process in order to render a broad description. This description was not just an integrated set of facts transcribed from field notes but captured the everyday practices, rituals and actions that bound the group of people, the signs and symbols they used to present and represent themselves and the language or variations of language they used.

3.11 Trustworthiness

It is important for any research study's findings and entire research process to be accepted by the research community as credible (Merriam, 1998). Different disciplines have their own ways of ensuring that research conducted within that particular discipline is judged trustworthy. Guba and Lincoln's (1985) model for ensuring trustworthiness comprises four criteria, namely credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. Credibility was ensured through firstly observing ethical practices such as voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity. For example, I gave the respondents guarantees that what they told me would remain between the two of us. This enabled them to talk freely without any fear of identification and victimisation (Mertens & Mclaughlin, 2004). Secondly credibility was ensured through using different data gathering methods and different data sources (Oka & Shaw, 2000).

The dependability of the findings was ensured through the use of an "inquiry audit," in which reviewers examine both the process and the product of the research for consistency (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, p.317). Simply put, I ensured that all the research processes were carried out as

planned in terms of the case study design requirements within the naturalistic inquiry traditions. Confirmability was undertaken through the member-checking exercise. Mertens and McLaughlin (2004) assert that trustworthiness can be ensured by using the member-checking technique to ascertain whether the respondents agree with the recorded version of the interviews. Observing ethical conduct enhanced the credibility and dependability of the study.

3.12 Ethical Issues

Strydom (2002) asserts that informed consent is a required clause, not a comfort or an obstacle. He further stresses that emphasis must be placed on precise and absolute information which will allow respondents to fully understand and comprehend the investigation and thereafter make a decision about their participation, which is voluntary and thoroughly informed. Some of the core ethical considerations taken into account in this study included informed consent, personal privacy, anonymity, confidentiality and preventing harm to respondents.

As researchers develop their data elicitation techniques, they need to take ethical issues into account and judge whether their research procedures are likely to cause any physical or emotional harm. I needed to gain knowledge of the culture of the respondents to ensure that it was respected during the data collection process (Patton, 2002). Berg (1998) asserts that in most qualitative research, subjects/respondents are known to the researchers and secrecy is virtually absent. Thus, it is imperative to provide subjects/ respondents with a great degree of confidentiality. Letters seeking permission to conduct this study were forwarded to the Phoenix District Office and the selected school advising them of the Department of Education's granting of permission to conduct the study and also to request permission and support from the school principal to undertake the study. After I obtained the necessary permission from the Department of Education to commence with the necessary interviews, I forwarded such approval to the UKZN Ethics Committee. I then met with the principal and discussed the aims and value of the study.

The Department of Education and the principal of the participating school were given the necessary assurance that teachers would not be disturbed while performing their duties. Prior to the commencement of the semi-structured interviews, the respondents were briefed on the rationale for the study and were assured that any information provided by them would be

used exclusively for the purposes of research, and that all information revealed would be treated with the strictest of confidence. Furthermore, they were assured that neither their names nor the name of their school would be quoted. All interviews were conducted at a place and time that was convenient to the respondents. It was important that teaching and learning was not disturbed in any way due to the fact that teachers were participating in the study. The research was conducted after school hours and on weekends depending on the availability of the respondents. I only started with the field work of interviews and observations after the UKZN Ethics Committee had granted ethical clearance to proceed with this study.

Mouton (2004) expounds that anonymity refers to the principle that the identity of an individual is kept secret. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. This meant that their names were not disclosed to anyone, and therefore, they were not exposed to any harm. This is based on the principle of non-maleficence (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The consent form, signed by all respondents (Smith, 1992), highlighted that the information shared with me would be kept strictly confidential; only my supervisor and I would receive the data provided and the identity of respondents would not be disclosed in any reports on this study.

3.13 Biases and how they were minimized

The fact that I was conducting research at the school where I teach had little impact on the production of the data as well as the analysis of the data. Henning et al. (2004) indicate that researchers who observe a site without actual participation but are on the scene daily to explore issues will gain more data than that obtained through interviews, documents or artefacts. Cohen, et al. (2007, p.397) recommend a classification of researcher roles in observation: as complete participant; participant observer; or observe as participant.

My role in observation was that of a participant observer. This means that my role was non-intrusive; I simply recorded incidents of the factors being studied. The role of the participant observer was adopted to avoid interrupting the normal functionality of a school site and interactions and to ensure a natural setting. The data from the interviews were transcribed and given back to the respondents to check for correctness of information. This was then used for the analysis and formed the basis for the findings of the study.

3.14 Limitations

This research study had certain limitations. Vithal and Jansen (2006) note that limitations empower the reader to appreciate what constraints were imposed on the study and to understand the context in which the research claims are set. One limitation of this study was that the interview and observation method was the only instrument used to gather information. This study was conducted using a relatively small sample size (five teachers) of individuals drawn from one school. It is restricted in terms of its transferability to other contexts or settings or to the general population of impoverished learners. I could not make generalisations about a best fit approach to addressing the problems faced by impoverished learners. While the specifics of the study could not be generalised, the approach to the analysis of managing learners' problems in impoverished situations could well be applied fruitfully to other school and institutional settings.

3.15 Summary

This chapter highlighted how the research was planned and executed. A detailed account was provided of the methodological approach, methods of collecting data, and sampling procedures and a brief profile of the research was presented.

The next chapter deals with the presentation, analysis, findings and discussion of the data.

CHAPTER 4

Data Presentation, Analysis, Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the research design and methodology employed in this study. This chapter outlines biographical information on the research respondents, and presents an analysis, findings and discussion of the data. The data are presented using themes and categories generated both from the literature and from the interviews with respondents. Further, in presenting the data, I wanted to ensure that the voices of the respondents were not lost. Therefore, verbatim quotations are also used in the data presentation. The emerging trends and patterns from the presented data are then discussed. Significant findings of the study and a discussion thereof in terms of the research questions generated in chapter one and the theoretical and conceptual tools outlined in chapter two are presented.

4.2 Biographical information on the research respondents

Throughout this dissertation all proper names, including that of the school, its teachers and its learners have been allocated pseudonyms. All the respondents were from White House Primary. This primary school in the Verulam district was purposively selected to reflect the context which is an impoverished school bordering the area of Amouti and Inanda. A profile of this school was provided in chapter three. Five teachers were selected to be the main respondents in this study. Brief biographical details for each respondent are presented below:

Respondent One: Nancy

Nancy is a 37 year old, loving, caring, Indian female and is currently teaching in the Foundation Phase; she has 18 years teaching experience. She holds a Masters degree in education and is currently studying towards her Doctorate. She is currently acting as Head of Department. She is soft spoken and thinks about her answers before she responds. Teaching has always been a passion of hers and in spite of the current challenges in education her passion has not abated. During lunch breaks and after school she spends time with learners, either counselling them or helping them academically on a voluntary basis.

Respondent Two: Abraham

Abraham is a Black male teacher, who has been teaching for seven years in the Senior Phase. He coaches soccer and cricket and promotes sports at the school and in the community. Abraham specializes in isiZulu. He is currently studying towards completing his Diploma in Education to improve his capacity to perform his duties. He does a lot of charity work in the community, helping destitute children and families. He believes that religion plays a crucial role in the lives of our children and community members and that instilling these values in our learners will help them become more disciplined individuals. He doubles as a pastor in the community.

Respondent Three: Nelson

Nelson is an Indian, 46 year old male who teaches in the Senior Phase. He has been teaching for 22 years at the same school. He holds an Honours degree in education. He is currently studying towards a Diploma in Remedial Education. He is a level one educator with senior educator status. He specializes in Mathematics, Natural Science, and Arts and Culture in the Intermediate Phase. He is a very artistic gentleman who assists the school in all their artistic endeavours.

Respondent Four: Carter

Carter is a senior educator of Indian descent and is 45 years of age. He has 18 years of service with the Department of Education. He holds an Honours degree in education and is currently studying towards his Masters degree. He is one of the Heads of Department in the Senior Phase. There are eight Senior Phase teachers in his Department. Carter is a dedicated teacher who cares very deeply for the learners in the community. He serves as a volunteer police reservist in his spare time.

Respondent Five: Bill

Bill is a senior Indian educator who is 63 years of age and has been teaching for 40 years. He is a very seasoned and learned teacher who holds a master teacher status and has completed an Honours Degree in Education. He served the child welfare society in the district as a volunteer for 25 years. He specialises in Social Sciences and English.

First interview findings

The initial first stage interview aimed to gain an understanding of each respondent's biographical and demographic details. These characteristics ought to be unique to the respondents, and they provided valuable insight into how different backgrounds and experiences shape perspectives and perceptions of teaching in general, and how each individual teacher reacts to the changing ways in which they fulfill their responsibilities within the school environment.

Descriptive qualitative measurements

A purposive sample based on a preselected sample of teachers from one school was selected. Each respondent was aged between 28 and 63 years of age, with an average of 22 years teaching experience. Sixty percent of the respondents were level one teachers in the initial to middle years of their career, with the remainder comprised of teachers within management. The school is relatively large, with a learner population of 889 learners. This translates into fairly high learner-per-class ratios, and, counter-intuitively, yields higher learner-to-teacher ratios. The respondents reported class sizes ranging from 35 to 45 learners.

An encouraging observation was that every respondent reported being "happy" with their current roles at school and being very satisfied with their positions. Many of the respondents differentiated between professional interactions and social interactions with their colleagues. This indicates that teachers understand their professional roles and responsibilities, as well as having an understanding of the need to be sociable and courteous in striving toward the core function of providing quality education, given their limited access to resources.

All the respondents mentioned that the relationship with their learners was most enriching, with teachers often going beyond the call of duty when needed. When this issue was probed further, it was ascertained that all the respondents were aware of their roles as teachers, and had a sound knowledge of the correct avenues to pursue in the management of learners. All of the respondents categorized the performance of their learners as falling into the range of poor to excellent.

The teaching environment is changing constantly, with teachers having to evolve in their teaching methods and in reaction to external factors such as curriculum change, the use of

new technologies, government interventions and other unique circumstances which may arise. Here again, it was encouraging to observe that most of the respondents actively chose to develop themselves both academically and practically. This was done by taking their personal education beyond the minimum level required to teach, as well as attending courses and training that improves their expertise and skills,

In terms of strategies that teachers used to relax and the manner in which they used their spare time, most of the respondents indicated that they engage in hobbies and stress relieving activities such as sport and gym. This is symptomatic of the level of stress associated with teaching and provides insight into how individuals choose to manage their stress levels in a positive manner.

All the respondents have extensive teaching experience. All are also studying or have completed additional qualifications and some have management and leadership experience. In addition these teachers are involved in activities other than academic ones. These factors are important to keep in mind as I explore the way they manage learner issues within impoverished communities. This may also be a limitation of the study as the profile of teachers within the public schooling sector suggests that these biographies are not representative of the overall body of teachers. The responses of these teachers may therefore be influenced by their personal biographies as reflected in studies of teacher identities, life histories of teachers and teacher narratives related to professionalism. However, the focus and methodological approach adopted in this study limits the impact of this limitation as the study takes an illuminative and contextually sensitive stance, rather than a generative and extrapolatory stance. A further limitation is that this study examines the phenomenon under study from the perspectives of teachers; learners' perspectives and experiences may be quite different. However, because the core focus of this study is teachers' management of learners' problems, teachers are the most appropriate respondents. A further study, which is not within the scope of this enquiry, could pursue learners' perspectives and experiences.

4.3 Presentation and discussion of the data

The data from the semi-structured interviews were grouped into themes, categories and sub-categories. The discussion below outlines the problems that learners are facing as a result of their impoverished backgrounds and then discusses how the teachers at White House Primary manage these problems. The following analytical framework, developed from both the

literature review as well as the data produced through the research design, is used as a lens to organize and present the data and the analysis thereof.

Areas of impact on learners manifested as learner discipline problems					
Effects of these themes on learner discipline problems		Poor academic achievement/ performance	Disruptive behaviour	Low self confidence	Other (e.g. learner non-responsiveness; oblivious behaviour patterns, etc.)
	Community environmental factors				
	Home support and care				
	School experience				
	Personal challenges and opportunities				
Three central foci					
1. Nature of the problems as experienced by the teacher (supported with prior study reference)					
2. How identified by teacher					
3. How managed by the teacher					

The themes listed in the column second from the left in the analytical framework relate to the contextual issues that impact on learner discipline problems, while the first row presents a list

of observable outcomes presented by learners, as noted by the teachers. The data and the analysis thereof are presented as cross-tabulations that will allow for theorising about discipline problems amongst learners in impoverished communities, using the theoretical framework that informs this study. The data are, therefore, presented to address three central foci. These are the nature of the problem as identified by the teachers and manifested by the learners, how the problems are identified by the teachers and how the teachers manage these problems.

4.4 Themes Emerging from the Data Collection

The following categories of themes emerged from the data:

4.4.1. The community as a cause

4.4.2. Managing poor academic achievement

4.4.3. High mobility

4.4.4. Home support and care

4.4.5. Language as a barrier to learning

4.4.6. Health Issues (HIV/AIDS)

4.4.7. Contextual realities that impact on learners' lives.

4.4.8. Abuse

4.4.1 The Community as a Cause

Many of the respondents mentioned that home environment of the impoverished learners had an overwhelming influence on discipline problems, resulting in poor academic performance.

Abraham pointed out:

“When dealing with children from impoverished communities and neighbourhoods, schools need to reinforce to learners that drugs, alcohol abuse, promiscuity and even bigamy is not acceptable behaviour in society. We find this very rife here in our school community. The

children do not know that these kinds of behaviours are unacceptable because they don't have good role models to manifest this kind of behaviour. They are so entrenched in a culture of negativity that reading, studying and even homework is foreign to them; therefore they perform poorly due to a lack of norms and values be it in the family or the neighbour next door or a few doors up the road. I told my learners that the only way to attain any kind of success is through education because education will take you everywhere and all these negative factors will take you nowhere. Also if they want to get out of this impoverished environment and want all the good things in life, they first need to read and make education their priority in life."

It is clear from the above interview extract as well as Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls's (1997) study on the impact of the community of schooling that the way of life in the broader community within which the school exists, influences what happens in schools. In addition, the learners are so deeply located within the cultural sensitivity and hopelessness that is prevalent in this community, that they do not see how education can lift them out of poverty (Sampson, Raudenbush & Earls, 1997). Many of the learners have parents who did attend school, but this did not make any material difference to their lives. This kind of attitude will influence learners' attitudes towards education. The challenge, then, is for teachers to convince these learners that education is central in their struggle to rise above the impoverished conditions that influence their lives and future aspirations (Rumberger, 2002). For example Bill submitted that:

"Even though many of our learners' parents went through our hands, majority of them never made it to matric or even to university. When they reached secondary school level, some either got pregnant, couldn't cope, got involved in drugs and alcohol abuse and even got suspended from school. It's only about a handful of children that really persevere, so we use some of our success stories from our neighbourhood to convince these learners that there is light at the end of the school tunnel and out of poverty. I say, if that person can do it (own a car, big house, wear nice clothe, jewellery etc.) why can't you? You are getting an education, the only thing you have to do is study; food, living expenses and shelter are all provided by your parent/s, and all they expect of you is to study. Let's face it, all our successful (past) learners moved out of this community and their children go to different schools, but we can still use them as role models for our present learners."

The way in which the respondents managed this situation was by reinforcing good morals and values, exposing the learners to positive role models and also presenting themselves as good role models. This counts for a lot in the lives of poor children. As Rumberger (2002) notes, without strong, positive peer influences, learners are not likely to achieve well. Garner and Raudenbush, (1991) postulate that schools exert positive influences on the lives of the poor. If the children are constantly reminded of good values, not only will they take their learning seriously; they will also see that teachers take their teaching and their learners' education seriously. According to Berliner (2005), when a negative culture is well entrenched in a neighbourhood, schools in that neighbourhood have the power to change learners' behaviour; this results in improved academic achievement.

The environment that the learners come from influences the ways in which they behave. When learners come from an environment where there is not much home support and care, this kind of behaviour tends to flow over into the school. They feel it is normal and acceptable behaviour because they don't have good role models at home to advise them or model appropriate behaviour. Some of the challenges related to environmental issues that impact on poor academic performance that these learners present, as indicated by the respondents, are not paying attention in class, talking in class, preventing other learners from focusing or concentrating on class work, repeated attempts to distract the teacher either by demanding his/her attention on matters outside of the content of the lesson or by displaying noticeable mis-behaviour. Bill pointed out that:

"While I am teaching... I get learners talking about cartoon characters, or what happened last night... with neighbours....they do not pay attention. Then some... would pinch or hit each other in the middle of the lesson. With a result ...class ...get disturbed...lesson... come...halt"

Carter also revealed that:

"During my lessons... sometimes I have to stop...separate learners because they engage in fisticuffs...That is so annoying considering we have so limited time...class to complete the lesson....syllabus."

Severe disruptive behaviour commands attention. It can serve to minimise learning opportunities for all learners. According to Buckley and Maxwell (2007), disruptive behaviour is when a learner is intentionally disobliging, makes a commotion and prevents

themselves and other learners in a class from learning and working. Northmore and Potterton (2003) further postulate that there are three important causes of disruptive behaviour and each is linked to some kind of unhappiness, that is, problems in the classroom, problems at home or physical or mental problems. According to Lee (2002), teachers are constantly faced with disruptive behaviour and dealing with this type of behaviour constantly can not only be emotionally challenging, but results in critical teaching time being lost in an efforts to manage disruptive behaviour. The respondents mentioned that some of the ways in which they managed these problems on a micro level were by setting extra tasks, giving time-out, detention, entering their names in a misdemeanour profile and taking away privileges like not allowing them to go on excursions, all of which they hated. Detention during break-time seemed to have worked the best as there is only one break at school, and all the children look forward to that break, to let off steam, run and play with their friends. For example, Nancy stated that:

“When I threatened to keep this particular child in, in the break, he could not stop crying, even though he was a grade 6 (bigger) child. He cried and sobbed as though somebody had hit him, when he saw how serious I was. This is when I realised that detention in the break was the best remedy for punishment. I told him, “You sit with me, eat your lunch and complete your work and look at your friends having a good time, no corporal punishment; this is what you get for disturbing my lesson and distracting other learners.”

“I did this once to him, and thereafter he never tried his tricks with me again. Also the other learners saw that it was not an idle threat, and if they transgressed they too would have to toe the line. We as teachers realised that if we make idle threats, children sum you up, and then they take advantage of you. We just need to set one example, and the rest becomes history.”

On a macro level, the teachers managed the problem by encouraging partnerships between the school and parents/caregivers which were focused around the learner’s/child’s learning needs, together with appropriate additional specialized support from the social/child welfare services. This ensured that all worked as one in support of the learner. The teachers further managed these problems by inviting mentors such as celebrities from radio stations, prominent personalities and anyone who could influence these learners’ lives in a positive way, to speak to the learners and to give short talks about the value of a good education and about abstaining from the negative habits mentioned above. Artists from different universities

performed plays and sketches that sent strong messages to the learners in a fun filled way. One of the plays was entitled, From Rags to Riches; this sent a strong message about the advantage of having a good education and how education can turn your life around; that nothing is impossible to conquer once you have an education, and that you should persevere against all odds, no matter what your circumstances are.

Abraham observed:

“When we, the teachers realised that the learners switched off with us singing the same tune and scenario about good morals, values and the importance of a good education, to them we decided that we were going to use a different approach to relate the same message or tune with a different set of actors and it worked wonders. We sought the help of outside organisations and companies. One company Woolworths sent a drama learner who did Life Orientation lessons with all the children in each grade. He did fun educational activities in the form of singing, dancing and drama and the children joined in with him simultaneously. There were very strong messages in his songs and drama which the children enjoyed. When we questioned the learners later about what they had learnt, they were able to regurgitate all the valuable messages that were taught to them by him and some of them even told us that, “But sir you also told us the same thing.” So we as teachers realised that this was a very fruitful endeavour on our part, so we decided that every month and whenever possible we would get these kinds of mentors for our children.”

Glasser (2000) claims that the classroom atmosphere can be altered to accommodate and assist learners with their problems. At this micro level of the classroom, management of the learners takes on a different form. It begins with understanding the issues that the learners are faced with and translating this into doable classroom activities. These activities attempt to get the learners to improve their concentration span so that they can develop academically. Most teachers indicated that these classroom activities are more inclined towards hands-on, practical work which the learners could identify with and be willing to participate in. The major focus is on trying to get the learners interested in some form of learning. These kinds of practical work will demand more attention from the learner as she/he engages with the ‘doing’ rather than the ‘listening’ of a lesson. In addition to simple practical work, the examples used in lessons were ones that learners would identify with and relate to. By teachers presenting these examples, learners would be more eager to participate in lessons

and therefore concentrate more for longer periods of time, which is crucial for their academic development. Hence the micro response to impoverished contexts that play themselves out in the classroom demand that teachers understand the learners' contextual realities and their pedagogy, relying on methods of teaching that are relative to the learners' contextual experiences, as can be seen in the interview extracts presented below.

Carter asserted that:

“When we know about a child’s circumstances then only do we understand why the child is performing at a very average or below average level. In a community like ours the one we teach in, which is poor and impoverished and survival is a key priority, where 99 percent of our learners come from, we have to familiarize ourselves to their way of life or else we would be perpetually frustrated because all academic learning takes place in school. It starts and ends there.”

He went on to say that:

“We as teachers manage these problems by familiarizing and sensitizing ourselves to the culture of poverty and the immense assortment of needs that our children of poverty bring to the classroom. We also set practical tasks and assignments in order for the learners to be able to achieve academically.”

As presented in chapter two, Choice Theory, is the basis for a quality classroom, while Reality Therapy is the technique of communication for problem analysis and solving, and emotionally bonding with learners. Against the backdrop of Choice Theory and Reality Therapy Theory the teachers set and deliver simple, quality tasks for the learners with which they are able to identify with and understand.

For example, Nancy stated that when she delivered a Life Orientation lesson to her learners on personal hygiene around the house and helping their mothers:

“I told them, you must wash all the dishes using soap or a detergent, sweep up your home using a broom, pick up all litter, wash your clothes every day and take a bath or shower. This was simple straight forward and understandable for the children. They even contributed towards the lesson. I tried the same lesson using a different approach/ technique in another

class and the learners just looked at me blankly as though I was some foreigner speaking a foreign language. The lesson went like this:

“Now children in order to keep your home clean you must put all your dirty dishes into the dishwasher, vacuum the floors and thereafter, do the laundry by putting all the dirty clothes into the washing machine and then into the tumble dryer. When all the chores are completed, sit in the Jacuzzi to cleanse yourself and de-stress.

“There was no contribution or input to the lesson because the learners did not understand and identify with what I was trying to tell them. It was then, that I understood, that in order to deliver a lesson of quality and in order to allow for problem analysis and solving, cognitive thinking to take place, I needed to simplify my lessons and familiarise myself with the circumstances of my learners. Basically, I had to become one with them. I then realised that as a teacher that teaches in an impoverished community where survival is paramount, the luxuries of having or owning a dishwasher, washing machine, Jacuzzi, tumble dryer and a vacuum cleaner is almost unheard of and foreign to most of these learners. One cannot teach these children/learners in the above way and expect them to understand, comprehend, familiarise and identify with this. The mere fact that some of them have electricity or running water is a luxury on its own”.

Bill suggested that:

“...unless environments and communities for the most impoverished children improve, we will not see the demonstration of a normal learners’ intelligence that is expected as these children come from a community or environment where drugs, alcoholism, HIV, child-headed homes and violence is the order of the day. The problem we have, however, is that we don’t know confidently how to improve their environment, because we don’t know which one of these factors about their environment is most devastating. All seem equally unbearable.”

Once again the reality is that the effects of smoking, alcohol and other drugs, lack of adequate medical care and many other factors all take their toll on poor children. The teachers are aware of the many problems that their learners face but do not know how to separate one from the other. Glasser (2000) asserts that a classroom of excellence adopts Choice Theory as the foundation and employs Reality Theory as the means of communication for problem

solving. He further maintains that Choice Theory should become a fundamental part of the teacher's life both, in and outside of the classroom.

Bill went on to say that:

“The only way we know how to manage this situation is by providing pastoral care, that is bonding with them emotionally. Furthermore by setting realistic tasks that is within their capability and aptitude considering their prior knowledge and circumstances in order for them to achieve academic excellence.” (Refer to Nancy’s comments above)

Berliner (2005) states that while these factors all interact with the schools that poor children attend, social, educational, medical, and environmental problems are also independent of the schools, and thus beyond their control. Poverty severely limits what our schools can be expected to accomplish in relation to academic achievement.

Nelson stated that:

“The parents are so caught up with trying to put food on the table that they do not have the time to monitor or mentor their children. They leave home early and get back when it’s late, taking it for granted that their child has done their homework and attended school that day or any other day. Sometimes a parent only knows of their child’s absence from school, when the teacher telephones the parent to query or pays a home visit.”

He went on to say that:

“The way in which we manage this problem is by providing a quality classroom for the impoverished, disadvantaged poor learners. We make our classrooms exciting, fun, colourful and interesting places by putting up colourful and meaningful charts, and use music, costumes and other kinds of props to make our lessons more interesting. Sometimes we even bring in the TV and the DVD player to showcase or send messages across to our learners. They just love all that, they are more enthusiastic to learn. It is such a pleasure to see the excitement on their faces.”

When parents are so involved with survival and making ends meet that they do not have time to supervise their child’s progress or lack thereof in school, children are left to their own devices; they know that their parents are too busy to check up on them; this results in poor

academic achievement. As Berliner (2005) so aptly states, there is every reason to suspect that improvements in the income of poor families will lead to improvements in school-related behaviour and achievement. According to Olivier and Venter (2003), many learners in South African schools can be considered helpless/vulnerable in the sense that they are affected by problems that impact on their present and future well-being and holistic development.

Environmental deficiencies have powerful effects both on their own and with regard to learners' poor academic achievement. According to Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Burrell and Morgan (1979) in Sealand (1993) neighbourhoods and environments communicate models for behaviour, such as drugs, achievement and alcohol.

4.4.2 Managing Poor Academic Achievement

Poor academic achievement was a major problem for learners from impoverished home backgrounds. The first characteristic feature was the large range of abilities of learners and prior attainment within the school and, in particular, the significant learning needs of the lowest achievers. The teachers revealed that because of language barriers, learners were achieving poorly academically because they experience learning difficulties in reading, writing and numeracy. Most of the teachers also said that while some of their low achievers were very good speakers, when it came to putting pen to paper, they failed hopelessly. For example, Carter pointed out that:

“I have a boy in my class who has an answer for everything. He speaks English very well, makes contributions to classroom discussions but if I show you his book, there is no work done. There’s really nothing to show, no constructive evidence of work done. He just can’t seem to put pen to paper. I tried calling for the parents but to no avail. Indeed he does have excellent listening skills although he can’t write. I don’t fail him; I test him orally, read for him and ask him the alternative answers where he is able to circle or underline a, b, or c, so as not to disadvantage him. Now this is one of the many cases of learners with different abilities that we are faced with in the classroom and this is one of many ways in which we manage these situations.”

Such learners perform poorly in tests and other forms of formal assessment. In the recent Annual National Assessment (ANA) these learners performed very poorly. The respondents stated that they managed this by seeking additional learning and teaching support by

engaging the services of additional teachers employed by the School Governing Body (SGB), even though it created extra demands on the teachers. The teachers identified learners who could not read from each class and gave their support teachers simple exercises and worksheets to teach these learners. With a smaller group of learners, they achieved more success because these learners could get more personalised attention. The teachers also mentioned that when these learners returned to the class, they were more confident because they knew how to read. They were excited about learning, reading and answering questions in all learning areas. The learners were more focused, and less fidgety and disruptive because they were more purposefully occupied, thus reducing discipline problems. The teachers said that reading is paramount in each and every learning area; without it, a learner is lost. For example, Nelson revealed that:

“When I taught mathematics to these learners who could not initially read, I found they could understand what addition, subtraction, division, multiplication, the sum of and other maths concepts meant. It made my teaching a little easier in the sense that they could attempt a sum even though they got it wrong. Prior to this they would add a subtraction sum and vice – versa. The fact that they can read a story sum and identify what method must be used to answer it, I am very thankful for that. Also I find that the children are less disruptive because they are attempting their sums not like previously when they could not read.”

The responses of the teachers suggest that a single approach to managing academic problems arising out of the impoverished community context would not help learners. Rather a combined approach has been seen to be most beneficial in managing this problem. Learner-teacher-school partnerships are needed. The school would need to allow for some professional judgment by teachers in terms of being more flexible with forms of assessment, lesson activities, use of additional resources and the opportunities for learners in the form of academic support and re-entry into their classrooms. Learners would need to feel secure in the knowledge that extra support would be beneficial rather than punitive. Teachers would need to have a mind-set and a sense of caring to try various options in their teaching methods, including external academic support from other teachers to promote effective teaching and learning. This kind of management of learner problems related to academic performance seems to yield a more acceptable form of intervention than an individualistic one driven by teachers only. Key to this kind of intervention is recognition, flexibility, acceptance, and will, all of which have been demonstrated through teachers’ descriptions of their interventions.

Teachers also mentioned that there was a serious lack of learner support material. For example, Nancy affirmed that:

“Because we deal ...impoverished learners...we need a library in school...fully functional...so teachers can encourage....reading...improve....skills....vocabulary...”

Bill stated that:

“If the computer room was functional and the internet was connected, then at least the learners would...able to do...projects, research, keep out of mischief...read...etc...There’s so many perks to having internet and computers in school.”

Abraham maintained:

“The text books that we have, some of them....not compatible for our second language learners ...too....difficult...comprehend. Language is....hard... understand...needs to be simplified. I have to adapt the same idea and concepts into simple language in order for the learners to understand what I am teaching.”

Carter further stated that:

“Even in mathematics I have to rewrite the text book... examples because ... too difficult... if I have to get learners...get any learning done ... because... just ...don’t understand ...concepts...have....be spoon fed. It’s a nightmare but if we as teachers want to feel any kind of satisfaction or achievement in our jobs then this is the way to go...or else ...everything ...seems... hopeless.”

This confirms that an insufficient or lack of teaching resources and equipment affects the performance of learners negatively (Sikhwivhilu, 2003). The teachers had to construct their own resources, which was a time-consuming process. They simplified worksheets and texts in order to make them understandable and commensurate with the learners development needs. According to Steyn and Van Niekerk (2002) self-actualisation needs will be fulfilled when individuals work at their full potential, when they are exposed concretely and within their ability. They will feel successful and achieve their goals.

If there is a shortage or lack of basic resources, teachers will not be able to deliver their lessons adequately and thus they will not be able to achieve their objectives. Children that come from disadvantaged backgrounds are not exposed widely to the outside world and are therefore not able to understand and comprehend what is being taught to them (Sikhwivhilu, 2003). Not all the respondents that were interviewed were confident of their ability to produce appropriate resources for learners. However, most mentioned that, where the majority of the learners in a class were low achievers, teaching approaches were often adapted to assist learners, thus aligning themselves with Glasser's (2000) theory. For example Nancy stated that:

"We adjust our teaching style to benefit our learners, because it is futile trying to teach a class of learners who do not understand the English language very well using advanced terminology and expect them to understand."

Nelson mentioned an incident in his class where he had given his learners a project straight out of the textbook:

"I had to rewrite a project (rules) which was taken from a text book that the learners had because when I explained as it was in the book, the learners looked confused. They couldn't comprehend or understand what I was trying to say on how to make the project."

The rules were originally: To construct a house, you have to initially

- 1. Position a foundation, then*
- 2. Erect four walls, thereafter*
- 3. Affix the roof*

"Nobody came with the projects to school. A learner came up to me the next day and said, "Please sir, we don't understand what is to be done, even my big brother couldn't understand these words."

"The grade four children were so thoroughly confused because of the terminology used. Some went home and even their parents couldn't understand what was to be done, so I rewrote the project according to their understanding (ability) and when they were presented with the new worksheet...you should have been there to see their faces...relief, smiles...They understood...what ...be done. The second worksheet went like this:

To build a house we first have to:

- 1. Lay a foundation, then*
- 2. Build (put up) four walls, thereafter*
- 3. Attach (Glue) the roof.”*

Glasser (2000) hypothesises that learners work best when they enjoy work or a challenge that is concrete, understandable and not laborious. In some cases, the respondents made adjustments appropriate to the learning styles and prior knowledge of the learners. For example, respondents made use of speaking rather than writing when they gave their instructions. Abraham said that:

“When we want to deliver a lesson on good morals, we find it better to tell it in the form of a story rather than getting the learners to take down meaningless sentences on good morals, which is a fruitless exercise... considering that many of them cannot read.”

On the other hand, some respondents stated that adjustments arose out of the need to manage classes. A leaning towards less challenging tasks was noted when controlling the classroom was difficult. Some respondents admitted that a good lesson was one in which learners used worksheets and copying exercises most of the time, to avoid major interruptions. The value and the challenge of the task were seen as less important, as the subject matter was simplified and discussion was limited. For example Bill mentioned that:

“Written work has to be given to learners, so we simplify our worksheets accordingly and after a discussion about the exercise the learners are expected to complete their tasks.”

Carter declared that:

“When I am working with weak learners... rest... class... noisy... I give them two pages, sometimes, (just to maintain discipline) from the text book to copy into their exercise books so that I can pay attention to the weak learners.”

Nelson stated that:

“I give my learners dictionary work whereby they are asked to copy five words from under each letter in the dictionary with their meaning. This exercise may seem less important but I

found that the learners were very eager to do this. They learnt how to spell new words as well as their meanings. In this way they extended their vocabulary.”

The lack of a proper diet was another feature that was strongly related to poor academic achievement. Poor children who don't eat a nourishing breakfast will not be able to pay attention in class and they may become fidgety and may disrupt the class (Crain, 2008). Bill mentioned that it was difficult for learners to pay attention in the class due to the fact that:

“Learners do not have breakfast and the school feeding scheme provides the lunch when the most crucial part of the day is over, the morning session where absorption of concepts (maths and English) is taught.”

According to Berliner (2005), children in poor households with food insecurity do not ordinarily learn well because of nutritional deficiencies. This leads to medical problems such as vitamin deficiencies, obesity, diabetes and other conditions that affect learning which academic achievement.

This was dealt with/managed by means of teachers identifying learners who lack a nutritional diet. The teachers secured sponsorship of food hampers from outside sources and asked learners from more affluent homes to bring food donations. Some teachers donated bread on a daily basis to some children. The teachers mentioned that they sometimes went the extra mile to buy groceries at their own cost for learners from extremely poor households. The school also engaged the services of the Department of Education's feeding scheme, thus ensuring that those children who do not bring lunch to school are provided with a meal. When a child is fed, he/she will remain alert and attentive to what is going on in the classroom and can think better, thus ensuring academic success (Crain, 2008).

4.4.3 High Mobility

High mobility of learners was another characteristic strongly identified by respondents. Learner mobility is the practice of learners changing schools other than for grade promotion (Hartman, 2002). Below I outline some of the views of the teachers and how they managed this problem.

Teachers were encouraged to articulate their opinions on learner mobility as this is a significant factor affecting learning and achievement in their schools. The potential impact of

mobility on learners' education has a snowballing and significant effect. Rumberger (2002) affirms that learners can suffer psychologically, socially, and academically from mobility. Learners need to feel both socially or academically accepted. The respondents felt that a learner's psychosocial wellbeing is harmed by mobility, especially if the learner is a recurrent mover. For example, Nancy felt that:

"It's hard for kids to move from one school to another, especially if they are coming from a different background and adjusting to a different one and some of these learners don't have good coping skills and that manifests itself emotionally, they cry... some even throw tantrums."

Nelson observed that:

"Some of the new learners that come in during the course of the year have a problem adjusting socially. I think it is because of the fear of the new environment, I noticed they find it difficult to make friends and trust people."

Carter further stated that:

"They have a propensity to be a bit more withdrawn, they do not volunteer to participate in sports and other extra-curricular activities...drama..."

The literature confirms that mobile learners face psychological challenges in coping with a new school environment as well as adjustment to new peers and social expectations (Rumberger, et al., 1999). The findings of this study also revealed that changing schools and homes negatively impacted on learner commitment to school activities. Such learners withdrew from participating in extracurricular activities. The way the teachers managed the problem was to give these learners incentives such as medals, a new book or becoming a class monitor for a week so that they could feel accepted and wanted. The teachers also encouraged other learners to befriend these learners, make them comfortable and encouraging them to participate. For example, Abraham said that:

"When I saw the potential of a newcomer (Sam) in athletics (running) and volleyball, I asked his friends to encourage him to participate in a tournament to represent our school. The reason being was when I approached him he refused...guess...scared, so I used his friends to

persuade him to tell him about the (perks), a medal, certificate of participation he would get in the assembly even if he doesn't win. Learners love that kind of recognition, they feel special."

Some teachers voiced concern that new learners were negatively influenced by their new peers and their behaviour deteriorated as a result. On the whole, teachers felt that fitting in to a new environment was a very stressful situation for learners particularly because of the importance of the peer group. For example, Abraham pointed out that:

"Some of these new learners join the delinquents...try to fit in ...here when they come but we as teachers are quick to identify disruptive learners. I guess it comes with experience".

Bill added:

"I also found that some of them have a tendency to be very disruptive, I guess it is because they are not present at the beginning of the year when classroom rules are set and followed."

The literature (see for example, Rumberger and Larson, 1998) and the data from this study confirm that bad behaviour is linked to learner mobility; some learners emulated disruptive learners in order to be accepted. The teachers managed this problem by laying the down the rules for acceptable behaviour, reprimanding the new learners where appropriate and reinforcing good behaviour. They also encouraged these learners to associate with well disciplined learners as well as model their behaviour on theirs.

Crockett, Petersen, Graber, Schulenberg and Ebata (1989) indicate that highly transient children may display symptoms similar to those with specific learning disabilities.

Bill mentioned that:

"Many of our newcomers do not know how to read. They are not English first language speakers with a result we have to give them special attention in order for them to cope."

Carter stated that:

"In our school we have a high rate of learner mobility which is prompted by poverty and homelessness because a large number of the parents are unemployed or migrant workers."

These children can't read because they don't have access to media (TV, newspaper)...so poor... result.... perform poorly in English and even in my mathematics lesson."

From the literature it can be deduced that mobility itself cannot be isolated as a cause of poor achievement, but it is a complicating issue for a child who has other vulnerable characteristics such as those mentioned above. The literature also serves to confirm studies by Kirkpatrick and Lash (1990) who found a correlation between mobility and poor achievement in language, reading, and mathematics. The teachers managed these problems by getting the various local newspaper companies to deliver their excess newspapers to school on a weekly basis. They mentioned that every class in the school had a reading corner, even the mathematics class, so all the teachers took copies of the various newspapers and placed it in their reading corner. The learners were prompted to read when their work in their various subjects was done. This also helped to maintain discipline. In this way the learners were exposed to media at the same time as sharpening their reading and vocabulary skills.

Mobile learners can change schools in the middle of a school year; learner mobility not only harms the learners who change schools, it also damages the classrooms and schools they attend (Kerbow, 1996).

Nelson was concerned that:

"High learner mobility puts enormous stress and causes instability on us as teachers and learners when making staffing, curriculum and calendar decisions. New arrivals have to be catered for at short notice. We also have to adjust our teaching pace in the class every time a new child arrives and we spend extra time helping newer learners catch up, thus preventing the rest of the learners from moving ahead."

Carter added that:

"We get frustrated with the principal for accepting new learners in the middle of the term because it is difficult to set and achieve academic targets as well as plan class and ability groupings. Our current learners tend to suffer because of these new learners. They get left behind and perform poorly academically."

Abraham further stated that:

“Through years of experience, I try to beat the system, when new learners arrive ...because of our limited time in the classroom... I have now learnt to have extra work and worksheets at hand for my existing learners so that they don’t fall behind. But it is not easy...existing learners... become disruptive... don’t learn...when I am helping newcomers...it’s like teaching two classes simultaneously”.

The above findings support claims that constant learner turnover is disruptive and prevents non-mobile learners from progressing, as teachers spend extra time helping newer learners catch up. The teachers mentioned that the non-mobile learners become easily distracted; they see this as an opportunity to do as they please, because they know that the teachers are going to be busy assisting the new learner. The way in which these teachers managed these problems was by following what Abraham did; they had extra tasks at hand to minimise disruptions as well as prevent their existing learners from underachieving or falling behind. Furthermore, Nelson revealed that:

“We managed this situation by encouraging buddy teaching, that is by partnering new learners with existing, learners. This method assisted us in trying to balance our already heavy teaching load so that the current or existing learners do not suffer because of these new comers. We also decided as a staff that we try to keep all the newcomers in one class. We achieved this by grading our classes and also giving the last class the least amount of learners, in order for that class to accept or accommodate any newcomer during the year. This was the first year we tried it. It seemed to have worked well so far.”

All the respondents talked about how they managed mobility. They mentioned that they caucused and developed strategies in an attempt to lower learner mobility rates and mitigate the effects of mobility on learners’ education. Examples of these strategies included: providing advice to parents on the negative effects of mobility and how moving affects children, planning time in their schedule to meet with new learners and their families, developing efficient learner record-tracking systems between schools and districts, by asking mobile learners to bring their books from the previous school, and networking with their previous school and teacher to see how far a child had progressed. Kirkpatrick (1990) maintains that it is important that a teacher is knowledgeable about the curricula used in other schools at the same grade and content area. The respondents utilised a variety of methods to assess a newcomer’s learning needs. Some of them even went to the extent of providing

tuition throughout the year during breaks, after school, or during the school holidays when necessary. They also organised and held professional development workshops to assist teachers to meet the needs of highly mobile learners so that the school's curriculum pace was not reduced.

4.4.4 Home Support and Care

All the study respondents raised the theme of home support and care. They drew attention to the emotional and material needs of learners from disturbed and poverty-stricken families. For example, Bill emphasized:

“Some children are apparently found to be lacking reliable, support and attention at home, while a few of them are actually uncared for or physically abused. One can see this when a child comes to school with dirty clothes, unpolished shoes and long hair. This just proves that they are truly neglected. Their parents take no pride in their child's appearance. They (parents) are too busy being caught up in their own lives to worry about their child's.”

The teachers revealed that the way in which they managed this problem was by securing clothing hampers from different organizations such as businesses and religious organizations.

In addition, Nancy revealed that:

“I bought shoes and uniforms for some of my learners. I also asked other learners who had old uniforms, shoes and jerseys that were not being used, to bring it to school for their poor friends.”

Nelson said that:

“We sent out notices via the learners seeking the assistance of parents with hairdressing skills to sponsor at least five learners per month with a free hair cut. The teachers alternated the learners every month so that the maximum of learners benefitted from this undertaking.”

Several respondents spoke about parental apathy, which impacted on learners' attitudes. The poor/disadvantaged parents' attitudes towards their child's progress or lack thereof left a lot to be desired.

For example, as Abraham noted:

“As long as their children are in school, these parents don’t care about what happens here. Only when there is a problem with the teacher then only would you see their faces, that too very seldom, otherwise they would never show up at any parent meetings or come to school when a parent letter is sent home. They take our teaching for granted; they don’t enquire about their child’s progress or check up on their child’s homework. I even have some reports here which haven’t been claimed by the child or the parent, given it is going on almost half the term. This is what we are faced with, this kind of apathetic attitude, it is so sad.”

The teachers mentioned that they managed the problem by telephoning parents, sometimes even asking the neighbours’ children to carry a message to parents whom they could not reach.

In some instances, respondents drew parallels between learners’ behaviour at home and at school. For example, Carter stated that:

“For some of my learners the use of slangs in their speech seemed acceptable/ normal to them as they don’t know any different until we correct them, then they realize that this kind of terminology is unacceptable in school and society at large.”

In other cases, the problem was seen to arise from the structures of families and society, which failed to provide children with any consistent set of rules. Children were perceived to have a lot of freedom and unsupervised leisure time. Some only had one parent at home or alternated between different step-families and grandparents who had different behavioural expectations. For example, Nelson affirmed that:

“These disadvantaged children/learners have a different set of rules at home, governing their manners towards adults and other children, their use of language, antagonism or physical violence, and the acceptability of adult behaviours like smoking, drinking, sex and illegal behaviours such as gambling and smoking dagga. They come to school and speak about some of these incidences as though it is acceptable normal behaviour for example:

“ One little boy told me casually one day, sir last night my dad and mum were sitting outside the house and smoking this funny little cigarette and it had a funny smell, not the one you get

from the shop because I know the smell of that one. After smoking my mother couldn't stop laughing and my dad got angry and hit her. But they are okay today.

"I listened to the boy and deduced that what his parents were smoking must have been dagga. I decided then that I had to do damage control, basically manage this problem by telling the boy that what his dad did was not good and a man should never raise his hand to a woman and also smoking is not good for their health."

These learners find it hard to adjust to the disciplined school environment.

Nancy declared that:

"...difficulties at home play themselves out at school in the form of concentration problems, attention-seeking behaviour, difficulties adapting to a consistent or rigid rule structure, unwillingness to trust and the need for emotional support and encouragement. Because of their lack of discipline at home these children find it very difficult to adjust to our type of discipline at school. They feel that we are being a bit too hard/firm with them because they do not understand what appropriate and inappropriate behaviour is. We try to reinforce positive, acceptable behaviour all the time in our lessons in the hope to enforce proper attitudes and mannerisms which would ultimately result in good behaviour."

From the above data it can be seen that different behavioural expectations prevail at home and at school. The overwhelming majority of parents do not deliberately neglect their child/children. Rather, due to their impoverished circumstances and their limited education, they do not have the intellect or the time to assist their children, resulting in their child manifesting disruptive behaviour in the classroom. The teachers complained that such learners talk consistently and seek the attention they lack at home. The teachers managed these problems firstly by identifying them and then assisting the learners by counseling them, listening to their plight, paying special attention to them, giving short talks to the class before the commencement of lessons about suitable behaviour and about substance abuse and subtly giving disturbed learners a few more privileges to make them feel accepted and loved. This took the form of responsibilities (tasks). For example, Bill revealed that:

"We give these learners tasks such as taking care of the teacher's cupboard, keeping the class quiet, etc. on a rotational basis."

Carter noted that:

“This worked wonderfully as these learners felt significant and important.”

4.4.5 Language Barriers

Language barriers also featured strongly among the challenges mentioned by the respondents. They noted that, because of their impoverished circumstances, many learners entered school with no knowledge of English; there were large numbers of learners who did not speak any English at home, or have access to English media. For example, Bill revealed that:

“Most parents are illiterate and also have minimal schooling experience and as a result are unable to communicate with their children in any other language except for their mother tongue language.”

Carter further stated that:

“These learners have very little exposure to English at home, and have a tendency to speak in their home language to their peers at school; many learners do not even have adequate vital communication skills in English.”

Bill asserted that:

“For most learners the only communication in English is when they are at school. In the learners home-front their parents only communicate in their mother tongue language to each other and to their children.”

Abraham added that:

“Because of their poor economic background they do not have exposure to television, radio and even the newspaper to help develop their bilingualism”.

Teachers managed the problem by encouraging these learners to speak only English at school and whenever they could in order to improve their vocabulary and communication skills.

They also encouraged parents to use English when helping children with homework. In addition, Nelson stated that:

“We informed parents of the remuneration of language attainment, stimulation and encouragement.”

Nancy declared that:

“We liaised with the librarian at the local library and thus created opportunities for learners to listen and interact in English by visiting the local library.”

Parents’ apathy with regards to their children’s homework was a further concern for teachers. For example, Nelson stressed that:

“Ninety nine percent of our learners come to school without doing their homework, this is frustrating. When parents help their children with homework at home it contributes to the marvellous improvement of learners.”

Bill declared that:

“Sometimes parents cannot assist with their child’s homework as they themselves do not understand English, are illiterate or unable to read and write in English.”

The above data support claims that teachers need to build partnerships with parents. While most respondents reported that they tried to manage the problem by working with learners’ parents, by giving them simple worksheets with a word bank that reflected words in both English and Isizulu, few parents responded. For example, Abraham pointed out that:

“These parents are unable to render any assistance to their children with regards to their homework because they leave home very early and come home late.”

The findings suggest that long hours of work, lack of knowledge of the English language, transport and finances impact on parents’ involvement. All the respondents expressed the need for specific language teaching resources for teaching learners with language barriers.

For example, Carter mentioned that:

“We need simple picture vocabulary books, objects and picture charts to display vocabulary, as well as worksheets to assist learners to work at home.”

The teachers managed this problem in a number of ways. Carter said:

“I sometimes bring in my own resources from home.”

Nelson reported:

“I borrow from neighbouring schools and friends with the purpose of facilitating concrete learning in our classrooms so as to make it a win-win situation.”

Bill declared that:

“I take books from the junior primary teachers which are very basic with pictures and adapt it for my lessons and learners because it becomes very frustrating when we try to teach concepts and the learners don’t understand what we are saying.”

Teachers require basic classroom resources in order to teach effectively. Learners from disadvantaged backgrounds lack their own resources in the form of stationery and books; if teachers are unable to provide such resources, they are unable to plan innovative activities with the learners.

As class sizes increase, the frequency of discipline and behavioural problems increases. For example, Nancy said that:

“Smaller classes would be a ‘welcome’ to us... it takes time to teach these children simple concepts because of their limited exposure to the English language and media resources. It is not because we want the simple way out. These children need patience and nurturing and therefore it is sometimes impossible to complete the syllabus.”

Bill further indicated that:

“You can sit with a group of six children, and then 35 of them will do what they want to even if you give them a task to occupy themselves.”

The literature indicates that language barriers are exacerbated where there are large classes, which also led to inability to complete the syllabus. Teachers reported persistent discipline problems with learners in large classes. Most of the respondents had classes of more than 40 learners; they felt that not only would smaller classes make their task easier; they would also benefit learners. Teachers managed this problem by drawing up worksheets and booklets for additional class and homework; this helped to ensure that the syllabus was completed as well as curtail discipline problems.

Another language issue faced by the respondents was teaching learners with different levels of proficiency in English. For example, Nancy pointed out that:

“In our classes we have high flyers in English as well as absolutely weak learners, who need our attention constantly. This creates a problem as different tasks have to be set for the high flyers so as not to disadvantage them.”

Carter verified that:

“We have to teach the core concepts of language first to the learners who don’t understand, thus paying extra attention to them.”

Teachers managed the problem by teaching at various levels. They set higher capacity tasks to challenge the knowledgeable learners (high flyers). This increased their work load.

4.4.6 Health Issues (HIV/AIDS)

The respondents noted that many learners were directly and indirectly affected by HIV and AIDS. For example, Bill remarked that:

“The learners that are HIV positive stay away very often, sometimes for weeks at a time, due to hospitalisation or being very weak from their illness.”

Furthermore Abraham revealed that:

“Many learners stayed away frequently to assist with the nursing of a parent or sibling because there was no one to take care of them, as the other adults had to go work in order to put food on the table.”

Children in households affected by HIV/AIDS risk missing school, either to care for sick family members (indirectly affected) or because the learners themselves are unwell (directly affected). The teachers managed this problem by paying extra attention to such learners, giving them love and support, and not pressurising them if they could not complete tasks.

In South Africa, hundreds of thousands of children are orphaned, isolated and undernourished, and at a greater risk of withdrawal from school (Streak, 2002). Several respondents said that some learners are orphans and are living alone. For example, Nancy mentioned:

“In some cases the older child carries the burden of caring for their younger siblings”.

Abraham revealed that:

“There are many children in this community that take care of their siblings as there is no adult supervision, because their parents are either dead or in hospital.”

The recognition of child-headed households as a family was an important issue for the respondents as it made their tasks as teachers easier when it came to understanding (managing) why a child behaved in a certain manner or why he/she did not complete his/her task. For example, Nelson observed:

“When a child is given homework or a project...it’s expected to be done, but when it comes to these learners/children of this nature... knowing their circumstances we try and assist them to do it in the class or during the break, given that they have so much of responsibilities at home.”

AIDS-affected children may be ill and unmotivated. They may have to cope with the trauma of a death in the family. For example, Nancy declared that:

“Learners have difficulty concentrating because of their illness and mourning through loss of their loved ones.”

Bill added that:

“Learners affected by this pandemic have a general sense of apprehension, perplexity and uncertainty. This is manifested in the classroom through withdrawal, anti-social behaviour where learners do not participate in lesson discussion and sometimes leads to violence.”

This data confirms that loss and grief filter through to learning institutions, affecting the learning atmosphere and learner morale. It also suggests that children infected with and affected by HIV have more complex cognitive, social and emotional needs (Muvumba & Pharoah, 2008). The teachers managed this challenge by referring to the need to develop clear practices, given the complex needs of these learners, and to introduce new challenges carefully and with reassurance. The teachers believed that learners with insecure or disrupted home lives sometimes felt threatened by change. Some respondents felt that dealing with the poignant issues and helping learners to work on managing their emotions more optimistically and confidently was a priceless lesson. In addition developing their capacity to interact well with one another and to listen and concentrate even if learning was limited was another precious end result.

According to Ansell and Young (2004), the HIV/AIDS pandemic is fuelled by disadvantage as it in turn creates and maintains further lack of control, making it impossible for children living in poverty to benefit from any kind of progress. The current social security system is fragmented and many children are not able to access grants for which they are clearly eligible; while many more do not qualify for social security despite clearly needing it (Du Plessis & Conley, 2007). As Abraham stated:

“There are many learners who are being taken off by caregivers and some of them even by neighbours and they don’t have social grants in spite of them applying for it. These children face discrimination, isolation and extreme hardship.”

Bill emphasized that:

“Affected learner’s chances of escaping from poverty are therefore limited further and sometimes they are forced to drop out of school altogether as learners have no access to social assistance.”

Nelson further stated that:

“The caregivers complain as it is very difficult for them as well, given that they have children of their own to take care off. They do this out of love for these homeless, orphaned children. But they say, ‘We can’t survive on love only can we?’”

The above data reveal the effects of the HIV and AIDS pandemic on learners. They also illustrate that when families in the community take in children affected by the pandemic this increases dependency on their limited income and assets. Every child has the right to benefit from social security, including social assistance. Such benefits should, where appropriate, be made available, taking into account the resources and the circumstances of the child and the people responsible for the maintenance of the child, as well as any other pertinent considerations (Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Article 26:1,2 cited in Du Plessis & Conley, 2007).

Carter declared that:

“We try to manage these problems by filling in the necessary forms for these caregivers so that they can get the necessary help that is required. Filling in these forms are time consuming considering we don’t have free time but we try our best given the circumstances.”

Nancy declared that:

“We further manage this situation by referring them to the child welfare or even call upon the social workers to come to school to assist these caregivers. We also try to refer them to religious organizations whereby they get food hampers for a period of six months at a time.”

Family members living with HIV and AIDS are likely to lose their jobs and income, while having to spend large amounts on health care and funeral expenses. This situation, in turn, deepens poverty. For example, Abraham confirmed that:

“I have a learner that comes to school sometimes, about three times a week. When I questioned him about his absence, he mentioned that he had to go to work when his boss called him, because his father has lost his job because of his HIV status (illness) and they do not have food to eat.”

The data confirms that the high absenteeism rates were the result of learners having to try to earn money to supplement the household income, thereby increasing the likelihood that poverty will persist in their generation (Streak, 2002). The respondents managed this problem by identifying learners who were in this predicament and assisted them with their schoolwork by ensuring that they received all their worksheets, continuous assessments and tests, irrespective of the deadlines. They ensured that these learners would not be penalised for handing in a project late. Tests were given to them ‘when’ they came to school.

4.4.7 Contextual Realities that Impact on Learners’ Lives

The lack of water in the homes of many learners featured highly as reasons for the lack of punctuality, absenteeism and poor academic achievement.

The respondents mentioned that late coming and absenteeism were common amongst learners who lacked access to water at their homes. For example, Bill mentioned that:

“Some learners revealed that because nobody was working at home, their water supply was cut and therefore they did not attend school regularly. They are sent by their parents to go looking for water. Some neighbours give some of the learner’s family water while some have to go to the river to get water.”

Nelson added that:

“There are various reasons why some of these learners get absent... they did not eat the previous day as there was no water to cook food at home, or... they did not have water to wash their uniform or their uniforms were wet or because they got the water late from the tankers that deliver water.”

Carter further stated that:

“Learners come late because they have to walk long distances to fetch water for the day and then get dressed and come to school. At least they are coming to school, even though it is late.”

Nancy added that:

“Some get absent because they suffer from scabies due to unhygienic circumstances and not bathing regularly.”

Nelson further stated that:

“When learners have no access to running water it results in the lack of hygiene and sanitation which is also a major problem for learners. Many learners fall sick often due to diahorrea.”

The above data reveal that some of the reasons associated with poor attendance involved learners going to fetch water a long distance from home and illnesses related to the lack of water. The respondents noted that they tried to manage this problem by alerting the principal to the problem so that he could telephone the water department and ask them to deliver water to the community. Furthermore, Abraham mentioned that:

“We encouraged learners to carry a container to school so that they can at least take water for cooking and drinking at home.”

Carter added that:

“We also invited soap and toiletry companies such as Palmolive/Colgate (to name examples) to promote their products as well as give short talks on personal hygiene and most importantly to donate soaps, detergents and any toiletry that would be of benefit to the learners.”

4.4.8 Abuse

Abuse was another issue frequently raised by the respondents. Substance abuse often leads to physical abuse (Smith & Segal, 2012). Abuse is traumatic for children raised in poverty. For example, Nancy recollected that:

“Jason, a grade 3 child once told me, mam, ‘my mummy hits me if I do not wash the clothes after school, even when it is raining I have to do it.’ He mentioned that his mother works till late and his father is a drug abuser (‘my daddy, he smokes dagga and takes tablets’) who doesn’t work.”

Bill pointed out that:

“Abuse is rife here in our school community. I have a grade 4 learner that comes from a very impoverished (no lights and water) home. The mother is an alcoholic and abuses this child. One day he came to school with his entire head filled with scabs. Upon closer inspection and questioning, I found that these scabs were caused through abuse. The mother got drunk and took her stiletto heeled shoe (the child described the shoe...’like the one Miss Gans wears...long heels’) and hit the child on his head, maybe about 25 to 30 times. I counted.”

The above data expose some of the physical abuse that learners from impoverished homes have to endure. This demonstrates that when a child lives with an alcoholic or addict, this can without doubt lead to neglect and abuse. The respondents mentioned that the way they tried to manage this problem was by calling the parents to school and addressing the problem. The parents were made aware of the consequences of their actions and what steps they as teachers could take (call child welfare, police, child line) when children/learners are abused. The teachers said that they tried to educate these parents about abuse as well as counsel learners in school by reassuring the child that they had done nothing wrong, by listening to the learner and providing pastoral care. For example, Bill stated:

“When the parent reported to school, the principal and I questioned her. She denied abusing the child at first, when I told her about the consequences of her actions, (that is calling in the child protection unit and welfare services) she apologised. I didn’t hesitate to reprimand her and I also told her that we would be keeping a very close eye on her son, if there is ever a repetition of what transpired, there ...no...second chances, police ...welfare... brought in...mediate...you...arrested.”

Sexual abuse of learners was also reported by some of the respondents. Hussey, Chang and Kotch (2006, cited in Jensen, 2009) established that impoverished children were more likely to report sexual abuse than better-off children. Child sexual abuse is a particularly complex form of abuse because of the guilt and shame attached to it. It is important to recognise that sexual abuse doesn't always involve body contact. Exposing a child to sexual situations or material is sexually abusive, whether or not touching is involved (Smith & Segal 2012).

For example, Nelson stated that:

“Tim approached me and told me during my Life Orientation lesson that, ‘Sir, every afternoon we go to Bob’s house and watch movies.’ I said, ‘okay, what kind of movies?’ and then he gets down to the gory details of what happens in an x-rated movie. When questioned where they got the movie fromit was Tim’s dad’s;’ who sits with both of you and watches?’ ... ‘his big brother’, ‘where’s his parents?’... ‘at work’. I took him along with Bob to the office immediately, but not without crying and tears from both the boys, who were so frightened because they said...dad ...going... kill us, we will get a hiding...please don’t call our fathers... we are feeling so ashamed.”

From the above data it can be deduced that although no touching was involved, these learners were exposed to sexual abuse and neglect given that they were only grade four learners. Sexually abused children are tormented by guilt and shame because they feel that they have done something wrong and become afraid. They may feel that they are responsible for the abuse or in some way brought it upon themselves (Smith & Segal, 2012). This situation was managed in the following way. The parents were called immediately on the telephone and questioned about the movie. At first they found it amusing, but when they were cautioned about the consequences of their neglect, (that is, calling Child Line, the police and the child welfare) the amusement vanished. They then acknowledged that it was neglect on their part to have the movie within reach of their children. They were also asked to provide adult supervision for their children after school, until they came home from work, so that the children were not left to their own devices.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter the data acquired from the interviews were presented under themes and categories which were produced after subjecting the data to content analysis. The patterns that materialised from the data were then presented and discussed. Managing low academic achievement amongst learners in an impoverished community would, therefore, require a combination of actions to address the various reasons for low academic achievement. Variances in academic ability, incongruence in learning materials, learners’ need for support, and health and other issues related to poverty impact on teaching and learning in profound ways. If one addresses one of the root issues e.g. learning materials, in isolation, the efforts made may not yield tangible benefits. A holistic approach is therefore necessary to address

all the facets of poverty. This means that teachers would first need to identify the range of issues that need to be addressed, and then explore possible solutions that will assist, sequence and combine the interventions and obtain buy-in from all concerned to holistically manage the impacts of impoverished contexts on learners' academic achievement.

In the next chapter, the main conclusions of this study are presented and recommendations are made.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore school management of learners' problems in the context of an impoverished school community. The main objectives of the study were to document teachers' experiences and coping strategies regarding the management of underprivileged learners. The research study was qualitative in nature and used a case study approach with multiple methods of data collection. The theoretical framework for the study was Choice Theory and Reality Therapy Theory. I personally conducted in-depth interviews which were then analysed. Five teachers from a primary school in the Verulam District of KwaZulu-Natal participated voluntarily in the study. An observation schedule was used to document my observations of the context.

The previous chapter dealt with the presentation, analysis and discussion of the data. This chapter draws together the main findings from which conclusions are derived and recommendations are generated and presented. The findings of this study provide sufficient evidence that poverty raises a number of challenges at school level that impact on the functioning of the school. After a careful consideration of the data, certain clear conclusions emerge in terms of the critical questions formulated in chapter one. The discussion in this chapter is informed by the aims, objectives and key questions presented in chapter one. Based on the findings outlined in chapter four and the conclusions of this study, recommendations for further research are proposed. This chapter details general recommendations to help teachers advance their management of learner problems in the context of an impoverished school community.

5.2 Key findings of the study

The aim of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of how teachers manage the problems that poor learners bring to the classroom in the context of an impoverished school community. The results of this study have indicated that, generally, teachers have positive attitudes towards impoverished learners. Several respondents were sympathetic and showed understanding and support for impoverished learners. Support took the form of leniency and

empathy towards the underprivileged learners. Such learners were found to have formed constructive relationships with teachers who provide a support base at their school. The following inferences were made regarding the themes discussed in the previous chapter:

Throughout the investigation the interview responses were studied. The findings of the research study indicate that, poverty and impoverished circumstances have a negative impact on learners' academic performance. Learners find it difficult to accomplish and achieve in a socially and economically disadvantaged environment, resulting in poor academic achievement. The majority of the learners in the school used for this case study come from impoverished backgrounds, where there are many siblings, and both or one parent are unemployed. Others have lost their parents due to illness and are raised by grandparents, neighbours, foster parents and relatives. All these factors affect learner performance in that learners from these kinds of backgrounds do not possess the necessary requirements for successful schooling. The findings also indicate that learners come from impoverished backgrounds where academic expectations are low. This observation was confirmed by the literature and the data emanating from this study. The respondents provided rich insights into the profound and devastating consequences of poverty that children encounter at school level. Such children face potentially destroyed lives in which they are unable to reach their full potential. Teachers in such a school setting are unable to derive maximum benefits from their workday and achieve the desired outcomes of their educational efforts. The challenges associated with poverty at the school and community levels are widespread and are attributed to universal processes.

Commitments made by South Africa to pursue the Millennium Development Goals (see chapter two), more particularly those related to education, health, water and sanitation, sustainable development and poverty reduction will not be realised within the expected time frame if conditions of this nature persist. The findings of this study call for proactive, decisive action at the structural level. Immediate and focused interventions to ensure quality education extend beyond the corridors of the education department. Redressing inequalities in schools located in impoverished communities requires the constant monitoring and evaluation of current and future programmes. This can be achieved through the implementation of policies aimed at poverty alleviation. Furthermore, a plan encompassing effective coordination between, amongst others, government, civil society, the private sector, academia, and donors is essential to achieve poverty alleviation. Poverty has fuelled, and will

continue to fuel, unnecessary human suffering. This will have immediate and long term consequences for individuals, communities, and the country as a whole which will impact on the global community. Strategic planning around the alleviation of poverty must be analysed from a human rights perspective and the best interest principle where children are concerned. From a structural perspective, a more democratic society is called for in order to redress past and present imbalances.

The school in this study is clearly an enabling environment for effective teaching and learning and a major contributory factor is the work of the dedicated teachers. The impoverished environment disallows learners from developing complex skills which inhibits their optimal development, thus effectively denying them the right to education.

5.3 Recommendations

I formulated specific aims to determine the course of the study. These aims were realised through a literature survey and the collection of data through unstructured interviews. The findings of this study give rise to a range of recommendations. The objective is not to present a *modus operandi* for success, but to move schools a little closer to improving and sustaining a culture of learning and teaching by capturing the advantages that a tactical management approach presents for the management of learner problems in the context of an impoverished school community. On the basis of the aims and findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered to address the issues raised:

Recommendation One

Home support and care and parental education are important issues, as low educational or literacy levels among parents may discourage them from helping their children with schoolwork (Pretorius, 2000). Various studies have shown that children like to feel supported in their education. This does not mean that parents should do children's homework for them, but they should be on hand to assist them when needed. Parents with a low level of education may not know how to support their children's learning. Several innovative suggestions have been proposed to address this issue, some of which have been shown to help learners, while others have had negative repercussions. Huetinck and Munshin (2000) point out that older brothers and sisters or uncles and aunts can help and use the term "parent(s)" generically to refer to the adult(s) assuming responsibility for children's education.

Recommendation Two

Maintaining good relationships is a fundamental aspect of the daily lives of teachers; successful teachers are those who create a purposeful learning environment by means of skillful management styles and create a system of incentives and support for learners. They manage learner performance rather than controlling them and they acknowledge and recognise that nurturing learners' self-esteem and self-confidence are central to the management of learner behaviour. In this regard, teacher training institutions should assess an applicant's ability to relate well to learners.

Recommendation Three

Whilst it is recognised that current educational transformation is placing severe financial constraints on schools, basic teaching and learning resources are a pre-requisite for the promotion of a culture of learning and teaching. Lack of resources in schools causes frustration. This can be addressed if the school, the School Governing Body and the Department of Education work closely with parents to raise funds to purchase educational resources, other facilities and equipment. The evidence shows that well-sustained schools have a positive influence on learner achievement. It is therefore recommended that the Education Department makes additional funding available for schools to purchase essential resources. This would help to improve the satisfaction levels of both teachers and learners.

Recommendation Four

High levels of learner mobility cause chaos in classrooms and the functioning of the school as a whole. Teachers become frustrated when they do not know how, when, why and what needs to be done and how the school's goals are going to be achieved. Therefore, it is recommended that the school management team gives constant feedback and advice to teachers. Frequent feedback, coupled with efficient management systems, helps to develop high levels of confidence among staff and will also assist in moving the school forward.

Recommendation Five

When learners are despondent because of their home environment and impoverished circumstances, withdrawal is a likely consequence. While they may also feel frustrated, teachers can nurture withdrawal if they do not demonstrate love and respect for learners as

individuals. Severe rules that are imposed without consideration of individual circumstances and that do not provide the opportunity for every learner to achieve academic success, or burdening learners with expectations beyond their ability impact very negatively on learners. It is recommended that these issues are addressed in order to minimise disruptive behaviour. Teachers should also align themselves with Glasser's Choice Theory, where he claims that learners present with their own unique problems and challenges and that there is no right way to handle these problems. Instead, teachers should set two goals; first and foremost, to minimise disruptive behaviour in order to facilitate the culture of teaching and learning; and second, to assist learners to cope with their problems. Teachers are urged to strike the delicate balance between the motivational needs and interests of individual learners, especially those who are not successful academically, and the school's curriculum. Schools also need to focus on providing opportunities for every learner, by listening to them, by respecting that each learner is a unique person who needs to be loved, respected and nurtured, and by ensuring that all achievements, irrespective of their magnitude, are recognised and celebrated.

Recommendation Six

Christie and Collins (1984, p.22) argue that: "moral degeneration at school must be addressed". They investigated impoverished South African schools which managed to operate reasonably well, while those around them collapsed. These schools strategise and make the best of the situations they find themselves in so as to succeed against all odds. In her discussion of the factors contributing to these schools' success, Devnarain (2010) singles out school governance and parental involvement. Parents themselves are expected to serve as good role models to promote and encourage socially responsible behaviour in their children. Good parenting skills will ensure that any form of abnormal behaviour is addressed immediately and ameliorated with positive guidance. It is recommended that the web of responsibility be extended to include parents so that they are held legally accountable for the behaviour of their children at school. Therefore, schools need to ensure that parents and their children understand the school's curricula and behavioural policies and expectations via effective and successful communication.

Recommendation Seven

Teachers have the ability to work independently and creatively; therefore they need to begin to build a sense of ownership of their school and their work; this will result in enhanced learner morale and performance. Teachers need to align themselves with Glasser's theory, whereby he declares that when a learner truly understands her/his association with the teacher, mutual trust is developed. Furthermore, to increase self-esteem and self-confidence, learners should be given responsibilities and their progress should be reported to parents through regular feedback on their child's successes, difficulties and behaviour at school. The degradation and humiliation of poor learners should be avoided. The Education Department is urged to provide psychological support services to schools to ensure that learners with psychological difficulties are assisted by psychologists, who could service a set of schools within a district. It is further recommended that these counsellors network closely with social support agencies like the Child, Family and Welfare Society, Child Line, the Child Protection Unit of the South African Police Services and other non-governmental organisations.

Recommendation Eight

The school as an establishment needs to find ground-breaking ways of rebuilding circles of care for learners with HIV/AIDS (Kinghorn, Coombe, Mckay, Rugeiyamu, Scheirhout & Johnson, 2002). It is recommended that the school management team and teachers bridge the gap between policy and practice on issues related to HIV/AIDS at the level of school community; bringing teachers and learners together with other resource people to recognise and attend to the needs of all learners in a synchronised and effective way (Khanare, 2008).

Furthermore, teachers need to advocate for the development of a supportive environment. In order to improve the effectiveness of the response to issues related to HIV/AIDS, the school environment should be supportive of all activities and programmes in relation to HIV/AIDS. This includes identifying a comprehensive range of services in the schools. The school management team should be part of a bigger team that includes other teachers and learners, so as to avoid overburdening teachers and administrators and thereby weakening the school system (Khanare, 2008). The school management team can make an important contribution by holding teachers accountable for fulfilling their roles and responsibilities as set down in the Norms and Standards of Teachers (DOE, 2000a).

In addition, it is recommended that existing national resources be mobilised (Chilli, 2006). Teachers and managers should develop partnerships for care and support for learners who are vulnerable or orphaned, as a result of being infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. This would require bringing local clinics, other schools, child welfare and social security on board. Collaboration and synchronization should also be sought with other sectors for the delivery of services, for example, the water department, and guidance and counselling services, to cite but a few.

Recommendation Nine

Poor access to water, poor quality water and poor hygiene practices affect health, nutrition and, consequently, education. Learners fall ill and their attendance at school suffers. Some learners who become ill at school are sent home; this impacts negatively on their education. Some learners only attend school for a few hours due to water-related problems. It is concluded that reliance on teachers and donor funding for access to water, as well as reliance on natural sources are no longer reasonable options. The provision of water infrastructure at the community level is vital in order to dissipate tensions between the school and the community over scarce resources and to sustain the good health and wellbeing of the local population (Devnarain, 2010). It is recommended that the necessary infrastructure be installed by the Department of Water Affairs to provide tapped potable water or an alternative source of water in all communities to ensure the health and wellbeing of the learner population.

Recommendation Ten

It is widely acknowledged that the current government inherited the negative legacies of apartheid, which include social discrimination and the disadvantages facing rural communities. It is acknowledged that rural areas in South Africa have suffered decades of underinvestment in infrastructure (Devnarain, 2010). To help mitigate the effects of poverty, different state departments like the Departments of Water Affairs, Education, Health, as well as local and district authorities, need to pool their resources and work together. The efforts of the state can be and are often supplemented by civil society organisations, business and the donor community. It is recommended that a networking forum would promote the interests of children and their development. Such a forum could initiate short- and long-term responses to mitigate the impact of poverty on rural education facilities and communities.

Recommendation Eleven

Learners whose parents are unemployed need to obtain grants to help them to sustain themselves. It is recommended that the Department of Education collaborate with the Department of Social Development to ensure that those who qualify for grants receive them. It is further recommended that rather than giving money to young girls who deliberately fall pregnant in order to access the child grant, it would be better to provide money to children who are already in school.

Recommendation Twelve

A multicultural setting can, at times, be very challenging. It is almost impossible to find a society that is completely culturally, ethnically and racially homogenous. Such diversity has consequences for every area of social policy. Therefore, teachers need to familiarise themselves with what Glasser (2004) postulates as the need for love and belonging. This is the most imperative need because we are social beings who need constructive relationships to feel completely satisfied. Teachers need to be familiar with different cultures and have high expectations of all learners. It is recommended that teachers and schools construct, rather than tear down, what learners bring to the classroom. That is, they need to understand cultural, linguistic, and experiential differences, as well as differences in social class, and incorporate them into the learning process. Too often, schools fall back on deficit theories and continue the practice of blaming learners and their backgrounds. Instead, teachers need to focus on where they can make a difference, namely, their own instructional policies and practices (Naidoo, 1996). In a diverse society, teachers must learn to recognise subtle and negative attitudes. Considering the impact that teachers have on the lives of the impoverished learners in their classes, they must be made aware of the non-intellectual factors which might bias their judgment of a child, of possible differences in their behaviour towards those of whom they have different expectations, and of their power to influence children's achievements.

Recommendation Thirteen

Large class sizes generally overburden teachers, who are then unable to respond to the needs of learners who require individual attention. It has also been observed that teachers' attitudes may be so concealed and subtle that they themselves do not realise that they are exhibiting negative attitudes. It is recommended that teachers provide encouragement and a nurturing environment in which all children can learn and excel; negative misconceptions about their academic, communication and social abilities should not be perpetuated.

Recommendation Fourteen

It is recommended that teachers promote collegial and collaborative work relationships to improve and strengthen the existing relationships between themselves and the school community, which includes the Department of Education and the School Governing Body. Partnerships help to support the growth and development of teachers and improve their teaching practices. Teachers will feel encouraged to work together when they understand their impoverished learners' circumstances. They will begin to work towards the betterment of the school and their learners. This will also enhance their understanding and management of the problems that poor learners experience. This can be achieved through staff development workshops. It is important for teachers to take cognisance of Glasser's theories to develop and implement strategies that addresses all the learners' needs. An integrated approach on the basis of these theories should be devised to direct, sustain and assist teachers in schools.

5.4 Recommendations for further research

The following recommendations and suggestions for further research are proposed:

This study was conducted in one primary school. It would be interesting to conduct a study within a different context, such as an education institution in an urban area. This would explore how teachers in an urban area respond to the problems of impoverished learners in the school context.

Furthermore, this study was specifically aimed at teachers. It would be useful to replicate the study with learners in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of schools' management of the problems facing impoverished learners.

Finally, the sample size in this present study was small; this limited the generalisation of the results. It is therefore recommended that further research be carried out using a bigger sample that would be representative of the population.

5.5 Summary

This chapter outlined the main conclusions drawn from this study. Based on the findings and the conclusions, recommendations for further research were provided. The aim of this study was to understand the school management of learner problems in the context of an impoverished school community. The impact of poverty on academic performance was also discussed. It is important to note that, the data collected provided answers to the research questions. Poverty indeed impacts negatively on academic performance, but with the help and support of dedicated, compassionate teachers, learners from poor backgrounds can achieve at school. It is trusted that this research study will be of value to all education stakeholders.

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APPENDIX A: LETTER TO THE DEPARTMENT

The Researcher Officer
Research, Strategy, Policy
Development and ECMS Directorate,
G23 Metropolitan Building,
Pietermaritzburg
3200

Mr S. Alwar

Sir

ACADEMIC RESEARCH: Request for permission to conduct a research study.
Topic: Management of Learner problems in the Context of an Impoverished School
Community.

I am currently pursuing a Master of Education Degree at the University of KwaZulu - Natal. A prerequisite for this degree is a thesis involving research. The focus of my study is to understand how the circumstances of impoverished learners' impact on the problems they face in school. The primary aim of this proposed research is to investigate the School Management of learner problems in the context of an impoverished school community in a primary school. My supervisor is Professor Labby Ramrathan (0826749829) and co-supervisor is Dr Vijay Hamlall (0834190441) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood Campus (School of Education). The information obtained from this research study, will be made available to school managers as well as the Department of Education. The dissertation would entail undertaking research in the area of Management by conducting two 45 minute interviews.

I hereby request permission to conduct the aforementioned research study in 1(one) Primary school in Ward 142 in the Phoenix Region. The school within the ward has been randomly selected and permission is obtained from the school principal. A sample of teachers will be interviewed from the selected school.

The teachers who participate in this study will do so voluntarily. Whilst conducting this study, I will ensure that normal learning and teaching will not be disrupted. All respondents or respondentss and the participating school will remain anonymous. Confidentiality and privacy will be maintained at all times.

Your kind assistance in this matter will be most appreciated.

Yours faithfully

C. Prammoney (Mrs)

Tel nos: 032 5331330(H)
032- 5357053 (W)
0837793327(cell)

Student number: 204300071

APPENDIX B: LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

The Principal

Sir / Madam

ACADEMIC RESEARCH: Request for permission to conduct a research study.

At present I am pursuing my Master of Education Degree which entails a full research dissertation at the University of KwaZulu - Natal, Edgewood Campus under the supervision of Professor Labby Ramrathan (0826749829) and co-supervisor is Dr Vijay Hamlall (0834190441) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood Campus (School of Education). The information obtained from this research study, will be made available to school managers as well as the Department of Education.

I request permission to undertake the research in your school. The dissertation would entail undertaking research in the area of Management by conducting two 45 minute interviews.

My research topic is:

School Management of Learner problems in the Context of an Impoverished School Community in a Primary School in the Phoenix Ward of the Pinetown District in KwaZulu Natal.

The objective of this project is to provide a critical insight in respect of the following;

- The research will explore the problems that learners encounter in the context of a primary school in Verulam that are related to issues of poverty.
- The research will be focusing on how teachers manage these problems and what kind of support structure they provide for these children in order to help them to cope.

I would like to conduct the research during the current year 2012. My project will involve interviews with selected teachers at their availability and a venue of their convenience if not at the school and I will ensure that the culture of learning and teaching will not be interrupted. It is my intention that the information obtained, be made available to school managers as well as the Department of Education.

I will secure permission from teachers to involve them in the research. A participant in this study is at liberty to withdraw from participating at any stage and for any reason. A decision not to participate will not result in any form of disadvantage. Thus participation is voluntary. I guarantee confidentiality of information and promise that no names of the school, colleagues or children will be made public. I will ensure that normal teaching and learning at your school will not be disrupted. I hereby seek permission from you to conduct my investigation. The investigation will be guided by a strict code of ethics, as prescribed by the UKZN Ethics Committee. All data collected during the investigation will be treated in a strictly confidential manner.

Should you have any concern about this project, please contact my supervisor Dr Vijay Hamlall, a parttime lecturer at the University of KwaZulu Natal, Edgewood Campus. He can be contacted telephonically on 0834190441.

Thanking you in anticipation for a favorable response.

Yours faithfully
C. Prammoney (Mrs)

Student number: 20430007

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Colleague

RE: INFORMED CONSENT

At present I am pursuing my Master of Education Degree at the University of KwaZulu - Natal. A prerequisite of this degree is a thesis involving research which I am currently initiating. The focus of my study is to understand how the circumstances of impoverished learners' impact on the problems they face in school. My supervisor is Dr Vijay Hamlall, a lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood Campus. He can be contacted telephonically on 0834190441. My research title is:

School Management of Learner problems in the Context of an Impoverished School Community.

It is my intention that the information obtained from this study, will be made available to school managers to enhance the work performance of teachers at their school. This study will also provide insight into some of the theories and their management implications. The ultimate value of this research will depend on your contribution, as your perceptions and experiences at your school form a vital part of this study.

One school in the Phoenix Ward has been selected through simple random sampling. Teachers at this school will be selected to participate in an interview. In the interview process, the teachers will be asked questions related to their work experiences. There will be two interview sessions of 45 minutes in duration. To facilitate the flow of the interview, there will be an audio recording of the process.

I realize that by participating in this interview that you have to sacrifice your time on my behalf, but believe that ultimately, this research will benefit all teachers by establishing the negative factors that influence educator work performance.

In order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality pseudonyms for the names of the school and the respondents will be used. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time. Furthermore, a decision not to participate will not result in any form of disadvantage. The data gathered through the interview, will be discarded of after submission of the thesis. The audio tapes will be incinerated.

Further information regarding this study can be obtained from
Charmaine Prammoney 032- 5331330/ 0837793327
Professor Labby Ramrathan (0826749829)
Dr Vijay Hamlall (0834190441)
at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood Campus (School of Education).

Your sincerity and insight in this interview will be most appreciated.

Thanking You
C. Prammoney

DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANT

I,(Full names of participant), hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in this research project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

.....
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....
DATE

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

School Management of Learner problems in the Context of an Impoverished School Community

The following research questions will be posed to serve as a guide in carrying out this research.

SECTION A: Biographical Information

Please respond to the following information. It is required to gather data in determining the experience and expertise of the respondents.

First Interview

1. What is your age?
2. How long have you been teaching? And at this school?
3. What is your present occupational status? Are you in management or do you hold a senior teacher status?
4. How many learners are at your school?
5. How many teachers are on your teaching staff?
6. What is the average numbers of learners in your class?
7. Did you choose to come to this school or were you appointed?

Probes: Are you happy at this school? What do you like/dislike about this school?

Probes: How would you change things at this school to make it better for you?

8. How would you rate the academic performance of learners at this school?
9. What is your relationship with other teachers at this school?
10. What is your relationship with learners at this school?
11. How has your experience of teaching changed over the years since you started teaching?

12. How do you use your leisure time?

Probes : If you had the resources what would you like to do in your leisure time?

Second Interview

1. What is the socio-economic situation of learners at this school?

Probes: Do the learners come from wealthy, average, poor homes?

2. How does this impact on:

(a) You as a teacher and your teaching?

(b) Other learners

(c) The ethos and climate of the school.

Probe: How do you think, these issues of poverty affect teachers' attitudes about the performance of their jobs?

3. Could you outline some of the learner problems that you and other teachers experience at your school?

4. In your opinion to what extent do these problems affect your teaching and the delivery of quality education?

5. In your opinion (view) what are some of the contributing factors to these problems?

6. Is there a common understanding amongst the staff regarding problems at this school?

7. To what extent do issues of poverty hinder the teaching of the curriculum?

8. During your stay at this school would you say that the number of learners coming from impoverished homes have increased or decreased? Why do you think this is the case? How has this impacted on the number and type of learner problems at your school?

9. What do you think are the challenges that teachers face when managing learners from poor home background?

10. Would you say that the teachers in your school have these problems under control? In other words how are teachers managing these problems?

11. What support structures are there in place to address problems encountered (school, external, etc.)?

12. How do you as a teacher respond to these problems?

13. Are there clear procedures to follow in order to handle learner problems?

14. What role do you play to minimise these problems?

15. What actions do you take if any?
16. What external support structures are elicited (extracted/drawn out) to assist with the challenges faced by the learners?
17. To what extent do you receive support from the stakeholders (SGB, parents) of this school? Do you think they are successful? Would you say that these procedures are efficient enough? Why?
18. What type of assistance do you need in order to deal with some of these problems?
19. What are some of the coping strategies employed by you and your colleagues to manage the challenges faced by teachers relating to impoverished learners?
20. What in-service training is provided at the school for dealing with social problems?
21. What role do parents play in helping to manage the learner problems?
22. How do you work with the parents of learners that have problems at school?
23. Do you network with other schools to identify common problems experienced in terms of challenges experienced by learners?
24. Are there any intervention programmes offered by the DOE? (PGSES, behavioural modification programmes)
25. What do you believe needs to be done to further equip teachers to deal with learner problems?
26. How do you perceive (observe) the management of social problems at your school?
27. Would you say your school has sufficient measures in place to manage social problems? Motivate your answer.
28. What do you think can be done by various stakeholders including yourself to better manage and help learners with problems who come from poor home backgrounds?

APPENDIX E: Turnitin Report

Turnitin

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APPENDIX F: Letter confirming editing

**62 Ferguson Road
Glenwood
DURBAN 4001
Tel: 072 442 7896
Email: deanne.collins30@gmail.com
Income tax number: 0526066204**

28 November 2012

This is to confirm that I have edited the thesis, “School Management of Learner problems in the Context of an Impoverished School Community’, by Charmaine Prammoney, learner number: 204300071.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "D Collins". The signature is written in a cursive style.

(Ms) Deanne Collins (MA)