

**THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON TEACHING AND LEARNING AT  
MZIMBA SECONDARY SCHOOL AT ALLANDALE VILLAGE IN  
BUSHBUCKRIDGE MUNICIPALITY: MPUMALANGA PROVINCE.**

**BY**

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## **Declaration**

I declare that the mini- dissertation hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo for the degree MDEV on The Impact of Poverty on Teaching and learning at Mzimba Secondary School at Allandale village has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university; that is my work in design and in execution, and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

Mabanga M.N ( Ms )



Signature: *M.N. Mabanga*

Date: August 2012

**Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter, Thembelihle and my two grand children Masingita and Mandisa, as an encouragement to seek knowledge for personal development, growth and to secure a bright future.

## Acknowledgement

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## **Abstract**

Poverty poses a challenge to every person, organization and community, which needs to be addressed, and can lead to unacceptable behaviour in persons, particularly to young children if not addressed. Schools in rural areas seem to be the most affected than schools in urban areas. The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of poverty in teaching and learning, particularly in rural schools.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON TEACHING AND LEARNING: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

#### 1.1 Introduction

Mzimba is a Secondary School situated in the rural village of Allandale at Bushbuckridge Municipality in Mpumalanga Province. Learners at this school, like all schools need to be informed about the importance of education in developing them. Not only should schools do that, but also the community, as the latter has a role to play in order for effective teaching and learning to take place. The Department of Education and the community should come with a strategy that will help learners understand the importance of education. At the moment, the Department of Education seems to be struggling to come up with the curriculum which can satisfy the needs of the national imperatives, in particular, those of improving the pass rates and help all learners reach their full potential and contribute towards the development of the society throughout their lives.

This chapter explores the background to the problem about the impact of poverty in teaching and learning. The background to the problem is in section 1.2. Following this, the researcher gives the statement of the problem, aim of the study, briefly examines the research design and methodology, and outlines the demarcation of the study.

## **1.2. Background to the problem**

Poverty is the challenge that people in Bushbuckridge Municipality face. It is not only Bushbuckridge, but in the province as a whole. According to the census conducted in ( 2001), Bushbuckridge Local Municipality is the largest in the Enhlanzeni District Municipality. According to the( IDP document Bushbuckridge Local Municipality 2010 ), unemployment is high in the Municipal area, especially in the rural areas with less than 15% of the total population employed. The document also shows high levels of poverty which results in low income per household, characterize the municipal area. Income per household in the municipal area is below the subsistence income levels of R1210. 00 for most of the households, and it reflects a high level of poverty, particularly in rural areas (IDP).

Education statistics in the Bushbuckridge municipality shows that 17.5% of the whole population in that municipality is illiterate, while only 18% of whites is literate ( IDP document Bushbuckridge Municipality, 2010 ). Parents of most learners attending at Mzimba Secondary School are unemployed, with those who are working, working on farms. According to the school's statistics, most teachers teaching in the school are under-qualified to teach at secondary school level (Mzimba Senior Secondary School).

Learners at Mzimba Secondary School come from poverty-stricken families. The school is characterized by a high rate of absenteeism and a high drop-out rate which are due to poverty. It is because of these facts that the researcher thinks that these challenges might be as a result of poverty within the community.

### 1.3 Statement of the problem

Mzimba Secondary School is characterized by a high absenteeism rate and a high drop-out rate. Most learners leave schooling before they can even reach Grade twelve (12 ), thus running the risk of being unable to participate in the development of the country's economy. Many of those who attend school fail at the end of the year. The pass rate of the school is very low, example in 2010 the school managed to get only 22% pass rate for the Grade 12 when compared to other schools in the circuit. Some parents withdraw their children from the school due to high failure rate. For the past three years, performance of the school show that they were among the lowest in the whole province of Mpumalanga.

According to the Department of Education, Mpumalanga Province, the Grade 12 results for the past three years are as follow:

- In 2008 the school only manage to get 6%.
- In 2009 it was 13% and;
- In 2010 it was 22%.

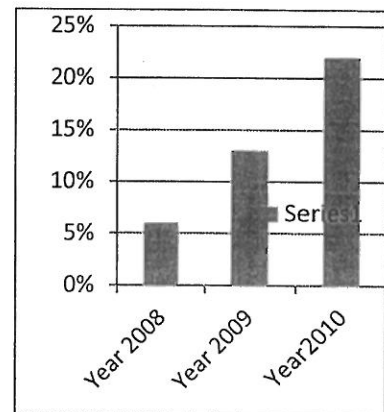


Figure1.1.Schoolperformance

These results indicate that there might be a possible link between poverty and academic performance of learners in the school.

#### **1.4 Aim of the study**

The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of poverty on teaching and learning at Mzimba Secondary School.

#### **1.5. Objectives**

This study was premised on the following objectives:

- To determine and establish the perception of parents, learners and teachers on the impact of poverty on the daily school attendance, teaching and learning at Mzimba Secondary School.
- To assess the role of stakeholders in dealing with poverty and the impact it has on teaching and learning.
- To recommend the possible strategies to improve the situation at Mzimba Secondary School.

#### **1.6 Research questions**

The following questions will act as guideline for this study

- What is the perception of parents, learners and teachers on the impact of poverty on the daily school attendance, teaching and learning at the school?
- What is the role of stakeholders in dealing with poverty and the impact it has on teaching and learning?
- What possible strategies can be recommended to improve the situation at the school?

## **1.7. Definition of concepts**

The following key concepts, relevant to the investigation, are now defined.

- **Poverty**

According to Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (1995), poverty means being unable to afford basic human needs, such as clean water, nutrition, health-care, education, clothing and shelter. This is also referred to as absolute poverty or destitution.

- **Absolute Poverty**

Absolute poverty is defined as a standard of living that is below the minimum level considered decent and reasonable by society (Holt, Reinhart & Winston, 1995). United Nations Development Report (2000) indicates that it refers to a set standard which is consistent over time and between countries.

- **Hunger**

International Food Policy Research Institute ( 2007 ) defines hunger as the uneasy or painful sensation caused by lack of food.

- **At-Risk**

At-Risk refers to children who are likely to fail in school or in life because of their life's social circumstances ( Leroy & Symes, 2001).

- **Social exclusion**

Social exclusion is defined as a multi-dimensional process of progressive social rupture, detaching groups and individuals from social relations and institutions



and preventing them from full participation in the normal, normatively prescribed activities of the society in which they live (United Nations Development Report, 2000).

- **Vulnerability**

Vulnerability is defined as the degree to which people, property, resources, systems and cultural economic environment and social activity is susceptible to harm, degradation, or destruction on being exposed to hostile agent or factor (<http://www.Business Dictionary. Com>).

- **Performance**

It is defined as how well or how bad something is done. In teaching and learning, performance is measured through Formative and Summative assessments ( IQMS, 2003 )

- **Formative assessment**

Formative assessment evaluates the process of learning, and it is part of the teaching process which is used to discover gaps, and adjust both teaching and learning processes to the student's learning needs immediately in the process of learning (IQMS, 2003).

- **Summative assessment**

Summative assessment is the evaluation conducted at the end of a certain period of time in order to judge the sufficiency of students' performance and knowledge ( IQMS, 2003 ).

## **1.8. Research design**

### **1.8.1 Qualitative Research Design**

A qualitative research design was used to conduct this study. Strause & Corbin(1990: 2) observe that a qualitative design is usually used to find out about people’s perceptions, behaviours and interactions. This research was designed to investigate the impact of poverty on teaching and learning at Mzimba Secondary School. It is in this regard that people’s views, perceptions and behaviour are considered. Qualitative research is “ a naturalistic inquiry involving the use of non-interfering data collection strategies to discover the natural flow of events and processes and how participants interpret them” (Henning, 2004: 92). Mauer ( 1996: 11 ) adds that such research is also interpretive and descriptive in nature. Henning (2004: 3 ) points out that qualitative research is “ the study of people in their natural environment as they go about their lives with the aim of understanding how they live, talk, behave and what their words and behaviours mean to them”. Cresswell (1998: 16) asserts that “ it is an investigative process where the researcher gradually makes sense of a social phenomenon by contrasting, comparing, replicating, cataloguing and classifying the objective of the study”. Qualitative research is therefore, inductive, descriptive, holistic and discovery-oriented.

## **1.9 Research Methodology**

### **1.9.1 Study Area**



See Annexure C for the community in which the school is situated.

This research was conducted at Mzimba Secondary School, in the community of Allandale village in the Bushbuckridge Municipality. The school is about fourteen kilometres away from Thulamahashe township. It is about ten

minutes drive from the Municipal offices to the school. The school is targeted because it is situated in the poor rural area and it is classified by the Department of Education as underperforming in the Province in terms of results.

### **1.9.3 Sample size and selection method**

The sample of this study consisted of two hundred (200) participants. The sample was chosen from learners, SGB members, community members and educators. A stratified random sampling was used to select the sample. According to De Vos et al. ( 2005: 200 ) “ Stratified random is suitable for heterogeneous populations because the inclusion of small subgroups can be ensured”. Stratification also consists of the universe being divided into a number of strata which are mutually inclusive.

The following groups of people formed the sample of this study;

- Ten ( 10 ) teachers from school;
- Fifty ( 50 ) learners from grade 10-12;
- One hundred and thirty ( 130 ) parents and;
- Ten ( 10 ) School Governing Body members.

### **1.10. Data collection method**

Methods used to collect data in any research, are depended on the research design chosen by the researcher, however, no method prescribes or rejects any particular way of data collection ( Bell, 1993: 5 )

#### **1.10.1 Focus group interview**

Krueger quoted in Kringer et al, (1990: 124 ) defines focus group as a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive and non-threatening environment.

This method was used because in a focus group interview, participants are selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic. De Vos, Strydom & Delport ( 2005: 299 ) note that focus group interviews are a means of better understanding of how people feel or think about an issue, product or service.

Focus group was preferred in this research because the researcher created a tolerant environment that encouraged participants to share their perceptions, points of view, experiences, wishes and concerns without pressuring participants to vote or reach consensus ( Kruger & Casey, 2000: 4 ). In focus group interview, the participants are free to share their views without anyone interfering. Focus group consists of six to ten ( Morgan & Kruger, 1998 ). Data from one hundred and thirty ( 130 ) participants chosen from the community members and fifty participants ( 50 ) from learners was collected through a focus group. Stratified random sampling was used as a criteria for selecting the group. According to De Vos et al ( 2005 ), this kind of sampling is suitable for heterogeneous populations because the inclusion of small groups can be insured. Data from educators and SGB members was through face to face interview.

#### **1.1 0.2 Face to face interview**

According to De Vos et al ( 2005) researchers use face to face interviews in order to gain a detailed picture of a participant's beliefs about, or perceptions or accounts of a particular topic. Face to face interviews are especially suitable

where one is particularly interested in complexity or a process, or where an issue is controversial or personal.

Secondary data information was also used. According to Rubin & Babbie( 2001) refer to secondary analysis as the re-working of already analyzed data over which the present researcher had no direct control or in which had no direct involvement. In this case sources from the Department of Education results and the Bushbuckridge municipality IDP document were used.

### **1.11 Data Analysis Methods**

After collecting data, the next step was data analysis. Data analysis entails bringing order, structure to the mass of time-consuming, creative and fascinating process ( Marshall & Roseman, 1995:1189). Since the study is qualitative in nature, data analysis was in line with the requirement of the qualitative research. Collected data was compiled, labelled, separated and organized through a process called coding. Through the coding method, themes and ideas that were common from participants were identified.

### **1.12. Ethical considerations**

#### **The following ethics guided this research**

- Permission to conduct this research was sought from the school, the community headman, learners, educators and the SGB members;
- The researcher officially introduced herself to the participants before the commencement of the interview process;
- Each participant was given a letter explaining the purpose of the research;
- Each participant was assured that whatever information collected from them will remain confidential and their anonymity was assured;

- Each participant was assured that he or she was participating at his / her own will and can withdraw at anytime he/she pleases;

### **1.13. Outline of research report**

**Chapter one** provides the introduction, background to the problem, statement of the problem, aim of the research, objectives, research questions as well as definition of concepts.

**Chapter two** provides the literature of what other writers have written on the impact of poverty on teaching and learning.

**Chapter three** focuses on the research design and methodology, data collection and analysis methods, population, sampling and area of the study.

**Chapter four** analyzes the data collected.

**Chapter five** gives an overview of the study by explaining and discussion the research findings. Recommendations are made and concluding remarks presented.

### **1.14 Limitations of the study**

The limitation of this study is as follows:

The main shortcoming of exploratory studies is that they seldom provide satisfactory answers to research questions, but can hint at the answers and can give insights into research methods that could provide definitive answers. Qualitative research approach is, in itself, a limitation. This is mainly due to the limited number of respondents expected. This however, has got no strong effect on the quality of the research, since the purpose of the study is not to generalize the findings.

### **1.15. Summary**

In this introductory chapter, the background to the research problem is discussed. It indicates that the rate of poverty is alarmingly high, and it has a negative impact on teaching and learning at Mzimba Secondary, and to the community as a whole. Despite this worrying scenario, the parents, teachers, learners, municipality and the department of education do not seem to have concrete strategies to deal with the problem. Against the above background, the researcher presented the statement of the problem, the aim, objectives and research questions, which she made use of a qualitative research design. She outlined her assumptions as a researcher and showed how the entire study was divided.

## **CHAPTER TWO:**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides information stated in related studies about the impact of poverty on teaching and learning. It provides a theoretical framework against which respondents, opinions regarding the impact of poverty on teaching and learning are interpreted. First, the section covers relevant aspects such as poverty, the achievement gap, out of school factors, diversity, student motivation to learn, lack of readiness to learn, relationship with and involvement of parents and families, and the poorly resourced school, before turning the spotlight on the relationship between poverty and academic performance.

#### **2.1.2 The concept being At- Risk**

In this context, the term "at-risk" refers to children who are likely to fail at school or in life because of their life's social circumstances. There are many factors related to poverty that may place a child at-risk for academic failure, amongst others, such factors are unemployment of their parents, abuse and neglect, substance abuse, dangerous neighbourhoods, homelessness, mobility, and exposure to inadequate or inappropriate educational experiences.

Poverty is an issue that more of our children come face to face with. Rises in the cost of living make poor people less able to afford items. Poor people spend a greater portion of their budgets on food than rich people. It is as of



this fact that poor households and those near the poverty threshold can be particularly vulnerable to increases in food prices. This makes them unable to afford other basic needs such as payment for their children's education and buying them clothes.

Leroy & Symes, (2001) point out that some of the factors that are related to poverty that may place a child at risk of not making it in future are, among others, young, single or low education level parents. Children born from single or uneducated parents often experience hardship and this increases the possibility of them dropping out of school at a young age. This will aggravate their socio-economic conditions going forward.

Leroy & Symes, ( 2001 ) further argue that being able to identify and understand children who are at-risk is critical if the community is to support their growth and development. Warm and caring relationships need to be fostered between teachers and children. This will help teachers detect any warning signs that may place children at-risk for failure, interfering with their chances for success in school and or in life. Academic and behavioural problems can be indicators of impending failure. Leroy & Symes ( 2001 ) identify the following behavioural patterns which lead to: delay in language development; delay in reading development; aggression; violence; social withdrawal; substance abuse; irregular attendance; and depression. Sometimes teachers find it difficult to reach the student's parent or guardian, they sometimes find that the student does not complete assignments, does not study for tests, or does not come to school prepared to learn because of poverty related circumstances in the home environment. As seen in Leroy & Symes ( 2001 ) these children may be unable to concentrate or focus in class, may be unwilling or unable to interact with peers and/ or adults in an effective

manner at school: Issues, such as being unable to concentrate or focus, unable to interact with peers, not only have an impact on the learning of a poor child but can also impact the learning of other children.

## **2.2. Definition of related concepts**

### 2.2.1 Academic performance

In terms of teaching and learning, academic performance is measured through formative and summative assessment:

#### ( a ) Formative assessment

Formative performance is used to evaluate the process of learning , and it is part of the teaching process which is used to discover gaps, and adjust both teaching and learning processes to the student's learning needs immediately in the process of learning ( Integrated Quality Management System ( IQMS 2003 )

#### ( b ) Summative assessment

It is the evaluation conducted at the end of certain periods of time in order to judge the sufficiency of student's performance and knowledge with the ultimate goal of promoting the students. Integrated Quality Management System ( IQMS 2003 )

### 2.2.2 Achievement gap

It refers to the observed disparity on a number of educational measures between the performance of groups of students, especially groups defined by gender, race / ethnicity, and socio-economic status ( Slavin, 1998 ).

### 2.2.3 Diversity

Diversity is defined in terms of categories by Marlow ( 1999 ) and Bowman (1994 ). The main categories which comprise diversity are as follows: Gender; Nationality and Ethnicity; Social class background; Sexual orientation; Age; Mental and Physical capability; Religion; and Worldview.

### **2.3. Poverty and Academic performance**

Effective learning is directly related to and dependent on the social and emotional well-being of the learner. It is important to recognise that particular conditions may arise within the social, economic and political environment in which the learner lives which impact negatively on the learner's social and emotional well-being. A child who is physically, or emotionally abused is not only physically or emotionally damaged, but such abuse may also lead to the learner being forced to miss school and eventually to "drop out" of the system. Factors such as substance abuse may affect the learner or the learner's family, causing family breakdown and increased stress. Problems in families, such as abuse, may also cause children to leave home and live on streets. For example young girls who fall pregnant while at school, are forced to leave school and go out to take care of the child, thus affect effective learning which increases poverty.

#### **2.3.1 Efforts to increase Academic Performance**

Palme ( 1991 ) points out that what will make a difference are measures which address the basic issues of poverty. He says school attendance and performance will improve if:

- Schools provide meals for their children;
- Pre-schools are made available;
- Parents' income and working conditions are improved;

- Bursaries are available and;
- School fees and fund payments are abolished.

He further says that it is not only children who are affected by the impoverished rural conditions. Poverty has a significant effect on teachers too. Most teachers do not choose to work in poor rural areas. Many of those who work there, do so against their will, a fact which has a negative impact on teaching and learning.

Berliner (2009) echoes the same sentiments when he states that in order to increase academic performance, out of school factors must be addressed in schools that have high numbers of learners who come from poor backgrounds if they expect to improve in their academic performance. Some of the out of school factors that he recommends that can improve academic performance of learners include the following:

- Reduction of drug and alcohol abuse.
- Removal of people from toxic environments.
- Reduction of absenteeism.
- Reduction of violence in families.
- Provision of morning, afternoon, and summer programs to make up learning gaps.

According to Berliner ( 2009 )School and Community also share responsibility for achievement. He mentioned that Longitudinal Studies done in the U.S on poor students have shown that although schools play a crucial role in educating students who live in poverty, responsibility for poor academic performance should not be placed solely on them. Communities and families must also provide support for disadvantaged students.

He further argues that in order to increase achievement or academic performance, schools should focus on a strong curriculum such that assessment should not take place at the end of the year, it should be continuous ( formative assessment ), identify and provide for individual student needs, communicating with parents, and providing a climate where children feel safe. In order to improve academic performance, he proposes that community organizations and families adopt some of the following goals:

- The fight against drug, alcohol abuse and violence;
- Provision of safe home environment;
- Provision of health care for all children;
- Increase time away from television
- Encourage reading
- Eliminate hunger and
- Encourage children to attend school.

Berliner (2009) further states that students should no longer be evaluated by their test scores alone, but also by addressing out of school factors which have an impact on their academic performance.

### **2.3.2 The achievement gap**

According to Slavin ( 1998 ) the difference in academic performance among children from different classes or groups (ethnic, racial and income) is referred to as achievement gap. Children from poor families generally achieve at lower levels than children of middle and upper classes. The causes are numerous and are related to both the social environment in which poor children live and the education they receive at school.

Slavin ( 1998 ) observes that there are numerous factors such as the quality of student learning behaviours; home environment; past experiences with education and teacher attitudes, which may influence student achievement. He further proposes that schools can have a powerful impact on the academic achievement and success of all children by viewing them as at- promise rather than at-risk and preparing them to reach their potential.

Monroe B ( 2004 ) agree with Slavin ( 1998 ) when he argues that “ students who lack middle class cultural capital and have limited parental involvement are likely to have lower academic achievement than their better resourced peers “. He further gives an example, that being raised in a low income family often means having fewer educational resources, in addition to poor nutrition and limited access to health care, all of which could contribute to low academic performance.

A good education is often the only means of breaking the cycle of poverty for poor children. These children need education that is founded on high standards and high expectations for all. Curriculum alignment must exist to ensure that rigorous curriculum and assessment accompany and are aligned with standards. What occurs in our classrooms has a significant impact on student achievement. The curriculum should be challenging to prevent decreased opportunity for higher education, which translates into less opportunity in life for the children( Slavin, 1998 )

Goodwin ( 2000 ) points out that content should be of high quality and be culturally relevant. A watered-down curriculum is unacceptable. Teachers should be knowledgeable of the cultures in which their students live so they can plan effective and engaging lessons. In addition to this he further says that instructional and classroom management techniques that work well with some

students, do not necessarily work well with poor children. The perspective and experiences of children need to be considered.

Goodwin ( 2000 ) concludes that teachers take the students who have less to begin with and then systematically give them less in school. He further says what schools do matters, but what matters most is effective teaching.

### **2.3.3. Out of school factors**

Berliner ( 2009 ) states that out of school factors such as drug and alcohol abuse, toxic environment, absenteeism and violence in families must be addressed in schools with large numbers of poor students. The school community and the general public acknowledge that poverty makes teaching and learning difficult for children who are hurt physically or mentally, those who are hungry, those who lack proper clothing, or those who live in unsafe environments.

Teachers may be aware that children find it much hard to learn or even care about getting an education or to hope that learning holds any reward for them. These factors need to be addressed, but schools cannot be expected to remedy the problems caused by poverty without assistance from the public outside of the school. He further lists seven factors that are not related to school practice, but which affect school performance in a negative way. These factors are as follows:

- Low birth weight and non-genetic prenatal influences on children.
- Inadequate medical, dental, and vision care, often a result of little or no medical insurance.
- Food insecurity.
- Environmental pollutants.

- Family relations and family stress.
- Neighbourhood characteristics.

Berliner (2009) further suggests that after-school programs, summer programs and other enrichment programs that may not be available for children living in poverty-stricken conditions, but could offset some of the ill effects of poverty can also be another out of school factor.

#### **2.3.4 Diversity**

Bowman (1994) and Marlow, (1999) point out that the rise in the number of poverty-stricken children has contributed to making classrooms more diverse than ever before and this makes both teaching and learning challenging. Teachers need to be tuned into the culture of poverty and be sensitive to the vast array of needs that children of poverty bring to the classroom. Social contexts have a significant impact on the development of children. Focus should be placed on finding a harmonious relationship between the cultural values of students and values emphasised in school. Considering that so many different cultures are represented in our society, we often encounter students who belong to more than one cultural group, in addition they may be poor, non – English speaking or of an ethnic/ racial/ religious minority group.

G. J Duncan ( 2007 ) points out that the culture and environment in which children are raised may play a role in the achievement of children. He argues that black parents may not encourage early education in toddlers because they do not see the personal benefits of having exceptional academic skills. As a result of cultural differences, black students tend to begin school with smaller vocabularies than their white class-mates, however poverty often acts as a confounding factor and differences that are assumed to arise from racial /



cultural factors may be socio-economically driven. Many children who are poor, regardless of race, come from homes that lack stability, continuity of care, adequate nutrition, and medical care creating a level of environmental stress that can affect the young child development, as a result these children enter school with few word knowledge that can affect their language skills, influence their experience with books, and create different perceptions and expectations in the classroom context.

High mobility is a symptom of poverty and its surrounding social factors. Children from poor families may move from town to town as their parents search for work or run away from problems such as abusive spouses; criminal records; or financial responsibilities. They may live in homeless shelters that only allow brief stays. The conditions they live in and their day to day life experiences can have a significant effect on their education and achievement.

School attendance is often irregular. Transfer to other schools becomes a norm to children from poor families. Children from poor families may behave in a hostile manner or be totally withdrawn due to past attempts to make friends.(Macmillan, J.H & Sally Schumacher; 2010). With regard to both the academic and social aspects of school, they may simply say “Why bother? I am just going to move again” Children transferred from other schools often come to school with no records from their previous schools, and it becomes difficult for schools to track the records down. Teachers have no idea what these learners have learned. It is also challenging for schools to place these children in classrooms and get them the additional services they may need. Even if placement is successful, these children will likely move again within the same school year.

To teachers these aspects of poverty make planning and preparation absolutely critical. Content needs to be related in various ways to meet the needs of the diverse students in classroom. Teachers have to consider the cultural values of these children as they arrange their learning. Constructivism is a key concept in that it respects student differences and allows them to use their own prior knowledge and experiences to make connections and learn. According to Macmillan JH & Sally Schumacher ( 2010 ) defined Constructivism as interpretive or constructive method where researchers use systematic procedures but maintain that there is multiple, socially- constructed realities. The definition above affords students the opportunity to become active learners by questioning, hypothesizing and drawing conclusions based on their individual learning experiences.

Marlow & Page (1999) state that by providing emotional support, modelling, and other forms of scaffolding, teachers can help students use their strengths, skills, and knowledge to develop and learn. Furthermore, Bassey (1996) adds that learning experiences and problem- solving based on real life problems can help them deal with some of the issues they may be faced with in their lives. Learning by doing gives students the opportunity to be active and imaginative problem solvers.

Diversity presents us with a chance to enhance the quality of education for all our students and provide them with a variety of opportunities to develop into productive citizens. As our schools and nation become more diverse, the need for understanding and acceptance of differences becomes more important. The challenge is to provide children with an effective multicultural education that will foster awareness, respect, and acceptance.

## **2.3.5 Student motivation to learn**

### **2.3.5.1 Social Issues**

According to Ciaccio (2000), one of the social issues facing children from poor families is emotional trauma. The emotional climate can often be very stressful and emotionally depriving. The lack of emotional nurturing can lead to feelings of alienation, inadequacy, depression, and anxiety, furthermore aggressive or impulsive behaviour and social withdrawal can also result. Emotional security and self esteem are often lacking, and there is a craving for attention and a need to belong.

Characteristics that are lacking in poor environment are those that help foster effective learning and academic success. Emotional draining and negative self status can literally zap the motivation to learn out of children.

Ciaccio ( 2000 ) states that emphasis needs to be placed on sparking the desire to learn (motivation) by not only helping to restore the child's self image, but also by encouraging students to see the demands and rewards for schooling. Children will work hard for intrinsic rewards, only if they have a good reason.

The technique of total positive response to student misbehaviour, as a method of developing relationships with students and a method of effective classroom management, should be in place. Every incidence of student's misbehaviour should be dealt with in a positive versus negative manner in an effort to disarm students that may exhibit some of the most challenging behaviours. Total positive response involves the use of positive strategies to meet student's need, combined with caring and total acceptance. Emotionally damaged students cannot effectively deal with criticism and channel it to improvement. Teachers must make it their responsibility to find ways to generate and maintain student interest and involvement on a consistent basis by making classrooms safe, accepting, interesting and engaging.

#### 2.3.5.2 The role of the teacher

Bowman (1994) states that the teacher may be the dependable and caring adult, often the only adult of this kind, who is a consistent and a reliable figure in their lives of unpredictability and change. Positive and respectful relationships of this nature are essential for at-risk students.

Bernard (1995) also states that educators need to work to foster resilience in children, focusing on the traits, coping skills, and supports that help children survive in a challenging environment. Children need educators' help if they are to adapt successfully despite adversity, alter or reverse expected negative outcomes, and thrive in spite of negative circumstances. Educators need to set high expectations for all, that communication, guidance, structure, challenge, and most importantly, a belief in the innate resilience of children. They need curriculum that supports resilience.

#### 2.3.5.3 The living environment

Bandura (2001) states that the concepts of agency and connotation, which encompasses self-efficacy and self regulation, are key to understanding motivation as it relates to poverty. The living environments and the culture of poverty often leave poor children with low levels of motivation to learn. Besides the fact that all of their energies may be directed elsewhere, in their struggle to survive, they may have poor experiences with schooling or may perceive that they do not need school to be successful. Children from low Socio-Economic-Status (SES) live in environments with social conditions over which they have little control. They often have the feeling they want or need to escape this environment and do better, but they feel they have no control over the nature and quality of their lives. According to Bandura (2001), the concept of agency is that an individual can intentionally make things happen

through their actions. If children can be shown that they can be agents, one can enable them to play a part in their self-development and take responsibility for their learning, personal development and achievement.

Huitt ( 1999 ) is of the same idea with Bandura (2001 ) that students with low self-efficacy and self regulation are always depressed, have fear of failure due to past experience from their parents. They may be truly capable children who, as a result of previous demoralizing experiences or self- imposed mind-sets, have come to believe that they cannot learn. If they doubt their academic ability, chances are they envision low grades before they even complete an assignment or take a test. This has an effect on goal-setting in that they also tend to set lower goals for themselves.

Huitt ( 1999 ) further points out that if a student can become self-regulated, they can mediate the negative environmental influences they may encounter. Unless they believe that they can produce desired results, students have little incentive to persevere in the face of difficulty. Efficacy beliefs influence whether people think pessimistically or optimistically and in ways that are self-enhancing or self-hindering. Teaching the use of self-talk techniques through role playing and group activity can be helpful in identifying thoughts that are often inaccurate and negative. Teachers should focus on the learning process, effort and striving, not only on the ability of the child or results, but personal standards should be stressed as opposed to normative standards.

### **2.3.6 Lack of readiness to learn**

Slocumb and Payne (2000) indicate that readiness is a multi- dimensional concept that considers behavioural and cognitive aspects of a child's

development as well as adaptation to the classroom. When considering poverty factor as related to readiness, it is important to note that poverty is not just about money, it is about how an individual does without resources and with all the baggage that goes along with being poor. Readiness needs to be considered at all age levels as the student approaches any new learning experiences or activities, regardless of when intervention begins, the whole idea is to educate children beyond their poverty levels and give them the intellectual and social skills needed to succeed in life (Renchler, 2000)

Slavin (1998) maintains that children from poor families start out in life at a disadvantage. He further states that their mothers may have no or inadequate pre-natal care as well as insufficient early health care. If their parents are fortunate to have jobs, affordable day care may be of poor quality. Poor children do not have the same kind of experiences that children of other social classes do. The experiences that they miss out on are those that could help in the development of skills and academic achievement. Some examples would be the use of home computers, visits to zoos and museums, attendance at pre-school programs, availability of literature and educational reading materials, interaction with educated, literate and well spoken adults.

Readiness, from the perspective of older children, has not only to do with the development, but also with creating a support system that will enable children to be free to focus on learning. Thus, by encompassing more aspects of the lives of these children, schools can give them a better chance of succeeding. This may include developing network with community partners by offering or referring students and families to community programs that meet health, social and recreational needs.

Maeroff (1998 ) states that helping these children may also involve keeping schools open and accessible to children and their families during evening or early morning hours so that they have safe, quiet places to study and have access to athletic facilities, recreational activities, computers, libraries, tutoring, and other resources. This can provide poor children with a full range of support, so they can develop a sense of connectedness or belonging with the school and can concentrate on learning and being students.

Guerra and Schultz (2001) also state that the social environment that is present in conditions of poverty affects the development of these children by limiting the way they learn to live in social groups. Opportunities for intellectual development , such as the development of cognitive skills and thinking patterns, are the result of social interaction. Children who live in poor conditions are unable to develop mutually satisfying social relationships. Language is an important tool in the process of learning to think. If children have limited opportunity to learn language, organize perceptions, and develop higher order cognitive processes, their ability to solve problems and think independently is negatively affected.

Another factor which has an impact on the lack of readiness to learn is the language used. Teaching and learning for many learners takes place through a language which is not their first language; this not only places these learners at a disadvantage, but also leads to linguistic difficulties which lead to learning breakdown. Teachers often experience difficulties in developing appropriate support mechanisms for second language learners. ( DoE, 2003 )

National Curriculum Statement (2005) makes the following statement with regard to the process of language learning as a means of teaching:

“It is recommended that the learner’s home language should be used for teaching and learning wherever possible. This is particularly important in the foundation phase where children learn to read and write”

“Where learners have to make a transition from their home language to an additional language as a language of learning and teaching this should be carefully planned” ( National Curriculum Statement, 2005)

It is a primary area of concern as deficiencies occurring at this stage in the learners’ educational life can easily lead to challenges for the learner and teacher at later stages in their life.

### **2.3.7 Relationships with and involvement of Parents and Families**

Kaiser & Delaney ( 1996 ) state that developing positive relationships with parents and families of low socio-economic status ( SES ) and getting them involved with their children’s education and school activities is an issue which need to be addressed. Parenting is a critical process affecting many developmental outcomes for children living in poverty.

Parenting is a means through which children experience the world, because the parent-child relationship is the primary context for early behavioural, social and cognitive development. Negative effects on parents which have, due to poverty factors, a negative effect on the development of the child. Children rely on their parents to mediate between them and their environment, respond to their needs and provide emotional stimulation and support. If parents do not support or provide emotional stimulation their children



because of poverty related stresses, development could be delayed or be negatively affected.

Kaiser & Delaney ( 1996) further suggested that home- school collaboration is particularly important for children of poverty in helping to facilitate better educational outcomes, because relationships with families are the most difficult to cultivate. Teachers and schools need to make an extra effort to reach out to parents and families of poverty, helping them to help their children.

Kaiser & Delaney ( 1996 ) argue that studies show that when students have parental assistance with homework, they perform better in school. This is a problem for many minority students due to the large number of single parent households and the increase in non-English speaking parents. They further say,“ Students from single parent homes often find it difficult to find time to receive help from their parent”. They further say that research show that the more the parents participate, the better student achievement will be. Sometimes reaching a parent can be difficult if they have no phone, or cannot read. There is also no guarantee that if found they will be positive, cooperative, or receptive. Teachers must do their best to attempt to foster a positive relationship with the parents in face of resistance, by trying to convince them that their involvement is for the benefit of the child.

Mcgee ( 1996 ) mentions that a significant discovery was made by researchers studying poverty and homeless families. They discovered that human relationships must take precedence over academics. They found that only if parents trusted teachers and felt accepted by them, could be the only way of getting through to them.

### 2.3.8 Poorly Resourced schools

According to Ardington, L ( 1992 ), conditions in rural schools are poor in comparison with those of urban schools. They argue that rural people and their children do not have the voice, the organization and political clout that urban people do. Rural Africans schools are of significantly poorer quality than urban African schools. Ardington (1992 ) further mentions three factors affecting rural education:

- Rural schools in South Africa are, with some few exceptions, poor quality schools.
- The quality of these schools is the result of two factors: Their impoverished socio-economic circumstances, and the way in which they are financed.
- This is caused by the results of a particular history of politics.

He further points out that a poor quality school is one in which basic necessities are lacking, which means that it has few or no resources, for example, there are too few desks, textbooks or classrooms for all children, not to say about sports fields, libraries, or overhead projectors. Children are crowded into small spaces, they sit working on the floor, or sometime under a tree. Graaff, J. Louw, W. & Van der Merwe, M. ( 1990 ) are of the same opinion with Ardington (1992 ) when they say poorly resourced school, is a school where teachers are not qualified to teach their subjects, where teachers punish children unnecessarily, or live them unattended for hours at a time. More importantly, it is a school where children leave school after only a few years, and those that do manage to write exams very few of them pass at the end of the year.

Graaff, J et.al ( 1990 ) mention five characteristics of a rural school and they are as follow:

- Children in rural schools come from impoverished backgrounds;
- Rural children often suffer from malnutrition and diseases which significantly affect their school performance;
- Their parents might have little or no education, as a result children from such families do not receive the stimulation or background which those from more affluent origins do;
- Also parents from rural backgrounds do not always regard education as very important;
- Rural parents usually have much lower incomes than urban parents, which leads to children dropping out of school very quickly.

They further contend that rural communities are poor communities, thus they have little money available, they cannot afford to pay school fees, levies or funds, they cannot buy books or uniforms for their children.

Gordon, Kane & Staiger ( 2006 ), and Sibuye ( 2000 ) support Ardington ( 1992) and Graaff ( 1990 ) by saying that different schools have different effects on similar students. Children from impoverished backgrounds tend to be concentrated in low achieving, highly segregated schools. In general, minority students are more likely to come from low- income households, which means minority students are more likely to attend poorly funded schools. Schools in lower- income districts tend to employ less qualified teachers and have fewer educational resources. Sibuye ( 2000 ) also mentions that Research conducted to African American students show that teacher effectiveness is the most

important in-school factor affecting student learning. Good teachers can actually close or eliminate the gaps in achievement on the standardized tests that separate white and minority students.

## **2.4 Summary**

Poverty is a challenge that children are coming face to face with. In order to overcome this and to improve quality of teaching and learning the following must be considered by the Department of Education when developing curriculum in schools or classrooms where students from poor backgrounds are involved:

- Provide all students with a rigorous curriculum.
- Have high expectation for all learners.
- Provide support to students and their families by involving parents.
- Help children to succeed.
- Create an environment and use activities that foster mutual respect, resilience, self-esteem, self-regulation and self-efficacy.
- Develop relationships with students to identify their needs and identify their individual learning style.
- Emphasize that each student is unique with value, talents and abilities.
- Promote awareness and acceptance of diversity. Encourage students to recognize similarities as well as differences.
- Provide developmentally appropriate, meaningful learning activities and use integrated instruction, cooperative learning, inquiry and authentic learning.

Poverty should not be seen as an excuse for the community to expect less from students. Students come to school with numerous issues and challenges that

interfere with their learning. Teachers need to focus on the teaching and learning of children, find ways to help them overcome these challenges and gain the most they can from their education. Their education is likely to be their one chance to break the poverty cycle and escape, just because they are poor does not mean they cannot succeed and poverty is actually one of the best reasons for them to succeed.

But there is still a gap which the education system should close, and that is, it should come up with a system that should cater for children from poor backgrounds to achieve in life. If the education system is to promote effective learning and teaching as well as prevention of learning breakdown, it is imperative that mechanisms are structured into the system to breakdown the existing impacts. Such mechanisms must develop the capacity of the system to overcome barriers which may arise, prevent barriers from occurring, and promote the development of an effective learning and teaching environment. Central to the development of capacity is the ability to identify and understand the nature and impacts of poverty, which cause learning breakdown.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the research design and the methods used to collect data, to determine and establish the perception of parents, learners, and teachers on the impact of poverty on teaching and learning. The qualitative research design was used. Consequently, data collection and analysis were all in line with the dictates of a qualitative study.

#### **3.2 Research Methodology**

According to Mauer ( 1996: 11 ), methods used to conduct research could range from being strictly empirical on one side to strictly theoretical at the other end, but it is not possible to classify any one research as purely empirical or theoretical. This means that a method used to investigate a problem is ,more often than not, a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods. But, whatever the method chosen by a researcher, Charmaz ( 1998: 26 ) is of the view that the most important thing with regard to any academic piece of work is that it should be always scientifically valid and potentially useful.

This study aims to cater for the above issues by adopting a qualitative research approach using focus group interview, face to face interview and secondary data as a means of data collection method.

### **3.2 .1 Qualitative Research**

Henning ( 2004: 92 ), defines qualitative research as “ a naturalistic inquiry involving the use of non-interfering data collection strategies to discover the natural flow of events and processes and how participants interpret them.”

Mauer ( 1996: 11 ), adds that such research is also interpretive and descriptive in nature. To support the above statements,( Henning, 2004: 3 ) further points out that qualitative research is “ the study of people in their natural environment as they go about their lives, with the aim of understanding how they live, talk, behave and what their words and behaviours mean to them.

Cresswell ( 1998: 161 ), asserts that qualitative research is “ an investigative process where the researcher gradually makes senses of a social phenomenon by contrasting, comparing, replicating, cataloguing and classifying the objective of the study”

### **3.2.2. Exploratory Research**

Exploratory research is a study that investigates a research question on which there has been no significant research ( Roodt, 1997: 30 ). Such a research aims at uncovering generalizations and developing hypotheses, which could be investigated and tested later using accurate and more complex designs and data collection methods and establishing a broader comprehension of the subject. Furthermore, an exploratory study could be structured to:

- Generate many ideas and develop tentative theories and assumptions about the subject;
- Formulate questions and defines issues for a more systematic inquiry;
- Develop a clear mental picture of what is involved in the subject;

- Determine the potential for further research; and
- Develop techniques and directions for future research and to gain new insights into a phenomena.

In line with the above observations, Cresswell ( 1998: 146 ) notes the following characteristics as typical of an exploratory research;

- The concept being investigated is “ immature “ due to a prominent lack of theory and previous research;
- There is a feeling that the available theory or information on the subject is inaccurate, inappropriate, incorrect or biased;
- A need exists to explore and describe the phenomena and to develop theory or compile information about the subject; and
- The nature of the phenomena may not suit quantitative measures.

Exploratory studies frequently involves the use of one to one ( face to face ) interviews that lead to insight and comprehension rather than the collection of detailed, accurate, and replicable data ( Babbie & Mouton, 1988: 80 ).

The researcher has, in this particular case, opted for this method of investigation because no research of this nature has ever been done in the Bushbuckridge Municipality. Most researches which were conducted, were on the Out-Based- Education( OBE)and HIV and AIDS, nothing on the impact of poverty on teaching and learning, was ever conducted in Bushbuckridge. There is lack of information and literature concerning the impact of poverty in teaching and learning in Bushbuckridge Municipality. It is therefore, the present researcher’s belief that a research of this nature will go a long way in the generation of information and ideas regarding the impact of poverty in teaching and learning in the municipality and schools as a whole.



### 3.2.3 Data Collection

Interviews were conducted through face to face and focus group to the selected sample. The researcher personally conducted the interview with the help of an assistant researcher who was taking notes from the respondents.

Methods of collecting data in any research, are depended on the research design chosen by the researcher, however, no method prescribes or rejects any particular way of data collection ( Bell, 1993: 5 ). Cresswell ( 1998: 148 ) asserts that data collection in a qualitative study involves the following aspects:

- Setting the boundaries for the study;
- Collecting information through observation, interviews, documents, visual materials, and establishing the protocol for recording the information;
- Enabling a researcher to gauge the language and words of the informants;
- Can be accessed at a time convenient to the researcher;
- Represents data that is well thought through because informants have paid attention to the compilation;
- As written evidence, it saves the researcher the time and expense of transcribing;
- Provides an opportunity for informants to share directly his or her “reality”; and
- It is creative because it captures attention visually.

( Cresswell, 1998: 150-151 )

In this case, data collection was done through focus group and face to face interviews. According to Kingry, Tiedjie & Friedman ( 1990: 125 ),” Focus group interview is not used for testing hypotheses or drawing inferences about larger populations, but it is a method that can however, be used for validating constructs prior to the development of more quantitative measures”. Krueger & Casey,( 2000 : 7 ) point out that the purpose of focus groups is to promote self- disclosure among participants. They further assert that focus groups are useful when multiple viewpoints or responses are needed on a specific topic. In this case, data from the hundred and thirty ( 130 ) households and fifty( 50 ) learners selected in the sample were collected through a focus group interviews

The use of face to face interview in this study enabled the researcher to handle sensitive topics with individuals as well as to gain a detailed picture of the participant’s beliefs about the research questions. Data from ten ( 10 ) educators and ten (10 ) SGB members were collected through face to face interview. With regard to the use of focus group interviews, the researcher realised that issues that were not likely to emerge in the face to face interview are more likely to come out in focus group ( De Vos.et.al; 2005: 300 ). It was against this backdrop that the researcher used focus group interviews as a complementary source of data collection. It was envisaged that this method would further enable the researcher to gain insight into group views and experiences of parents and learners in relation to the topic under study.

The secondary data collection method was used as a supplementary source to help the researcher with information, where the researcher had no direct control or direct involvement ( Rubin & Babbie, 2001: 385 ).

### **3.2.4 Data collection procedures**

Data were first collected from individual respondents, that is, the ten ( 10 ) educators and the ten ( 10 ) SGB members constituting a sample in this study, through face to face interviews in order to gain more insight into the topic from individual respondents. Babbie ( 1995: 80 ) states that face to face interviews lead to insight and comprehension. After the face to face interviews, data were collected from parents, that is, the one hundred and thirty ( 130 ) households, through focus group interviews. The ( 130 ) parents were divided into group of ten ( 10 ) each with thirteen respondents ( 13 ), to form focus groups in order to gain insight into group views as well. The ( 50 ) learners were also interviewed through focus group which was divided into ten groups with five ( 5 ) response in each group. According to Morgan & Krueger ( 1998: Vol, 2: 71 ) point out that focus groups usually comprise six to ten participants, whereas , Schumacher & Esham ( 1986 ) say focus groups consist eight to fourteen participants.

During the focus group interviews, the assistant researcher took notes. These notes were later discussed with the researcher after the interview. Cresswell ( 1998: 134 ) maintains that written notes, audio-recordings or audiovisual recordings can be used in data collection and that more than one copy should be kept including backup copies of computer files. The assistant researcher should take detailed field notes during the focus group session. Both parties then discussed their notes as soon as possible after the group session ( De Vos et al. 2005: 315 ).

### **3.2.6 Population of the study**

Bless and Higson- Smith ( 1995: 87 ) define population as the set of elements that the researcher focuses upon. It may be individuals, groups, organisations, human products and events, or the conditions to which they are exposed (Wellman & Kruger, 1998: 18 ). The population of this study included all learners, educators at Mzimba Secondary School as well as all households of Allandale village.

#### **3.2.6.1 Sampling**

In research, sampling refers to the technical accounting devise that is used to rationalise information ( Bless & Higson- Smith, 1995: 85 ). When sampling, a researcher sets out to choose in an appropriate manner a restricted set of objects, persons, or events from which he/she draws the actual information. When sampling, a researcher takes care to choose a sample that ensures representativeness of the whole target population. In the case of this study, the population consisted of one hundred and thirty (130) participants from the community, fifty learners (50) from grade 10-12, ten teachers (10) which included five members of the School Management Team ( SMT ) and ten SGB members.

#### **3.6.6.2 Stratified Random Sampling**

According to De Vos et al. (2005: 200 ), this kind of sampling is suitable for heterogeneous populations, because the inclusion of small subgroups can be insured. Stratification also consists of the universe being divided into a number of strata which are mutually inclusive. In this regard, the present researcher envisaged that, due to different groups interviewed the stratified random

sampling would be suitable for this study. The following groups of people formed the sample for the study;

- Ten ( 10 ) members from teachers, which included five members of the School Management Team.
- Fifty ( 50 ) learners chosen from grade 10-12 which also included learner representative committee.
- Ten ( 10 ) SGB members ,and
- One hundred and thirty ( 130 ) parents chosen from the community, selected through stratified random sampling. The strata consisted of men, women and learners ( boys and girls ). In each category random sampling was used.

Two hundred ( 200 ) respondents, therefore, constituted the whole sample. One hundred and thirty ( 130 ) parents and Fifty ( 50 ) learners were interviewed through focus group interviews, and face to face interviews were used for educators and SGB members.

### **3.2.7 Methods of data analysis**

Data analysis was the final stage of listening to what the respondents had said (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 225 ). Henning ( 2004: 101 ) points that data analysis in a study of this nature has to be managed according to the principles of the study design. Since this is a qualitative research, data analysis was in line with the dictates of a qualitative study.

Greenfield ( 2002: 215 ) identifies five stages to qualitative data analysis, which are:

- Collecting the data;
- Data reduction;

- Data display;
- Drawing conclusions; and
- Verifying findings.

During data analysis the researcher looked for trends and patterns that reappeared from the information given by the respondents ( De Vos et al.2005: 299 ). The context-bound information in qualitative methodology leads to the emergence of categories and themes, which could ultimately lead to patterns and theories that could help to explain a phenomenon ( van As & van Schaalkwyk, 2001: 39-40 ). In the light of the above , transcripts, notes and memory formed the basis for analysis. Data from respondents were collected, categorised into themes by considering trends and patterns reappearing in the data, displayed, analysed and verified.

### **2.8 Process of data analysis:**

The focus group interview was used as a major instrument to collect the data that were analysed. As indicated in the methodology section of this study, the interviews were divided into two groups of respondents. The first group of respondents was 10 educators and 10 SGB members to enable the researcher conduct face to face interview. The second group was 130 parents who were grouped into thirteen participants per group, and fifty ( 50 ) learners who were grouped into 10 participants per group in order to enable the researcher to conduct focus group interviews. In all the interviews, notes were written down. Data analysis was simultaneous with data collection, the interview being transcribed and labelled as soon as it was finished. According to Charmaz( 1998: 112 ), data analysis in a qualitative study like this one, is done through a process called 'coding'. Through coding, collected data is compiled, labelled, separated and organized.

In this investigation, the researcher coded data pages to their sources. On top of each page of a transcript, the researcher placed a code for the typed data and a page number of a particular set was placed

The researcher summarized and analyzed the data collected from the interviews. The data collected was grouped into themes. The themes were coded and recorded until no new insights appeared. The researcher used Maykut & Morehouse's ( 1994: 137 ) look/feel alike criteria to group each of the coded unitized data.

Formal analysis was done after all the field work had been collected. This was in the earliest possible time so as to deal with the data while memories are still vivid. Data gathered was validated by assistant researcher/ facilitator.

### **3.2.9 Data analysis through memo writing**

Taking notes enables the researcher to write down any problems or difficulties experienced during the research process. In addition to ensuring clarity, completeness and consistency of data collection and analysis. According to Maykut & Morehouse ( 1994: 38 ), a researcher's memo consists of the experiences, interaction and observations that the researcher makes in the process of data collection and analysis.

Memo writing in this investigation commenced as soon as the first respondent was interviewed and continued throughout the process of data analysis. During the process of interview, the researcher jotted down information or actions exhibited by the respondents during the research interview. In this regard, facial expressions, easiness or uneasiness of the respondents during the course of the interview were jotted down. Respondents' mannerisms were then compared with their utterances and responses. This enabled the

researcher to detect any mismatch between the two. Memo writing also proved important and helpful during the process of analyzing the interview transcripts. Memos were thus used to record the products of coding, in addition to the operational and theoretical notes. Memos with operational notes guided the researcher in sampling concepts and categories, questions to be asked in the process of data analysis and possible comparisons. Such notes further revealed the leads to follow during the course of data analysis. On the other hand, memos with theoretical notes assisted the researcher to indicate the properties and dimensions of the potentially relevant categories, the relationship and variations among them ( Merriam, 1998: 161; and Strause & Corbin, 1990 ).

What the above discussion implies is that the researcher used both operational and theoretical notes contained in the memos to:

- Elaborate on process, and assumptions that could have been subsumed in the codes;
- Explore further the codes and expand on the processes identified and suggested in the codes;
- Establish the relationship between the different categories;
- Keep focussed on the analysis and avoid the likelihood of getting entangled in irrelevant data;
- Link analytic interpretation with empirical reality; and
- Identify holes and gaps in the constructed categories and in the researcher's own thinking.( Charmaz, 1998: 517; and Strause & Corbin, 1990: 197)



### 3.3 Ethical consideration

Ethics are moral standards that govern and direct the behaviour of individuals or groups of people. According to Strydom ( 1998: 24 ), they are a set of principles suggested and accepted by an individual or group of individuals to guide their conduct towards research participants and other interested parties. Struwig & Stead ( 2001: 66-71 ) assert that research ethics provide researchers with a code of moral guidelines to prevent them from engaging in scientific misconduct, such as failing to maintain confidentiality and privacy; distortion and inventing of data; plagiarism and forcing people to be involved in research. Ethical guidelines are ,therefore , used as standards upon which a researcher evaluates his/her own conduct. Non-adherence to the acceptable standard is either harmful or potentially harmful to all individuals involved in the research.

It is against the above background that the researcher adhered to the following ethical considerations in the research.

- The researcher sought permission from the local headman of the village, to conduct research in that community and from the principal of the school.
- The permission to interview was granted before the interviews started.
- The researcher introduced herself to the participants before the commencement of the interview process.
- The researcher explained the purpose of the interviews and sought the permission of the participants to write down notes during the interviews.

- The researcher also assured the participants that all information collected remain confidential and that their anonymity as individual participants would be assured

### **3.4 Conclusion**

In this Chapter, the researcher has discussed the research design, the methods of data collection and briefly explained the procedure of data analysis. The researcher has indicated that the methods used to collect and analyze data were informed by the qualitative research design. The researcher has also revealed that since the inquiry is qualitative in nature, methods of data collection and analysis used were consistent with the dictates of qualitative research. The ethical considerations which have guided the researcher throughout the investigation were also explained.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Presentation of findings**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The aim of this study was to examine the impact of poverty with regard to teaching and learning at Mzimba Secondary School in Allandale village under Bushbuckridge municipality. The study was also structured to find out how the parents, educators and learners perceived the impact of poverty towards daily school attendance. The study was also structured to find out possible strategies that can help improve the situation at the school. Finally, the researcher set out to investigate the role of stakeholders (Department of Education, Municipality, Department of Health and Social Development and Parents) with regard to the alleviation of poverty in school and in the community at large. The questions that the researcher posed made it possible for her to come up with explanations and insights with regard to the major issues that she investigated in this inquiry.

#### **4.2 Research findings**

The categories and sub-categories that emerged out of data analysis formed the basis of the research findings in the study. During the process of data analysis, several different categories emerged. The first group of categories related to the perception of parents, educators and learners on the impact of poverty towards daily school attendance at Mzimba Secondary School. The second group of categories pertained to the role of stakeholders with regards to the alleviation of poverty in school and the community at large. Third group of categories were the possible strategies that could improve the situation at

the school. Open-ended questions guided both the face to face and the focus group interviews. The questions were structured to find out the perception of parents, teachers and learners on the impact of poverty on teaching and learning at Mzimba Secondary School. However, the researcher was also interested in the role of stake- holders in alleviating poverty and the strategies that could help improve the situation at the school. The following is a detailed discussion of the findings:

#### **4.2.1 The perception of parents, educators and learners on the impact of poverty on daily school attendance at Mzimba Secondary School**

The findings from both focus group and face to face interviews revealed that poverty has a negative impact towards teaching and learning, and thus it affects the daily school attendance of learners.

##### **4.2.1.1 What do you understand by the concept "poverty"**

Poverty means being unable to afford basic human needs, such as clean water, nutrition, health care, education, clothing and shelter.

Educators indicated that poverty is the inability to afford basic needs such as proper clothing, clean water, education, electricity, health and sanitation.

Parents and SGB members indicated that poverty is the inability to provide one's children with basic needs such as, paying their school fees, unable to buy them proper uniform, unable to provide them with food, whereas learners indicated that poverty is lack of education. This was in line with the definition of concepts in chapter one of this study.

#### **4.2.2 Causes of poverty**

Parents and SGB members indicated that poverty is caused by unemployment, which makes it difficult for them to provide for their children, whereas learners indicated that poverty is caused by lack of education, which puts them at a risk of becoming poor for the rest of their lives. They will not be able to get proper employment, without good education. For them to run away from poverty is to have good education and get employed. Without education, they can only be employed on farms, or as domestic workers, which increases their poverty.

In a question that wanted to find out from the respondents what the causes of poverty are, the following came out. Out of the 130 parents interviewed through the focus group, 73% indicated the following factors as causes:

- Unemployment;
- lack of education;
- Polygamy; and
- bearing more children.

All educators together with the SGB members interviewed through face to face interview mentioned the factors that parents mentioned as the causes of poverty. Parents indicated that due to lack of education, it was not easy for them to get employment, which makes it difficult for them to provide for their children with their school needs. Out of all the parents interviewed, 75 (57.6%) of them indicated that polygamy also contributes towards poverty, they mentioned that it contributes in the way, that if you have more than one wife, it is obvious that you will have more children, in which you will fail to take care of them, which increases poverty in the family. They also indicated that if a man has more than one wife, sometimes it happens that he only

concentrates on one and ignores the other wife with her children, which makes the children of the other woman suffer both mentally and academically

Educators indicated that it is not necessarily the case of having more children when one is in a polygamous marriage, but that, if a man has more than one wife, he will put more attention on one and ignores the other, which contributes to conflicts and hatred among the wives and their children. In the issue of bearing more children, educators indicated that things are expensive, which makes it difficult for parents to provide for their children, particularly when they are not employed or if they earn less.

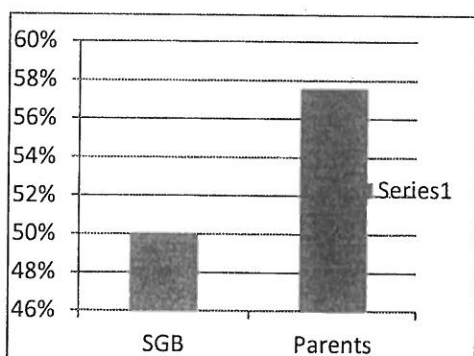


Figure 4.1

Out of the ten SGB members 50%, which was comprised of males, indicated that it is their culture to have more than one wife, and the females cited poverty as the reason why they agree to marry men who are already married. The females also indicated that as long as the husband takes care of them and their children, they do not have any problem of sharing him. One female SGB member mentioned that the cycle of poverty will continue as long as the man has more than one wife, which will lead to more children who cannot be taken care of.

All learners interviewed indicated that divorce is also a cause of poverty. They indicated that when their parents divorce, it leaves them vulnerable, with only

one parent who cannot provide for their needs. They indicated that most of the learners in that school have divorced parents, and that makes them lose interest in their school work. They indicated that when one comes from a family where parents have divorced, one is always stressed and not focussed.

The researcher discovered that what the learners indicated about poverty was true because, in most cases, children who come from broken families do not perform well at school.

#### **4.2.3 The effects of poverty on teaching and learning in schools.**

Out of all the respondents 70% indicated that the reason for absenteeism by children from poor families were due to hunger, lack of proper school uniform and unable to pay school fees.

The findings from both focus group and face to face interviews revealed the following factors caused by poverty which adversely affects teaching and learning:

- Drug abuse and Alcoholism;
- Absenteeism;
- Low self-esteem;
- Crime;
- Teenage pregnancy;
- School drop-out;
- Malnutrition;
- Stress; and
- Relationships with older people.

All the respondents indicated that the above factors affect teaching and learning in a negative way. All educators indicated that there are learners at school who use drugs and drink alcohol. They indicated that these learners come to school drunk or high on drugs which does not only affect that particular learner but, all learners at school as well. They indicated that when they investigated the problem, they found out that all the learners behaving in that manner, were either staying alone at home or their parents were not working. Children from poor families always associate themselves with those who use drugs and alcohol for the sake of running away from the stressful situation at home.

Educators also indicated the issue of absenteeism, where they indicated that half the number of learners in that school are always absent on many occasions, which makes the results of the school very poor. This was supported by the findings from the Department of Education, which indicated that from 2008-2010 the school performed dismally in grade 12 results.

The researcher asked why the results were so poor and the educators indicated that learners did not come to school regularly. They also indicated that due to the poor performance of the school in Grade 12 results for the past three years, it attracted the attention of the Department of Education, where they wanted the school to give explanation on their poor performance. Though educators indicated that they do not get support from the Department of Education, it looks as if the visits by the Department of Education to the school has brought some improvement, because the results improved from 6% in 2008 to 20% in 2010. One may be tempted to say that those visits by the Department indicated support which educators say they did not receive.



However, on the issue of performance, parents indicated that it is not only children who bring the results down, teachers play a role too. The researcher asked them how? They indicated that some of the educators were always absent from work. This was supported by SGB members, who indicated that every time they visited the school, three or more educators are absent.

The responses solicited from Focus Group 6 and 7 of parents, revealed that some learners from the community were involved in criminal offences due to poverty, which disturbed the learning of those children, because they have to absent themselves from school to attend court cases.

Fifty (50) out of 130 respondents indicated that due to poverty, parents also played a role in their children's criminal practices too, because when their children brought something home, they did not even ask where the things came from, they do not even ask their children when they came home late. They only start to worry when their children are caught, but even there they start to blame other people rather than themselves. Even though there might be some exceptions, it, in general, it looks as if when people are poor they can do whatever it takes as long as what they are doing will put food on the table and satisfy their needs, how to obtain the needs, they do not care.

Fifty (50) learners interviewed mentioned several things that affect teaching and learning at school. Forty (40) of them, that is to say, (80%), indicated that sometimes they absented themselves from school because they were hungry, so they could not concentrate. They also indicated that there are some learners who use drugs, which also affects their learning in class, because those learners disturbed them by making noise, or cracking jokes in the middle of lessons. When the researcher asked them why? They indicated that they used drugs to relieve themselves from stress, for not getting support from

their parents, for sleeping without food at home, and for not having proper school uniform.

Some of these children thought that by using drugs or alcohol they will forget about their poverty, because they will always be drunk or high on drugs. More often than not, many of them do not have money of their own to buy these drugs, but they get them from friends who can afford them.

Out of the 50 learners, girls indicated that sometimes they have relationships with older men, who in turn give them pocket money to buy things at school. They also indicated the issue of teenage pregnancy. They mentioned that when they have children, they will get child support grant from the Department of Social Development, which also puts them at risk of becoming parents at a very young age, which at the end affects their education. They also indicated the issue of low-self-esteem. They indicated that being poor makes them less confident in all what they do at school. They also revealed that they do such things, as using drugs, involvement in crime, relationship with older people because they want to run away from poverty. They indicated that some of the students involved in those things did so unwillingly as they are forced by circumstances or situation beyond their control.

With regard to relationship with older people, two girls in focus group 4, indicated that their parents allow them to be involved with those people, as long as they bring money home to buy food, it is not a problem. They revealed that it stresses them out because they do not even get time to study. It is not a problem to their parents as it is the only way to make a living. Furthermore, they revealed that their parents told them that it is their culture or it is normal to have a relationship with an older man because a woman has to be married by a man who is older than her.

Things like these also happen to children from rich families where they are involved in drugs and have relationships with older men, but to them there seems to be a number of reasons why they do it. Some do it because of peer pressure, some is because they want to conform while to some it is mainly for fun. For children coming from poor families, many of them do not engage in these activities for fun, but they are only doing these in reaction to poverty and circumstances from home.

#### **4.2.4 How does poverty affect achievement of learners at school**

Learners in focus group 2 indicated that poverty has a high impact on their achievement at school. They indicated that poverty forces them to drop-out of school, which leads them to becoming poor for the rest of their lives. Children who do not have proper qualifications will not get decent jobs, hence no source of enough income in which they can improve their lives. These learners indicated that without education one may not achieve anything in life. Members from focus group 5 indicated that poverty leads to leaving school at a very young age, before even completing Grade 12 to go and look for work in the hope of improving the situation at home. Members of group 1 indicated that some learners dropout of school to get married at very young age, which puts them at a risk of being poor for the rest of their lives. Getting married at a young age does not necessarily make one poor for the rest of his/her life, but if one gets married at a younger age and does not further one's studies and get qualification, it can put one at a risk of not getting a decent job, the likelihood of inadequate financial resources and thus becoming poor for the rest of one's life.

All the learners interviewed through focus group indicated that poverty shatters their dreams of becoming better people in life.

Members of focus group 5 for learners also indicated that transferring from one school to the other in the middle of the year has an impact on their achievement. They indicated that when one changes schools in the middle of the year it means that you have to change everything. They indicated that it is not easy to adapt in a new environment as it may be difficult to make new friends. They also indicated that if that thing happens, the implication will be that the year is wasted because in many cases when people, mainly Africans, relocate in the middle of the year, their children do not continue with school for that year. They also mentioned that even if one manages to continue with school, there is possibility of failing at the end of the year.

Parents mentioned that the reason they take their children along with them, was because, they do not want to leave their children alone when they go out to look for jobs. Members of focus group 1 for parents indicated that when these children are left alone, they easily get initiated into drugs or criminal activities, so they have to take them wherever they go. These parents also agreed that it disturbs their children's learning as it has a negative impact on their achievement. These parents also explained that though they may leave their children in the care of relatives, this does not help as such children get abused, and as a result, drop out of school and end up leading untoward lives.

### **4.3 The role of stakeholders in dealing with poverty**

#### **4.3.1 The Department of Education**

All members from both focus group and face to face interviews indicated that there was nothing that the stakeholders are doing with the situation. The stakeholders in this case are, The Department of Education, Municipality, parents and the Department of Health and Social Development.

All educators indicated that they do not receive help from the Department of Education. They indicated that the Department does not supply them with the resources they need, such as textbooks, or if they supply them, they always deliver less than expected, which makes teaching very difficult. Educators indicated that the only time they see the Department at the school, is when they come and ask why they have performed poorly. They also indicated that the only thing that the Department is concerned with are the results, not how the school manages to achieve them. They also stated that the Department should not only worry about poor results, it should also investigate the causes of the poor performance by visiting the school from time to time.

All the learners indicated that poor performance is caused by, among other things, by the Department's delivery of insufficient textbooks. They mentioned that sometimes they had to share textbooks, which makes it difficult for them to write homework at home. They also indicated the problem of congestion in the classrooms. They indicated that due to this challenge, it is very difficult for effective learning to take place because some learners make noise during the cause of the lesson. This was also supported by educators.

#### 4.3.2 The Municipality

Out of 130 parents interviewed through focus group 100 indicated that the municipality was doing very little to alleviate poverty in that community. They mentioned the issue of nepotism among their representatives. They indicated that their representatives in the Municipality are misrepresenting them. They indicated that whenever there are projects in the community, the only people to be employed are the representatives' relatives. They also mentioned that, for example, there was once a project for building the low-income houses (RDP) houses, the people who benefited from that project were the

representatives of the community and their relatives. People who were employed to work on that project were the relatives of those who represent them in the Municipality. They indicated that the houses were meant for the poor not for their relatives only.

#### 4.3.3 Parents Involvement

It is interesting that 70% of the learners interviewed mentioned that they are staying with their parents, but do not get assistance from those parents. Only 30% are either staying with their grandparents or alone. They indicated that it becomes a problem to them to do school work at home because nobody is helping them. They indicated that their parents tell them that it is the responsibility of their educators to teach at school not them. They also mentioned that even when they are invited for parents meetings, they do not attend.

Educators and SGB members also complained about parents not attending parents meetings. The chairperson of the SGB mentioned that it becomes difficult for them to work with parents who are not willing to contribute towards the education of their children. The SGB members mentioned that there were many unresolved issues in that school due to parents who do not want to be involved in the affairs of the school. The educators indicated that when there are problems with the learners, they are unable to resolve them because parents will not come even if they call them to school.

Out of the 130 parents interviewed through focus group, 20 indicated that they do not participate in their children school work because they are unable to read and write. 50 out 130 indicated that they work on farms, they always come home late. 10 parents indicated that it was the responsibility of teachers

to teach their children because they are paid. They also indicated that they do not attend parents' meetings in that school (Mzimba) because all the educators in that school are not from the village. They indicated that the principal of the school employed his relatives to be teachers in that school. Only three educators are from the village. The researcher wanted to know the reason why they say all educators in that school are not from the village, yet there were three of them from that village. They indicated that those three educators were only employed after they threatened the principal that they will burn the school if they were not employed.

They further mentioned that the reason for the poor results in that school is that the teachers do not have the interest of those learners at heart because they are only there for money and furthermore they are not from the village, so they do not care whether children pass or not. They further indicated that this was the main reason why they do not want to get involved in the activities of the school.

#### **4.4 Possible strategies which can be recommended to improve the situation at Mzimba Secondary School**

Both members of the focus group and face to face interviews indicated the following as possible improvement strategies:

- Creation of jobs, provision of shelter, provision of food parcels, business formation, employment of local people, provision of place of safety, bursary schemes, feeding schemes. All these should be done by the municipality, the Department of Health and Social Development and parents.

- Provision of school uniform, abolition of school fees, building of enough classrooms, supply of materials to the school and building of libraries by the Department of Education.

#### 4.4.1 What the Municipality should do?

Both parents and SGB members have indicated that the Municipality should create job opportunities in the form of projects for the community, to alleviate poverty in that community. They also indicated that there is a river that passes through that village which can be converted into a dam, which can provide water if Municipality can provide them with an open space and seeds to start a vegetable growing project.

The researcher saw that if that could happen, many people could be employed in that project, where they can grow different crops which they can sell to local supermarkets and other people. Another thing that the municipality can do is to talk to the community about the projects which are there.

They further said that if projects are to be created, local people should be employed to reduce nepotism. The educators also agreed with what the parents and the SGB members have said. The educators mentioned that if nepotism could be reduced, the lives of many families in that community could improve.

Parents, Educators and SGB members further indicated that the municipality should establish structures that will be responsible to identify the most vulnerable households who live in absolute poverty in order for them to be provided with food parcels. They further indicated that the most vulnerable members should be provided with shelter. They also indicated that this could only work if those structures are formed and put into practice, because if



structures are not formed people who are to benefit from the projects, or receive food parcels and shelter may end up not benefiting.

They also indicated that there were children in that community who are also learners at Mzimba Secondary School who live alone. They indicated that the municipality should build places of safety for those children, where they could be safe at night and be catered for.

Parents and SGB members further indicated that the community should also not just sit and wait for the Municipality to create jobs for them, they should form small businesses for themselves. They mentioned that they could form small groups and start businesses such as pottery, small farms, vegetable growing and making beads. They indicated that through these, they could make enough money that could alleviate their poverty.

#### 4.4.2 Learners expectations from the Department of Education

All learners interviewed indicated that the Department of Education should establish bursary funds for learners who come from poor families. They indicated that bursaries should not be for only those who performed well in subjects such as Mathematics, Physical sciences and life sciences, but it should also cater for learners who qualified for diplomas to study in colleges and technical colleges. They further indicated that bursaries were only available for those who passed with distinctions.

They also mentioned the issue of feeding schemes in all the schools. They indicated that feeding schemes are only available in selected schools, yet there are learners who are from poor families even in township schools. They further indicated that schools should not be graded according to quintiles. This was also supported by educators. The educators mentioned that schools were

graded into quintiles 1 to 5, where they mentioned that only schools under quintile 1 were qualified for feeding schemes, leaving children who attend quintiles 2 to 5 schools without food. Educators also mentioned that food should not be given once a day, but the most vulnerable learners be identified and be given food to go and cook at home after school. They indicated that food is only given to learners once a day at ten o'clock in the morning, and when they go home after school, they are all hungry and that some of the learners will only receive food the next day when they come to school.

The learners also indicated that payment of school fees should be abolished because it was the reason why some learners drop out from school because their parents do not afford to pay for their school fees. These were supported by all parents interviewed through focus group. Four (4) respondents from Focus Group 9 indicated that their children left school because they were unable to pay for their school fees.

Respondents from Focus Groups 4, 6 and 8 mentioned the problem of school uniform, where they indicated that there were some learners who do not have school uniform. They indicated that it becomes difficult for those learners to attend school on regular basis. They indicated that the Department should identify those learners and provide them with uniform. They further indicated that among those learners who do not have school uniform, were orphans.

Educators mentioned the challenge of shortage of classrooms. Seven (7) out of 10 educators interviewed through Face to Face interview indicated that it becomes very difficult to teach in an overpopulated classroom. They indicated that no effective teaching in classrooms which are congested can take place. They said that some learners make noise and it is difficult to control overpopulated classes.

Educators also mentioned the issue of shortage of learning materials such as textbooks. They indicated that if textbooks are supplied they are supplied late, towards the end of the year. They indicated that it becomes impossible for them to teach without learning materials. They also indicated that in some learning areas, no materials are supplied at all.

Both learners and educators mentioned that the Department should build libraries in schools. They indicated that they do not have a library at school. The educators also mentioned that they do not even have an administration block at school.

#### 4.4.3 The Department of Health and Social Development

It was also indicated through the Face to Face and the Focus group interviews that the Department of Health can also play a role by providing food parcels to the most vulnerable people in the community. Parents interviewed indicated that there are children who stay alone and they do not get help from the department. They suggested that these children should be taken to a place of safety where they can be taken care of.

Educators indicated that at one stage social workers visited the school and asked them to identify learners who are orphans and those who stay alone at home. They mentioned that it is now two years since they came, and nothing has been done up to now.

#### **4.5 Overview**

In this study, the researcher set out to investigate the impact of poverty in teaching and learning at Mzimba Secondary School at Allandale village in Bushbuckridge Municipality and the views of parents, learners and teachers with regard to daily school attendance, teaching and learning at the school.

The main question in the study addressed the impact of poverty with regard to teaching and learning.

#### **4.5.1 On the question of the causes of poverty**

##### **Findings**

In this question, it was found that lack of education, polygamy and bearing more children are the main causes of poverty. It was argued that without proper education, one cannot be employed in good paying jobs. Polygamy and having more children also increase poverty.

##### **Conclusion**

One may conclude that if one could have good education, one will get a decent job and will be able to take care of the family. It becomes disastrous if one is without education, without a decent job but is still involved in polygamous marriages and having more children, that he cannot afford.

##### **Recommendation**

Learners should go to school and have qualifications in order to get employment. This will free them from poverty.

#### **4.5.2. How does poverty affect teaching and learning in the school?**

##### **Findings**

Parents, learners, SGB members and educators revealed many factors such as drugs and alcohol abuse, absenteeism, crime, teenage pregnancy. It was argued that these factors affect teaching and learning in a negative way because learners miss some classes due to them.

## **Conclusion**

The logical conclusion here is that poverty play a role in the behaviour of people as these people tend to behave in a manner which is not acceptable to society because of it. Sometimes people do shameful things because of poverty.

### **4.5.3 The role of stakeholders in dealing with poverty**

Before the stakeholders' role on how they deal with poverty was explored, the researcher first examined parents, teachers, SGB members and learners's views on the concept poverty.

#### **4.5.3.1 What is the role of the stakeholders in dealing with poverty?**

##### **Finding**

It was found that parents, municipality and the Department of Education had an important role to play with regard to poverty alleviation in the community and at the school. This means that all stakeholders have to ensure that poverty in the community is alleviated so that attendance, teaching and learning could improve at the school. Stakeholders must ensure that all learners from poor families are taken care of.

##### **Conclusion**

How parents, teachers and learners responded to the different issues that affect teaching and learning depended on their views and perceptions.

##### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that parents, SGB members and the municipality be encouraged to come up and participate in projects that aim at alleviating

poverty, such as, crop farming projects, where different types of crops could be grown, bricklaying and weaving,. By doing this, the number of unemployed people will be reduced.

#### **4.5.3.2 What should the Department of Education do to improve performance at the school?**

##### **Finding**

According to the participants, the Department of Education does not give enough support to the school. It does not, for instance, visit the school during the course of the year and also that learning materials are not delivered on time hence the poor results.

##### **Conclusion**

The Department of Education does not give enough support to the school. It only visits the school when the results are out and poor. In other words, the department does not do enough to prepare both educators and learners to achieve the desired results at the end of the year.

##### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Department of Education ensures that teaching materials are delivered on time at the school, and that they should give support to the school throughout the year.

## 4.6 Summary

Since the purpose of this study was to determine the impact of poverty in teaching and learning, the findings are summarized as follows:

- The school is characterized by few resources, such as textbooks. It does not even have enough classrooms where effective teaching and learning could take place. The Department of Education does not supply the school with enough material (Learner Teacher Support Materials).
- Many parents in the community are unemployed and most learners come from families which live in abject poverty.
- Most learners in that school are involved in criminal acts such as drug use, which makes it difficult for effective teaching and learning to take place.
- The most worrying factor is that both learners and educators are always absent from school.
- All the stakeholders, the municipality, the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Social Development and parents seem not to be doing anything to help the community and the school.

The final products of the process of data analysis, as discussed in this chapter, were distinct categories that answered the research questions. It generally emerged that though parents, educators, learners and SGB members expected the Municipality, Department of Health and Social Development and the Department of Education to play certain roles, nothing has been done to fulfil these roles.

The next chapter will focus on the recommendations and conclusion

## CHAPTER 5

### RECOMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of poverty in teaching and learning at Mzimba Secondary School. The study was also structured to determine and establish the perception of parents, learners and teachers on the impact of poverty on the daily school attendance, teaching and learning. The questions that the researcher posed have enabled her to come up with an explanations and views regarding the impact of poverty on teaching and learning. Chapter four of this study focused on the analysis of the findings. The conclusions and recommendations in this chapter are made in relation to research questions asked in chapter one. In this chapter, the researcher presents the research overview of the entire study by briefly indicating what was involved in each of the chapters. Following this recommendations, are suggestions for further study.

Through the use of the focus group and face to face interviews, the researcher collected and analysed data and came out with the perceived role of parents, teachers and learners to improve the state of teaching and learning in the school.

During the process of data analysis, it became evident that educators, parents and learners perceived poverty as a stumbling block towards the education and achievement of the children. Difficult as it may seem, the respondents believed this could be overcome through education.



In chapter 3 of the study, the researcher discussed the research methods that were used to investigate the problem. Qualitative research methods and tools were used as this is a qualitative research study. In particular, the focus group and face to face interviews were used to solicit the respondents' views with regard to the research questions. All collected data were analyzed, using the comparative method, as put forward by Maykut and Morehouse ( 1994: 127 ).

All the interviews conducted were transcribed and typed out. The collected data were scrutinized for common ideas that emerged out of the respondents' answers. These ideas were then grouped in different categories. As a consequence of this procedure, data pertaining to research questions were reduced to small sets of categories. Data pertaining to the perception of parents, teachers and learners on the impact of poverty on daily attendance, teaching and learning, for instance, were reduced to three categories, while data regarding the role of stakeholders in dealing with poverty were also reduced into three categories.

One notable thing in this investigation was the inconsistency between the views of parents, learners and educators on the how they perceived poverty in relation to the daily attendance of learners at school and, on the effect it has towards teaching and learning. While the respondents acknowledged the impact of poverty, it emerged that nothing much was being done to address this challenge.

Despite all this, all the participants in this investigation believed that the municipality, the Department of Education, Department of Health and Social Development, parents and educators could play a vital role in trying to fight poverty in that community by:

- Working together with the aim of trying to alleviate poverty in the community;
- Coming up with means and solutions to try and improve the results at the school and;
- Eliminating absenteeism.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

The following recommendations emerged from the interviews:

### **5.3.1 The Department of Education should do the following:**

- Provide sufficient learning material at school on time;
- Provide feeding scheme;
- Build library and administration block;
- Build enough classrooms ;
- Abolish payment of school fees and;
- Provide support to the school throughout the year.
- However, some of the recommendations from the respondents might not be possible. One of them is that the department must provide school uniform.

### **5.3.2 The Municipality**

- Provide job opportunities by creating projects for the community such as crop farming, brick- laying and weaving ;
- The local people should be considered first if there are projects in the community;
- Provide bursary schemes and;
- Provide shelter.

### **5.3.3 The Department of Health and Social Development:**

- Provide places of safety for the most vulnerable children;
- Provide food parcels.

### **5.3.4 What should parents do to support their children?**

- Parents should be involved in their children's school work;
- They should attend parents meetings called at school and participate in all the activities that take place at the school.

## **5.4 Suggestions for further research**

It is evident from the literature, as explored in chapter two, that a lot has been written on the impact of poverty in teaching and learning. Despite this, no research has been done in the area of the Bushbuckridge Municipality to determine the impact of poverty in teaching and learning. This particular research, the first of its kind in the Bushbuckridge Municipality, focused on 10 educators and 10 SGB members. Fifteen focus groups were constituted, ten from parents and five from learners.

Against the above premise, the researcher feels that there is a need for further research in the area. This being the first and the only research up to this now, there is still scope for research to be conducted. More research in this area could equip schools and parents with knowledge and skills of dealing with poverty in schools.

## **5.5 Limitations of the study**

According to Rickman (1999: 77), any research inquiry is fraught with a number of limitations. Findings in a research of this nature could be subjective and influenced by the researcher's preconceptions. However, in order to demonstrate research honesty, the present researcher acknowledged her preconceptions as a point of departure. This was in line with Mauer's (1996: 8) advice that subjectivity in research need not necessarily be a problem, as long as it is acknowledged in advance so that it can be kept within reasonable limits.

In this investigation, the researcher's personal views and conceptions were kept in check by:

- Consistently and deliberately allowing the findings to emerge naturally from the collected data; and
- Consulting with my colleagues and supervisor frequently.

( Mauer, 1996: 16 )

It is also worth indicating that this study is qualitative in nature and that its focus was on the school in the Bushbuckridge Municipality. The Municipality is in the rural part of South Africa in Mpumalanga Province. Therefore, the findings made in the inquiry may not be applicable to Municipalities in urban areas where most of the families are highly educated and rich.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

This investigation sought to establish the impact of poverty in teaching and learning at Mzimba Secondary School at Allandale village in the Bushbuckridge Municipality. It also explored the parents, educators, SGB members and learners' views on the impact that poverty has towards teaching and learning.

It emerged that the school, represented by different parents, educators and learners was conversant with numerous poverty related issues that included the concept ' poverty ', the causes and what could be done to alleviate it. Though the parents and educators were aware of the situation at the school, little or nothing was done.

The relationship between the literature review and the findings in chapter four were checked. It was found that there is a relationship with what other scholars have written about the impact of poverty on teaching and learning such as the problems and the negative effects caused by alcohol and drug abuse, as well as lack of active parental involvement. There was, however, a slight difference in that the scholars did not mention the issue of polygamy and having many children.

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Annexure A:

Letter of request to interview

P.O Box 115

Thulamahashe

1365

22 June 2010

The Principal

Mzimba Secondary School

Private bag x1337

Thulamahashe

1365

Dear sir/ madam

**REQUEST FOR A PERMISSION TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS**

I hereby ask for a permission to conduct interviews at the school. The research topic of my study is 'The impact of poverty on teaching and learning at Mzimba Secondary School at Allandale village in Bushbuckridge Municipality'.

The participants in the study will be learners, teachers and SGB members.

Your co-operation in this regard is highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely



Mildred N Mabanga

Annexure B:

Response to letter of request to interview

Mzimba Secondary School

Private Bag x1337

Thulamahashe

1365

20 July 2010

Miss MN Mabanga

P.O Box 115

Thulamahashe

1365

Dear Madam

Response on request to conduct interviews at the school

In response to your letter dated 20 June 2010, requesting to conduct interviews, we would like to inform you that the permission is granted. The school management together with the School Government Body feel that the research on the Impact of poverty on teaching and learning will be helpful to learners and can make a difference to the community as a whole.

The school supports your study and would be glad to receive a copy after the study is completed.

Yours sincerely



Qhibi B.N ( SGB Secretary)

Annexure C:

Map showing the village in which the school is situated



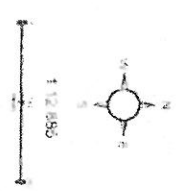
# Study Area Map

## Allandale B

Province: Mpumalanga  
 District Municipality: Ehlanzeni(D301)  
 Local Municipality: Bushbuckridge(M320)  
 Tribal Authority: AMASHANGANA  
 Chief Name: NXUMALO MPRISANA ESIC  
 Gazette: Unpublished  
 Main Place: Allandale B  
 Sub Place: Allandale B Village  
 Sub Village: None  
 Section Name  
 Sub Place Type: Traditional  
 Settlement Type: Traditional Residential  
 Zoom Map: 0 of 0

**Legend**  
 D Allandale B  
 Pure Traditional Settlement

Geographic Coordinate System  
 Harare:sthoek\_1994  
 Datum  
 Harare:sthoek\_1994



Statistical Services  
 Statistics South Africa  
 111 Reuter Street  
 Pretoria 0001  
 Tel: 012 320 8400 Fax: 012 320 8401  
 Email: info@csa.gov.za

## Annexure D

Interview schedule for Parents, Teachers, SGB members and Learners



## Interview schedule for parents, teachers and SGB members and learners

### Questions

1. What do you understand by the concept 'poverty'?
2. In your view, what do you think is the cause of poverty in a community?
3. How does poverty affect teaching and learning?
4. What factors affect the performance of learners at school?
5. Do you think poverty can affect the achievement of learners.
  - (a) If yes, how?
  - (b) If no, how?
6. Do you think that if parents can be involved in the learning of their children can improve their performance?
7.
  - a) In your view, do you think Municipalities can play a role in alleviating poverty?
  - b) How about the community/ parents
8. Do you think children from poor families always achieve lower compared to children from rich families?
9. What do you think can be done to motivate learners from poor families to learn?

**THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON TEACHING AND LEARNING AT  
MZIMBA SECONDARY SCHOOL AT ALLANDALE VILLAGE IN  
BUSHBUCKRIDGE MUNICIPALITY: MPUMALANGA PROVINCE.**

**BY**

**M.N MABANGA**



**Mini Dissertation Submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Development ( MDEV) in  
the Faculty of Management and Law at the Turfloop Graduate  
School of Leadership, University of Limpopo.**

**SUPERVISOR: PROF. M.M SEPOTA**

**AUGUST 2012**

## Declaration

I declare that the mini- dissertation hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo for the degree MDEV on The Impact of Poverty on Teaching and learning at Mzimba Secondary School at Allandale village has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university; that is my work in design and in execution, and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

Mabanga M.N ( Ms )



Signature: *M. Mabanga*

Date: August 2012

**Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter, Thembelihle and my two grand children Masingita and Mandisa, as an encouragement to seek knowledge for personal development, growth and to secure a bright future.

## Acknowledgement

I wish to thank my spouse, Ludwick, for his support, patience and understanding during my travels and late nights of writing this dissertation.

I also like to thank the following people for their contributions made to my work:

- Prof. M.M Sepota, my supervisor, who made it possible for me to finish this dissertation by providing me with the necessary assistance. He is a good supervisor, who encouraged me to work hard and to be an independent thinker.
- My friend A.K Isabirye who always encouraged me to register and further my studies.
- Pastor E.D Ngobeni for his prayers and encouragement from the begging to the end of this study.
- Mr N.S Mafuyeka for helping me with the typing of this dissertation.
- All my colleagues who contributed towards the completion of this dissertation.

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## **Abstract**

Poverty poses a challenge to every person, organization and community, which needs to be addressed, and can lead to unacceptable behaviour in persons, particularly to young children if not addressed. Schools in rural areas seem to be the most affected than schools in urban areas. The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of poverty in teaching and learning, particularly in rural schools.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON TEACHING AND LEARNING: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

#### 1.1 Introduction

Mzimba is a Secondary School situated in the rural village of Allandale at Bushbuckridge Municipality in Mpumalanga Province. Learners at this school, like all schools need to be informed about the importance of education in developing them. Not only should schools do that, but also the community, as the latter has a role to play in order for effective teaching and learning to take place. The Department of Education and the community should come with a strategy that will help learners understand the importance of education. At the moment, the Department of Education seems to be struggling to come up with the curriculum which can satisfy the needs of the national imperatives, in particular, those of improving the pass rates and help all learners reach their full potential and contribute towards the development of the society throughout their lives.

This chapter explores the background to the problem about the impact of poverty in teaching and learning. The background to the problem is in section 1.2. Following this, the researcher gives the statement of the problem, aim of the study, briefly examines the research design and methodology, and outlines the demarcation of the study.

## **1.2. Background to the problem**

Poverty is the challenge that people in Bushbuckridge Municipality face. It is not only Bushbuckridge, but in the province as a whole. According to the census conducted in ( 2001), Bushbuckridge Local Municipality is the largest in the Enhlanzeni District Municipality. According to the( IDP document Bushbuckridge Local Municipality 2010 ), unemployment is high in the Municipal area, especially in the rural areas with less than 15% of the total population employed. The document also shows high levels of poverty which results in low income per household, characterize the municipal area. Income per household in the municipal area is below the subsistence income levels of R1210. 00 for most of the households, and it reflects a high level of poverty, particularly in rural areas (IDP).

Education statistics in the Bushbuckridge municipality shows that 17.5% of the whole population in that municipality is illiterate, while only 18% of whites is literate ( IDP document Bushbuckridge Municipality, 2010 ). Parents of most learners attending at Mzimba Secondary School are unemployed, with those who are working, working on farms. According to the school's statistics, most teachers teaching in the school are under-qualified to teach at secondary school level (Mzimba Senior Secondary School).

Learners at Mzimba Secondary School come from poverty-stricken families. The school is characterized by a high rate of absenteeism and a high drop-out rate which are due to poverty. It is because of these facts that the researcher thinks that these challenges might be as a result of poverty within the community.

### 1.3 Statement of the problem

Mzimba Secondary School is characterized by a high absenteeism rate and a high drop-out rate. Most learners leave schooling before they can even reach Grade twelve (12 ), thus running the risk of being unable to participate in the development of the country's economy. Many of those who attend school fail at the end of the year. The pass rate of the school is very low, example in 2010 the school managed to get only 22% pass rate for the Grade 12 when compared to other schools in the circuit. Some parents withdraw their children from the school due to high failure rate. For the past three years, performance of the school show that they were among the lowest in the whole province of Mpumalanga.

According to the Department of Education, Mpumalanga Province, the Grade 12 results for the past three years are as follow:

- In 2008 the school only manage to get 6%.
- In 2009 it was 13% and;
- In 2010 it was 22%.

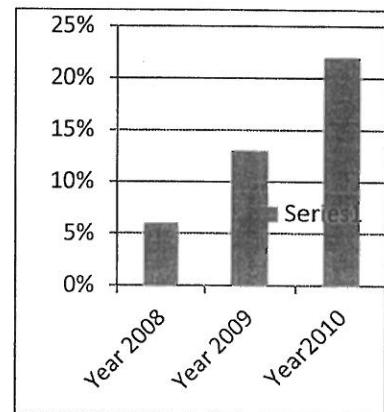


Figure1.1.Schoolperformance

These results indicate that there might be a possible link between poverty and academic performance of learners in the school.

#### **1.4 Aim of the study**

The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of poverty on teaching and learning at Mzimba Secondary School.

#### **1.5. Objectives**

This study was premised on the following objectives:

- To determine and establish the perception of parents, learners and teachers on the impact of poverty on the daily school attendance, teaching and learning at Mzimba Secondary School.
- To assess the role of stakeholders in dealing with poverty and the impact it has on teaching and learning.
- To recommend the possible strategies to improve the situation at Mzimba Secondary School.

#### **1.6 Research questions**

The following questions will act as guideline for this study

- What is the perception of parents, learners and teachers on the impact of poverty on the daily school attendance, teaching and learning at the school?
- What is the role of stakeholders in dealing with poverty and the impact it has on teaching and learning?
- What possible strategies can be recommended to improve the situation at the school?



## **1.7. Definition of concepts**

The following key concepts, relevant to the investigation, are now defined.

- **Poverty**

According to Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (1995), poverty means being unable to afford basic human needs, such as clean water, nutrition, health-care, education, clothing and shelter. This is also referred to as absolute poverty or destitution.

- **Absolute Poverty**

Absolute poverty is defined as a standard of living that is below the minimum level considered decent and reasonable by society (Holt, Reinhart & Winston, 1995). United Nations Development Report (2000) indicates that it refers to a set standard which is consistent over time and between countries.

- **Hunger**

International Food Policy Research Institute ( 2007 ) defines hunger as the uneasy or painful sensation caused by lack of food.

- **At-Risk**

At-Risk refers to children who are likely to fail in school or in life because of their life's social circumstances ( Leroy & Symes, 2001).

- **Social exclusion**

Social exclusion is defined as a multi-dimensional process of progressive social rupture, detaching groups and individuals from social relations and institutions

and preventing them from full participation in the normal, normatively prescribed activities of the society in which they live (United Nations Development Report, 2000).

- **Vulnerability**

Vulnerability is defined as the degree to which people, property, resources, systems and cultural economic environment and social activity is susceptible to harm, degradation, or destruction on being exposed to hostile agent or factor (<http://www.Business Dictionary. Com>).

- **Performance**

It is defined as how well or how bad something is done. In teaching and learning, performance is measured through Formative and Summative assessments ( IQMS, 2003 )

- **Formative assessment**

Formative assessment evaluates the process of learning, and it is part of the teaching process which is used to discover gaps, and adjust both teaching and learning processes to the student's learning needs immediately in the process of learning (IQMS, 2003).

- **Summative assessment**

Summative assessment is the evaluation conducted at the end of a certain period of time in order to judge the sufficiency of students' performance and knowledge ( IQMS, 2003 ).

## **1.8. Research design**

### **1.8.1 Qualitative Research Design**

A qualitative research design was used to conduct this study. Strause & Corbin(1990: 2) observe that a qualitative design is usually used to find out about people’s perceptions, behaviours and interactions. This research was designed to investigate the impact of poverty on teaching and learning at Mzimba Secondary School. It is in this regard that people’s views, perceptions and behaviour are considered. Qualitative research is “ a naturalistic inquiry involving the use of non-interfering data collection strategies to discover the natural flow of events and processes and how participants interpret them” (Henning, 2004: 92). Mauer ( 1996: 11 ) adds that such research is also interpretive and descriptive in nature. Henning (2004: 3 ) points out that qualitative research is “ the study of people in their natural environment as they go about their lives with the aim of understanding how they live, talk, behave and what their words and behaviours mean to them”. Cresswell (1998: 16) asserts that “ it is an investigative process where the researcher gradually makes sense of a social phenomenon by contrasting, comparing, replicating, cataloguing and classifying the objective of the study”. Qualitative research is therefore, inductive, descriptive, holistic and discovery-oriented.

## **1.9 Research Methodology**

### **1.9.1 Study Area**



See Annexure C for the community in which the school is situated.

This research was conducted at Mzimba Secondary School, in the community of Allandale village in the Bushbuckridge Municipality. The school is about fourteen kilometres away from Thulamahashe township. It is about ten

minutes drive from the Municipal offices to the school. The school is targeted because it is situated in the poor rural area and it is classified by the Department of Education as underperforming in the Province in terms of results.

### **1.9.3 Sample size and selection method**

The sample of this study consisted of two hundred (200) participants. The sample was chosen from learners, SGB members, community members and educators. A stratified random sampling was used to select the sample. According to De Vos et al. ( 2005: 200 ) “ Stratified random is suitable for heterogeneous populations because the inclusion of small subgroups can be ensured”. Stratification also consists of the universe being divided into a number of strata which are mutually inclusive.

The following groups of people formed the sample of this study;

- Ten ( 10 ) teachers from school;
- Fifty ( 50 ) learners from grade 10-12;
- One hundred and thirty ( 130 ) parents and;
- Ten ( 10 ) School Governing Body members.

### **1.10. Data collection method**

Methods used to collect data in any research, are depended on the research design chosen by the researcher, however, no method prescribes or rejects any particular way of data collection ( Bell, 1993: 5 )

#### **1.10.1 Focus group interview**

Krueger quoted in Kringer et al, (1990: 124 ) defines focus group as a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive and non-threatening environment.

This method was used because in a focus group interview, participants are selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic. De Vos, Strydom & Delport ( 2005: 299 ) note that focus group interviews are a means of better understanding of how people feel or think about an issue, product or service.

Focus group was preferred in this research because the researcher created a tolerant environment that encouraged participants to share their perceptions, points of view, experiences, wishes and concerns without pressuring participants to vote or reach consensus ( Kruger & Casey, 2000: 4 ). In focus group interview, the participants are free to share their views without anyone interfering. Focus group consists of six to ten ( Morgan & Kruger, 1998 ). Data from one hundred and thirty ( 130 ) participants chosen from the community members and fifty participants ( 50 ) from learners was collected through a focus group. Stratified random sampling was used as a criteria for selecting the group. According to De Vos et al ( 2005 ), this kind of sampling is suitable for heterogeneous populations because the inclusion of small groups can be insured. Data from educators and SGB members was through face to face interview.

#### **1.1 0.2 Face to face interview**

According to De Vos et al ( 2005) researchers use face to face interviews in order to gain a detailed picture of a participant's beliefs about, or perceptions or accounts of a particular topic. Face to face interviews are especially suitable

where one is particularly interested in complexity or a process, or where an issue is controversial or personal.

Secondary data information was also used. According to Rubin & Babbie( 2001) refer to secondary analysis as the re-working of already analyzed data over which the present researcher had no direct control or in which had no direct involvement. In this case sources from the Department of Education results and the Bushbuckridge municipality IDP document were used.

### **1.11 Data Analysis Methods**

After collecting data, the next step was data analysis. Data analysis entails bringing order, structure to the mass of time-consuming, creative and fascinating process ( Marshall & Roseman, 1995:1189). Since the study is qualitative in nature, data analysis was in line with the requirement of the qualitative research. Collected data was compiled, labelled, separated and organized through a process called coding. Through the coding method, themes and ideas that were common from participants were identified.

### **1.12. Ethical considerations**

#### **The following ethics guided this research**

- Permission to conduct this research was sought from the school, the community headman, learners, educators and the SGB members;
- The researcher officially introduced herself to the participants before the commencement of the interview process;
- Each participant was given a letter explaining the purpose of the research;
- Each participant was assured that whatever information collected from them will remain confidential and their anonymity was assured;

- Each participant was assured that he or she was participating at his / her own will and can withdraw at anytime he/she pleases;

### **1.13. Outline of research report**

**Chapter one** provides the introduction, background to the problem, statement of the problem, aim of the research, objectives, research questions as well as definition of concepts.

**Chapter two** provides the literature of what other writers have written on the impact of poverty on teaching and learning.

**Chapter three** focuses on the research design and methodology, data collection and analysis methods, population, sampling and area of the study.

**Chapter four** analyzes the data collected.

**Chapter five** gives an overview of the study by explaining and discussion the research findings. Recommendations are made and concluding remarks presented.

### **1.14 Limitations of the study**

The limitation of this study is as follows:

The main shortcoming of exploratory studies is that they seldom provide satisfactory answers to research questions, but can hint at the answers and can give insights into research methods that could provide definitive answers. Qualitative research approach is, in itself, a limitation. This is mainly due to the limited number of respondents expected. This however, has got no strong effect on the quality of the research, since the purpose of the study is not to generalize the findings.

### **1.15. Summary**

In this introductory chapter, the background to the research problem is discussed. It indicates that the rate of poverty is alarmingly high, and it has a negative impact on teaching and learning at Mzimba Secondary, and to the community as a whole. Despite this worrying scenario, the parents, teachers, learners, municipality and the department of education do not seem to have concrete strategies to deal with the problem. Against the above background, the researcher presented the statement of the problem, the aim, objectives and research questions, which she made use of a qualitative research design. She outlined her assumptions as a researcher and showed how the entire study was divided.



## **CHAPTER TWO:**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides information stated in related studies about the impact of poverty on teaching and learning. It provides a theoretical framework against which respondents, opinions regarding the impact of poverty on teaching and learning are interpreted. First, the section covers relevant aspects such as poverty, the achievement gap, out of school factors, diversity, student motivation to learn, lack of readiness to learn, relationship with and involvement of parents and families, and the poorly resourced school, before turning the spotlight on the relationship between poverty and academic performance.

#### **2.1.2 The concept being At- Risk**

In this context, the term "at-risk" refers to children who are likely to fail at school or in life because of their life's social circumstances. There are many factors related to poverty that may place a child at-risk for academic failure, amongst others, such factors are unemployment of their parents, abuse and neglect, substance abuse, dangerous neighbourhoods, homelessness, mobility, and exposure to inadequate or inappropriate educational experiences.

Poverty is an issue that more of our children come face to face with. Rises in the cost of living make poor people less able to afford items. Poor people spend a greater portion of their budgets on food than rich people. It is as of

this fact that poor households and those near the poverty threshold can be particularly vulnerable to increases in food prices. This makes them unable to afford other basic needs such as payment for their children's education and buying them clothes.

Leroy & Symes, (2001) point out that some of the factors that are related to poverty that may place a child at risk of not making it in future are, among others, young, single or low education level parents. Children born from single or uneducated parents often experience hardship and this increases the possibility of them dropping out of school at a young age. This will aggravate their socio-economic conditions going forward.

Leroy & Symes, ( 2001 ) further argue that being able to identify and understand children who are at-risk is critical if the community is to support their growth and development. Warm and caring relationships need to be fostered between teachers and children. This will help teachers detect any warning signs that may place children at-risk for failure, interfering with their chances for success in school and or in life. Academic and behavioural problems can be indicators of impending failure. Leroy & Symes ( 2001 ) identify the following behavioural patterns which lead to: delay in language development; delay in reading development; aggression; violence; social withdrawal; substance abuse; irregular attendance; and depression. Sometimes teachers find it difficult to reach the student's parent or guardian, they sometimes find that the student does not complete assignments, does not study for tests, or does not come to school prepared to learn because of poverty related circumstances in the home environment. As seen in Leroy & Symes ( 2001 ) these children may be unable to concentrate or focus in class, may be unwilling or unable to interact with peers and/ or adults in an effective

manner at school: Issues, such as being unable to concentrate or focus, unable to interact with peers, not only have an impact on the learning of a poor child but can also impact the learning of other children.

## **2.2. Definition of related concepts**

### 2.2.1 Academic performance

In terms of teaching and learning, academic performance is measured through formative and summative assessment:

#### ( a ) Formative assessment

Formative performance is used to evaluate the process of learning , and it is part of the teaching process which is used to discover gaps, and adjust both teaching and learning processes to the student's learning needs immediately in the process of learning ( Integrated Quality Management System ( IQMS 2003 )

#### ( b ) Summative assessment

It is the evaluation conducted at the end of certain periods of time in order to judge the sufficiency of student's performance and knowledge with the ultimate goal of promoting the students. Integrated Quality Management System ( IQMS 2003 )

### 2.2.2 Achievement gap

It refers to the observed disparity on a number of educational measures between the performance of groups of students, especially groups defined by gender, race / ethnicity, and socio-economic status ( Slavin, 1998 ).

### 2.2.3 Diversity

Diversity is defined in terms of categories by Marlow ( 1999 ) and Bowman (1994 ). The main categories which comprise diversity are as follows: Gender; Nationality and Ethnicity; Social class background; Sexual orientation; Age; Mental and Physical capability; Religion; and Worldview.

### **2.3. Poverty and Academic performance**

Effective learning is directly related to and dependent on the social and emotional well-being of the learner. It is important to recognise that particular conditions may arise within the social, economic and political environment in which the learner lives which impact negatively on the learner's social and emotional well-being. A child who is physically, or emotionally abused is not only physically or emotionally damaged, but such abuse may also lead to the learner being forced to miss school and eventually to "drop out" of the system. Factors such as substance abuse may affect the learner or the learner's family, causing family breakdown and increased stress. Problems in families, such as abuse, may also cause children to leave home and live on streets. For example young girls who fall pregnant while at school, are forced to leave school and go out to take care of the child, thus affect effective learning which increases poverty.

#### **2.3.1 Efforts to increase Academic Performance**

Palme ( 1991 ) points out that what will make a difference are measures which address the basic issues of poverty. He says school attendance and performance will improve if:

- Schools provide meals for their children;
- Pre-schools are made available;
- Parents' income and working conditions are improved;

- Bursaries are available and;
- School fees and fund payments are abolished.

He further says that it is not only children who are affected by the impoverished rural conditions. Poverty has a significant effect on teachers too. Most teachers do not choose to work in poor rural areas. Many of those who work there, do so against their will, a fact which has a negative impact on teaching and learning.

Berliner (2009) echoes the same sentiments when he states that in order to increase academic performance, out of school factors must be addressed in schools that have high numbers of learners who come from poor backgrounds if they expect to improve in their academic performance. Some of the out of school factors that he recommends that can improve academic performance of learners include the following:

- Reduction of drug and alcohol abuse.
- Removal of people from toxic environments.
- Reduction of absenteeism.
- Reduction of violence in families.
- Provision of morning, afternoon, and summer programs to make up learning gaps.

According to Berliner ( 2009 )School and Community also share responsibility for achievement. He mentioned that Longitudinal Studies done in the U.S on poor students have shown that although schools play a crucial role in educating students who live in poverty, responsibility for poor academic performance should not be placed solely on them. Communities and families must also provide support for disadvantaged students.