



An analysis of how socioeconomic issues affect the performance of learners in rural schools: A case study of Ga-Sekgopo High Schools Grade 8-10 learners

By

Mapula Emily Baloyi

Student Number: 213514234

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Supervisor: Dr S Dlamini

Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work and has not been submitted before to any institution for assessment purposes.

Further, I have acknowledged all sources used and have cited these in the reference section.

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Mapula Emily Baloyi

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Date

Abstract

Rural Schools in South Africa are characterised by poor service delivery and low academic achievements. The learners in rural schools face several challenges that lower their chances of attaining academic excellence. Some of these issues include low socioeconomic status, inadequate service delivery which leads to a lack of basic infrastructure, such as classrooms, libraries, and other resources such as textbooks and computers, which would assist to advance learners.

Despite the government's efforts of implementing different policies in the Department of Education, rural schools continue to struggle because of their disadvantage of being in a remote rural area, where there is a lack of access to basic resources. This study reveals that most rural communities attempt to assist the learners in rural schools, some communities have engaged in protest action to remove educators who were not advancing the learners. In other instances, the communities donate funds to assist schools in meeting their needs. Although, the involvement of the local community is essential, the gap in schools remains, as the rural communities are also in a disadvantage situation and therefore their impact can be minimal. Also, the communication from the schools and the communities is not efficient, this depends on the School Governing Body structure, the leadership of the school and the overall involvement of parents. This study investigated how socio-economic issues affect the academic performance of rural learners, focusing on the schools in the Ga Sekgopo Village in the Limpopo Province of South Africa.

This study adopted a qualitative research methodology to answer the research questions. In depth interviews were used to explore the views and the perspectives of the educators and the former learners of Ga Sekgopo. The sample consisted of one representative of the educators, the School Governing Body (SGB) from each of the five schools from Ga Sekgopo as well as 5 former learners who previously attended the High schools in Ga Sekgopo village were interviewed.

The findings of this study revealed that external factors such as socioeconomic issues, a lack of infrastructure, poor participation of the parents in the learners' schooling, HIV/AIDS infection and poor government service delivery and poor implementation of policies. All have a significant impact in affecting the teaching and learning process, in essence affecting the level of achievements produced by the learner.

This study revealed that schools in rural areas are at a disadvantage as they experience different challenges such as, poor service delivery from the government, poor infrastructure, an issue with obtaining good educators and more. Learners in rural schools are affected by those challenges that are predominant in the schools, and also have to face the challenges that they have at home which may be associated with their socioeconomic status.

Therefore, this study recommends a strategy or a model for rural schools, that will help in retaining Education graduates in rural school. Also for the government to prioritise service delivery in rural schools, and to formulate programs or workshops to train the educators on how to deal with learners from rural schools. Partnering with Non-Profit Organisations which are interested in developing learners academically, would be a viable solution to cover the gap that rural learners experience.

Keywords: Education, Socioeconomic issues, academic underperformance, rural schools, School governing body.

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Chapter One

Introduction & overview of the study

1.1 Introduction

The South African Education system has moved from a racially segregated and unequal system to one that is grounded on the notion of equality of all learners. This paradigm shift was followed by a transformation in educational policy. The apartheid government left a legacy of inequality and poverty, and thus, there is a need for the democratic government to formulate policies that aim to transform and develop the country and its people. It is essential for the government to prioritise and invest in education, because education plays a crucial role in the economic development of the country. Maringa and Phew (2014) explain that education is important because it uplifts and empowers people to play an effective role in the community. The former President Thabo Mbeki echoes this view in the following extract from his opening speech at the conference, Education for African Renaissance in the 21st Century that:

If the next century is going to be characterised as a truly African century, for social and economic progress of the African people, the century of durable peace and sustained development in Africa, then the success of this project is dependent on the success of our education systems. For nowhere in the world has sustained development been attained without a well-functioning system of education, without equality of educational opportunity. (President Thabo Mbeki, 1999)

Thabo Mbeki's statement emphasises on how important education is, and its potential to develop the African economy. Moreover, education is a tool that could help to balance socioeconomic status of communities, alleviating poverty, as well as increasing the chances of having self-sustained individuals, if it is facilitated properly. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that education is received, especially by disadvantaged groups.

The South African education system has developed as a result of the policies that were implemented to redressing the injustices of the past. However, the quality of education in South Africa remains in question. The South African education system remains divided, this

division is not entirely based on race as it was in the past, but the division is more socioeconomic status based. This can be observed in the pattern that, most economically stable communities have schools which produce good academic results, for example the Western Cape Province and Gauteng Province have been producing the highest academic performance, whilst Limpopo and Eastern Cape Province's are the lowest. Snyman (2018) identified that the worst performing schools in the country are situated in Eastern Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu Natal Province's.

The Economist (2017) made headlines when it declared that the South African education system is one of the 'grossly' incompetent in the world, and also incompetent when compared to other middle income African countries. Emphasising that this incompetency is dominant in Numeracy and Literacy fields. The South African education system has been through a lot of dynamics, in terms of policy, and there are still challenges that need to be solved to achieve equity and quality in schools, in order to produce learners from different spheres of South Africa who will contribute towards the economic development of a country.

There is also an issue of equity in the South African education system. Equity refers to inequality and unfairness. UNESCO (2017), explains that equity is about ensuring that there is a concern with fairness, such that the education of all learners is seen as having equal importance. Moreover, for all learners to receive an equal opportunity for them to attain economic freedom and break the cycle of poverty. In this regard the issues of the availability of resources, basic infrastructure and the socio-economic background and status, of learners in rural schools compared to those in urban schools, are unequal. With learners in rural schools receiving a poor quality of education, because of their disadvantaged circumstances, poor service delivery and low socioeconomic status background, than the latter who have access to most materials that help them to achieve academic excellence.

Education increases the overall societal value of human beings. As it gives individuals power to overcome challenges that are found within a society, it also increases one's productivity level, literacy rates and helps fight against issues such as the HIV/Aids pandemic and poverty. Overall, education stimulates development, from an economic and social perspective. Therefore, it is of great importance that the South African government, should continue to be dedicated to improving the education system, working diligently towards creating a sound policy framework that is considerate of rural schools. (UK essays, 2018).

Therefore, this study analyses how socioeconomic issues affect the academic performance of learners in rural schools. In terms of socioeconomic issues, the focus will be on Poverty, Unemployment, Education, and the disadvantaged location of the school. The focus on rural schools more specifically in the Ga-Sekgopo village. As rural schools are known for low academic performance, lack of basic resources and the likes. The main objective is to find out what the main challenges are which cause rural schools to underperform, is it the socioeconomic dynamics? Is it the teachers? Or bad service delivery? Understanding the challenges that rural schools face will aid in finding a suitable model or framework that could address the issue.

1.2 Background

The term rural is ambiguous, therefore in the context of this study rural areas will be defined as, remote areas that do not have access to basic resources such as proper sanitation, and infrastructure. According to Du Plessis (2014), it should be noted that South Africa has diverse rural areas and therefore certain social, economic, educational and cultural factors need to be considered in enhancing the definition of rural education. In this study the term rural refers to the areas which were known as homelands, during the apartheid era, these are areas with lack of basic services such as, tar roads bridges, clinics, etc. Rural schools are the schools in the outskirts of the country, schools which are situated in rural areas. Some use the concept synonymously with the concept farm school or small school.

Academic underperformance is high in South African schools, especially schools which are situated in townships and rural areas. These schools are also characterised by poor access to basic resources such as classrooms, libraries, desks, chairs and teachers. However, schools situated in urban areas are seldom faced with situations such as the ones highlighted above.

The reason for the inequality displayed in the South African schooling system, is a result of the countries colonial past. UK essays (2018) states that prior to 1994, South Africa experienced extreme racial segregation under the apartheid government. Apartheid left a legacy, which affects different spheres of society in South Africa. UK essays (2018) explains that the South African government is still fighting to uproot the effects of the apartheid regime in education after 24 years of democracy. The apartheid era systemically subjected the non-white population to a different and poorer quality of education from the white population. Although South Africa has successfully made some commendable achievements, there are still challenges and failures that suggest the need for policy revision. Not all of these

issues are a direct result of the apartheid era although many have at least some link. According to Spaul (2013) the strong legacy of apartheid and the consequent correlation between wealth and education meant that poorer learners perform worse academically.

Socio-economic issues also play a major role in determining academic success of learners. Socioeconomic status (SES) can be defined as a person's overall social position to which attainments in both the social and economic domain contribute. According to Considine and Zappala (2002) the learners' school achievement reflects to the SES of the parents or family. Socio-economic status is determined by an individual's achievements in: education; employment and occupational status; and income and wealth in terms of socio-economic issues, Bayat et al (2014), explains that wealth leads to higher academic performance, while poor communities, or poor students perform the worst. However, there is an exception of some equally poor schools producing high academic performance, in that case other variables may be involved. In South Africa the common trend is that most affluent schools perform better than rural schools which consist of people with lower socio-economic status.

As highlighted previously rural schools in South Africa are characterised by poor teacher quality, poor infrastructure, and poor service delivery. News24 (2017) outlines the evidence when the Limpopo provincial government failed to distribute thousands of textbooks to some schools around the province in 2012, and in 2017 a similar incident occurred at the Vhembe district of Limpopo, where most grade 10 and 11 students in some schools were forced to use old textbooks as the delivery was delayed. Ntshobane (2016) explains that the Ntlaza village in the Eastern Cape has been struggling to get basic infrastructure from the government, therefore the community resorted to using mud schools.

There are also cases of a shortage of teachers in most rural schools, leading to parents having to hire and pay teachers, because the department is delaying. Therefore, there is a strong link or interdependence of wealth and academic performance, and that needs to be considered when strategizing about improving education in rural schools. Another equity issue is that some pupils in rural schools may attain good academic excellence, however there is still a gap between them and other learners, for example rural school learners may take time to adjust in tertiary or in the workplace, while learners from assimilated schools may adjust easily because they have been empowered with the skills and knowledge that gives them an advantage at the university or the workplace. Hackland (2018) argues that academic results

serve as a clear indication of improvement in schools, however it is significant to train learners and to empower the youth and prepare them for life after school.

Inclusive education is about equity and social justice in education (Engelbrecht, 1999; Swart & Pettipher, 2005). It is concerned with overcoming barriers to learning and increasing access and participation in education (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007; Booth, 2000). It also is about presence, participation and achievement of all students regardless of background. Participation in a school context involves children and parents playing a central role in decision-making, learning and in the development of schools (Todd, 2007). Learners in rural schools need to be afforded the opportunity to rise from their circumstances and create a better future, education can do that. Learners can learn sports that could open doors for them to become a successful sportsman, or it could equip them for a career that could afford to take them a higher socio-economic status and so on. However, if rural schools do not have enough sports facilities, computer laboratory's or even quality teachers then the learners are robbed of the opportunity to rise from their circumstances and create a better future.

This research was conducted at Ga-Sekgopo village in the Limpopo province South Africa. This area falls under the Mopani district and the Greater Letaba municipality. It has a population of around 5 245 per km² (Census, 2011). Ga-Sekgopo is a rural area which is characterised by households with a low socio-economic status, the historic imbalance in South Africa, left the majority of South Africans without access to basic services and resources. Ga-Sekgopo falls under those areas as there is widespread illiteracy lack of skills, training and poor service delivery in the area, with most of the population working minimum wage jobs. There is an improvement with education in the area because of the paradigm shift of the education system in South Africa. However, the schools there still have a high dropout and failure rate. Therefore, this study focuses on the schools in that area, focusing more on the teachers, who will give perspective on issues facing their schools.

1.3 Rationale of the study

This study is significant because basic education needs urgent policy attention, as it continues to undergo dynamic challenges. According to chapter 2 section 29 of the constitution of South Africa everyone has a right to basic education, and quality and equal education accessible to all is important, to develop the country. Rural areas such as Ga-Sekgopo are the ones that need most attention, as Limpopo is one of the provinces with schools that produces the lowest results in the country, and most of those schools are situated in rural areas. The

education system in South Africa has improved with some schools receiving a world class education, while others struggle to get a basic education (McConachie et al 2016). One of the assumptions of this study is that socio-economic factors affect the academic performance of learners, thus the focus is on rural schools. Rural schools in South Africa also have challenges with basic infrastructure and service delivery, as the case of non-delivery of textbooks in Limpopo, and lack of classrooms, or teachers in Rural Eastern Cape. Therefore, this study investigates how that affects the academic performance of the school. Due to the evident struggle of rural schools, it is important to analyse the challenges which these schools face, to understand the reason behind the performance of these schools, and to formulate a solution.

Ga-Sekgopo is a predominantly poor area, there is a lack of basic services such as clinics, water and basic infrastructure, and there also is a high level of illiteracy and high dropout rate among the youth, which leaves no hope for the economic growth of the area, as there is little or none government activity in the area it almost seems forgotten, therefore it is important for pupils to attain education so that they can develop themselves.

1.4 Problem statement

The education system in South Africa is considered as one of the worst in the world. Most of the underperforming schools are situated in rural areas, rural schools in South Africa have poor results compared to private schools and other urban schools. Some common attributes that rural areas have is poor service delivery and low socioeconomic status, therefore this research seeks to find out how the poor socioeconomic background, lack of basic services and other factors come to play in influencing the academic performance of schools. Smally (2014), argues that the South African education system has gross educational inequalities. That is a legacy of the apartheid regime, underfunding and an urban influx during that era led to insufficient schooling facilities, teachers as well as educational material in rural areas. Smally (2014) highlights that 92 percent of the country's public schools, lack a functioning library, while some still use pit latrines and they also lack electricity and running water. Those challenges are unique to schools in rural areas, thus this study investigates how some of these gross or socio-economic issues affect the academic performance of public schools, making it commonly lower than that of schools that are situated in better urban or semi-urban areas.

Rural areas in South Africa are poorer, and lack basic service delivery from the government and that affects the schools as well, leading to schools which lack enough educational material or quality teachers. It is crucial for the government to consider these factors, and as a result offer funding to these schools so that the gap or inequality between schools should close. It is an injustice for the development of a community to lie in their socio-economic status.

The dropout rate is also high in rural schools which may be caused by learners who are not motivated, or who may not understand the significance of being educated. Creswell et al (2007), states that learners who have educated family members tend to do well because they are familiar with the learning environment as they experience it at home, while the latter hardly participate because they do not see any significance in education. Therefore, there are several issues which could cause low performance in schools and it is crucial to consider these different challenges.

Some rural schools perform well, and others do not, as McKay (2015) highlights that poorer schools are in the rural areas and they are the schools that often struggle to attract teachers. They are schools sometimes without electricity and water, yet, some of the most excellent learners come from rural schools and this can be explained by that some learners are more motivated and resilient than others. Resilience is a word we can acknowledge with the matric results.

The Constitution (South Africa, 1996), and the Republic of South Africa (No. 108 of 1996) and various policy documents say that all South African learners should have access to the same quality of learning and teaching, similar facilities and equal educational opportunities. However, this is not yet the case. Many of these problems are linked to socio-economic factors such as poverty and unemployment and have a direct influence on the quality of education that is available to children (Du Plessis, 2014: 1109).

Therefore, this research examines whether educators and stakeholders inform equity and quality of education received by learners in turn, leading to good performance of schools. For example, some educators or SGB members, facilitate activities that will fuel the pupils learning experience.

The statistics of the grade 12 results that are released annually do not accurately reflect the schooling system of South Africa as, there are a lot of factors that influence positive results of grade 12 learners. It also does not show the number of learners who fail to make it to

grade 12, in as much as the national grade 12 results highlight the areas with schools that perform the best and those that perform the worst. The success of grade 12 learners tends still to overshadow the flaws that the education system has. Spaul (2013) also argues that the national and provincial averages tend overestimate the achievement of most South African learners looking at the average results, instead of an in-depth analysis.

1.5 Objectives and research questions

Objectives

- To examine how socioeconomic factors, affect grade 8-10 learners
- To identify the challenges that course low academic performance in Ga-Sekgopo
- To assess how educators and parents contribute to the learner's academic performance
- To investigate how Educational policies address the issue of low performance in rural areas

Research Questions

- How do socioeconomic factors affect the performance of learners in rural areas?
- What is cause for low performance in Ga-Sekgopo High Schools?
- How do educators and parents contribute to the learner's academic performance?
- How do educational policies address the issue of low academic performance in rural areas?

1.6 Limitations

The study was undertaken at Ga-Sekgopo village in Limpopo Province, the information found there cannot be wholly generalized to all rural schools in South Africa as they have different challenges and dynamics. Because this research focuses solely on rural schools, it will not fully explore the level of inequity in South African schools, therefore future research can compare between schools situated in rural, semi-urban and urban areas, and it could also investigate different aspects of education.

1.7 Structure of the dissertation

Chapter 1: Is the introduction of this study. It introduces the topic and provides an overview of the study area and the background of the study, and explains the rationale of the study as well as to identify the objectives and the problem area which this study focuses on.

Chapter 2: This is the literature review, where different literature that relates to the topic will be critically discuss the relationship between different studies and identify a gap that literature. It also presents the Theoretical Framework which informs this study.

Chapter 3: This is the Methodology; this chapter explains the research methods which adopts for data collection.

Chapter 4: This chapter is the data analysis, presents the results found from the data collection process, and the results will be presented in themes based on the objective of this study. It will then analyse that data

Chapter 5: This last chapter sums up the whole study. Present recommendations for the problems or gaps which were highlighted, and then it concludes the study.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has highlighted the epidemic that the South African education system is facing especially in rural areas such as Ga-Sekgopo, therefore showing that there is need for research to be done in this area. It has also outlined the purpose of this research, the problem statement and objectives of this study as well as presenting the structure of this study which shows what this study entails of.

Chapter Two

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

“The hope and aspiration for any parent, society or government is that children and youth receive a good education and that the capital, capabilities and skills gained from schooling lead to personal development, citizenship and readiness for the labour market” (Reddy & Van Der Berg, 2012:3)”.

2.1 A brief overview of South African Schools

South Africa has three types of schools; public fee free schools, public private schools and independent private schools. The standard and quality of education varies widely amongst these types of schools, because of various reasons including the background of how the schools were established as well as access to capital and access to resources.

Public private schools are subsidised by the government; however, they charge school fees. These fees cover basic things such as books, uniforms and extras depending on the class size, facilities, and teaching quality. In some cases, parents have the option to apply for exemption or a reduction on fees. Most of these schools were previously known as white schools, however at the dawn of democracy South Africa embarked on a more inclusive education system. Were learners from different racial groups and family backgrounds would mix in one school. This transformation in the education system, brought to light an inclusive curriculum for everyone. Some argue that the standard of education has depreciated, were certain schools that excelled are now performing badly or are just mediocre, this is in terms of the academic results produced, increase of the class size and just the overall activity and efficiency of the school.

Independent private schools are either privately-governed or traditional private schools with a religious background that were established by missionaries. Barry (2009) explains that private schools in South Africa were established by missionaries for religious reasons, while others were established as a response to the economic changes in the country. Therefore, most parents prefer to enrol their children into these private schools because of their prestige and quality compared to public schools, which are now seeing as depreciating. However, the challenge with that they are very expensive for middle income parents, therefore most of the learners who attend these schools come from wealthy families.

Public free fee schools in South Africa are dependent on government funding and are operated by the provincial government. There is no fee for the learners, they receive books

and study material from the government, and there are feeding schemes in place in these schools for both primary and Secondary schools, the parents usually just cover the cost for uniform. However, these schools tend to be underdeveloped as some of them were originally schools where Bantu education was carried out. Public schools usually are faced with challenges of being under-resourced and are characterized with poor academic performance.

Schools across South Africa have different needs and therefore having a one size fits all policy in all these schools will not work as only certain groups will benefit. The statement above points towards the issue of inequality in South Africa, where rural areas are predominately poor, and urban areas are more affluent while semi urban areas are predominately middle class. This affects schools in the sense that schools which are in more affluent areas tend to have more resources and amenities, such as libraries, computers, supplementary study guides, exposure to more learning opportunities. In contrast to rural schools which commonly do not have enough classrooms let alone libraries and computer labs, rural areas also have less learning opportunities for learners due to a lack of access to educational facilities in the community such as libraries, museums, even lack of exposure to different sports and technologies.

The cause of this inequality as discussed in the previous chapter goes back to the apartheid era and how the educational system was set up, with a division of white and black schools. Therefore, the quality of education varies significantly between areas, which means that there are higher educational standards in cities, in the sense that schools in the city usually have access to educational facilities, and rarely lack teachers. Whilst public schools which lack basic resources, qualified teachers and specialist equipment, these schools tend to have lower educational standards. Of the public schools, the best tends to be those that were previously known as “Model C” schools during the Apartheid years. These schools are partially funded by governing bodies and parents, resulting in higher educational standards and better facilities. In contrast, private schools in South Africa have a very good reputation, with smaller class sizes, more extracurricular activities and, in some cases, learning systems more closely based on those in the likes of the United States and Britain, (Expatia, 2018).

South African public schools are in a state of crisis, Columba leadership (2018) claims that there has not been any real improvement in the quality of South African education over the past few years. Spaull (2013), argues that education in South Africa is not doing well compared to other middle-income countries and some under-developed African countries. In

his study Spaul (2013) laid emphasis on how the South African syllabus is left behind, and how most learners are lacking behind in numeracy and literacy compared to other learners at their stage in other African countries. According to Spaul (2013) the South African National Senior Certificate (NSC) Report of the grade 12 results each year, is not a true reflection of how the education system is going, as it does not take into consideration the number of learners who do not get to grade 12. Hypothetically in a “100 pupils that start school, only 50 will make it to Grade 12, 40 will pass, and only 12 will qualify for university” (Spaul, 10:2013). Barry (2009), argues that the educational policies that were devised after apartheid are failing because the government excluded the private sector, where private schools were seen as an alternative scheme in providing education.

“Private education has been viewed as an alternative scheme in the provision of Education in Africa south of the Sahara”. (Barry, 2009:78)

Thus, public schools are impacted by the government’s limitation. The government commits a large amount of the national budget to education, however despite that certain areas still run short of basic resources that would advance education and development especially in rural areas. As a result, attaining universal primary education, which the government has promised has become only a deceptive reality. According to Bray (1996), National, regional and local authorities have an obligation to provide basic education for all, however they cannot carry out this task in its entirety. Therefore, it would be more efficient for the government to partner with nongovernment organizations, the private sector, religious groups and families to provide quality education to all.

2.2 The two sub-systems of South Africa’s education system

Post-apartheid education system structure has nine educational departments, one at each province which are led by the national department of education. The national department is providing a national framework for school policy, while the administrative responsibility lies with the provinces.

Spaul (2013) has identified two educational systems within the South African Education system that two consists of schools which are predominately poor and wealthier ones. Spaul (2013) also argues that there are two types of school systems in South Africa, which are largely split along historical-school-system and socioeconomic lines. One which is functional, wealthy, and able to educate students; with the other being poor, dysfunctional, and unable to equip students with the necessary numeracy and literacy skills they should be

acquiring in primary school. Spaul (2013) discusses that historically disadvantaged schools remain dysfunctional and unable to produce student learning, while historically advantaged schools remain functional and able to impart cognitive skills. Spaul (2013), explains that the spatial segregation policies of apartheid have left a legacy of the inequality of opportunity to quality education. Therefore, most black students usually being situated far from good schools, which mean that good schools are geographically inaccessible to them, and those same schools usually charge higher school fees, which makes them financially inaccessible.

Consequently, ex-Black schools have remained Black, while ex-White schools have become more racially diverse, albeit with wealthier/ middle class, Black, Coloured and Indian learners. According to Spaul (2013) it is now well established in the literature that the quality of schooling that individuals receive is directly associated with their labour-market prospects. Therefore, offering a mediocre quality of education to the poor disadvantages them in the labour-market and entrenches their poverty.

Silverman (2014), in his study investigates the correlation between school quality and the housing values. He therefore concludes that a neighbourhood that has high value houses tends to have quality schools as well, this is since those residents contribute to the school, and that the presence of quality schools influences the value of the households. Silverman (2014) states that the value of houses and the quality of schools are interdependent especially in urban areas.

Many schools in disadvantaged regions experience difficulties attracting and retaining teachers, and the impending retirement of a substantial fraction of public-school teachers raises the spectre of severe shortages in some public schools, Sartain and Steinberg (2015). This is a common trend in disadvantaged schools, Sartain and Steinberg (2015) discusses that in the urban areas serving economically disadvantaged and minority students appear particularly vulnerable. The results indicate that teacher mobility is much more strongly related to characteristics of the students, particularly race and achievement, than to salary. There is an outcry for

India is a developing country which has undergone the process of increasing resources and establishing government run schools just like South Africa. Muralidharan and Kremer (2007) undertook a study that revealed that public schools in India are also known to be under-resourced and that private fee-charging schools increasingly cater to a substantial fraction of the primary-school going population in India. Moreover Private-school teacher salaries are

typically they have lower pupil teacher ratios, which reduces multi grade teaching. Private school teachers are significantly younger and more likely to be from the same area as their counterparts in the public schools. They tend to be less absent than teachers in public schools, and the children in private school have higher attendance rates and superior test score performance, with the latter being true even after controlling for observed family and school characteristics. Muralidharan and Kremer (2007).

The case study outlined above relates to the South African context, where the quality of the school is heavily shaped by the geographic socio-economic status of that school. Therefore, urban public schools usually have access to resources, and different education material and resources such as libraries etc. while rural schools are the opposite. Spaull (2013) argues further that learners in wealthier schools are far more likely to have their own textbooks, receive homework frequently, experience less teacher absenteeism, repeat fewer grades, live in urban areas, speak English more frequently at home, and have more educated parents. Thus, all these factors are likely to contribute to the better performance of this school subsystem. However, the argument above is not to disregard that some learners in rural schools excel better than some learners in urban areas academically, as studies show that some rural schools or learners in rural schools are able to attain exceptional academic results more than some urban schools. Therefore, it should be noted that there are many individual factors that influence a learner's academic performance. It could be the family background, the resilience of the learner or also the motivation from teachers amongst other factors. In regard to this study the focus is on how socioeconomic factors affect learner performance.

Inequity is an issue in the South African education system and schools in rural areas have a serious problem of resource shortage and teacher shortage. As Spaull (2012) sheds light on how the strong legacy of apartheid and the correlation between education and wealth have meant that poorer South African learners perform worse academically. Although racial segregation has been abolished for 24 years now, schools which served predominantly White students under apartheid remain functional, while those which served Black students remain dysfunctional and unable to impart the necessary numeracy and literacy skills students should be acquiring. Although one cannot generalise that all rural schools perform badly, as Spaull (2012) states that there are stark differences in the factors influencing student performance of wealthy and poor learners. However, it can be confirmed that there is a problem that needs to be solved to allow every learner to have an equal chance in learning and attaining good

academic performance, in order to sustain the economy and to develop those rural areas which they come from.

Therefore, it is crucial to analyse the two sub-systems separately when investigating what pushes academic achievement in South Africa. Factors may affect student achievement differently across the two subsystems; school inputs, teacher practices or other characteristics. It is possible, for example, that an advanced media technology may be effective in the well-functioning system but ineffective in the historically disadvantaged system where schools may not have the expertise to implement the technology. Therefore, Spaul (2013) states that important dynamics in one section of the school system can be overlooked because of estimating a single model for the entire school system, alternatively, it is possible that a single model will suggest a relationship that is in fact invalid and is driven by differences between the two subsystems. Consequently, modelling student performance in a single regression could lead to spurious results and misleading policy conclusions

The wide concern in South Africa's education system is the issue of access to education, although it is getting better as the government works on redressing the injustices of the past. Spaul and Taylor (2015), argues that the ability of a country to educate its youth should not be only measured by access to schooling or enrolment rates alone, but rather by its ability to impart to students the knowledge, skills and values that are necessary to function as full members of their society, the country's economy. It is also important for policy makers to note the number of learners that enrol and that dropout. According to Spaul and Taylor (2015) the attainment of knowledge, skills, and values must be the central aim of educational expansion. Therefore, the discussion of the educational system's performance in Africa, needs to provide a composite measure of access to schooling and quality of learning to place educational outcomes at the centre of the dialogue.

2.3 An outline of the state of Secondary education in rural areas in South Africa

Nyundu (2016), since the dawn of democracy in South Africa, significant strides have been made in (ensuring equal access to) education. With that Section 29 of the highest law in the land the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) has made provision for the realisation of a basic education for all citizens. Moreover, significant portions of the national budget have since been set aside annually in ensuring the realisation of this right. Yet, the quality of education remains unequal across municipal spaces, even against the backdrop of the amalgamation of previously disadvantaged spaces (such as Luthuli) with affluent areas (such as Mbombela/Nelspruit). This has resulted in the persistence of 'two

worlds of education’ within municipalities as in the case of Mbombela Local Municipality. A world of well-resourced schools and exceptional matric pass rates flourish in Nelspruit/Mbombela, while a world of impoverishment and low academic performance rates is experienced in Luphisi. This research refers to this predicament as ‘structural inequalities between Model C and Rural Schools’ resulting in spatial educational inequalities. The research explores the problems re structural inequalities between Model C and Rural Schools, using the case of Sdungeni Secondary School in Mbombela Local Municipality’s Luphisi village to uncover these hindrances.

The report departed by focusing on birth location and the socioeconomic background of learners and how this has a great influence in the kind of education a learner is likely to receive. Using the qualitative method of enquiry, which is a multi-layered type of research technique that crosscuts disciplines, fields, and subjects, the study arrived at presenting a cohort and demonstration of multiple truths rather than ‘a single truth’. The research brought to light that whilst the government has made concerted efforts at ensuring the equal structures of education in different municipal spaces, these efforts are still hampered by class (as a residue of apartheid) as well as government’s adoption of neoliberalist policies which further perpetuate the rich-poor divide. It was also noted that the confusion regarding the governance of schools due in large part to traditional and/or structural issues may be hindering the upgrading of rural schools with amenities and higher grades. Consequently, schools by virtue of their location, morphology, still play a significant role in reproducing and perpetuating social class divisions as well as ordering different societies according to their ‘latently prescribed.

To bring about the desired changes, it is imperative that both policies and practices become contextually responsive. In an attempt to ensure quality education and support for all, South Africa introduced a continuum of support model. However, in a country faced with vast contextual differences in the provision of and access to quality educational support, the teachers in certain communities are faced with many challenges. While the country boasts some of the most advanced policies on inclusion and education as a basic human right, there is still a vast gap between policy and implementation (Dreyer, 2008; Wildeman & Nomdo, 2007).

According to Weybright, Xie and Smith, (2017). A report from South Africa’s Department of Basic Education in 2011 found that there is an increase in school leaving across grades such

that 6.5% of learners dropped out in Grade Nine but 11.5% and 11.8% dropped out in Grades 10 and 11, respectively. It is estimated that out of each 100 learners that begin school in Grade One, half will dropout, 40 will successfully complete the NSC exam, and only 12 will be eligible to pursue higher education.

Two main categories of temporary and permanent dropout and within those categories, found evidence of different temporal patterns of school leaving. For example, sporadic dropout was characterised by intermittent school leaving for a few months and then returning to school. Learners classified as event dropouts had family, school, or life events (e.g. pregnancy) that caused them to dropout for long periods of time. Some of these learners would eventually go back to school but some would not. Youth who were classified as permanent dropout had no intention of going back to school. Some felt lost after dropping out but held open the possibility of returning to school if something in their context changed. Dropping out of school is a common practice in rural high schools.

Neither school dropout nor academic success is determined by the learner alone. From an ecological perspective, there are contributing multi-level and cross-level influences. These influences are found at the individual.

The Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa approved revised regulations, stipulating that learners may only be retained once (between Grades 10-12) to prevent the learner being retained in this phase for longer than four years. Historically, one-way low performance has been addressed is by holding learners back to repeat a grade. By the time learners reach Grades 10–12, 52% have repeated a grade and 9% of 12th Graders repeat a grade three times or more. Weybright et al (2017) argues that this approach is not effective as academic gains from retention tend to disappear or see a washout effect several years later.

Dropout rate is high in rural schools, it is found that the number of learners decrease from grade 8-12, this is commonly a result of the high dropout rate or grade failure. Certain scholars argue against the relevance of failing learners, as it may not be a progressive way of ensuring learning. The arguments discussed above displays that there is a gap in the South African education system.

2.4 In context to grade 8-10 learners

Van der Berg et al (2012) found that 84% of White students who were in Grades 8 and 9 in 2002 successfully advanced three grades by 2005 compared with only 32% of Black African students. Furthermore, grade progression in the schools

typically attended by Black students was poorly linked to actual ability and learning.

The analysis in Van der Berg's study reveals that grade progression within schools attended by Black children is characterised by a considerable degree of randomness, with the consequence of high enrolment despite high rates of failure. The correlation between the performance of grade 8-10 and grade 12 results reveals that Analytical skills need to be built up from the early years.

The findings of Van der Berg's study show that raising marks at Grade 12 requires raising the marks at Grade 8. Generalizing from this, and linking to the literature on cognitive development, Subject pass marks in the earlier years of schooling. Furthermore, high levels of attention should be paid to the early years of learning because, for learners who come from environments of lower household and parental resources, to contribute to breaking the cycle of poor academic performance. According to Van der Berg et al (2012), without this, both the socioeconomic background and the type of school will continue to let the learners down and the reproduction of inequality will continue.

Deventer (2008), states that adolescence is one of the most critical phases in the lifespan of human beings and is characterised by experimenting and recklessness that lead to social problems, diseases and deaths among adolescents. This poses a major educational challenge to bring about a lifestyle change among adolescents.

2. 5 let's investigate the link between socioeconomic issues and good academic performance

"Education exists within a socio-economic, political and cultural reality, and these forces continually impact on the school, and particularly on the education of young children", (Foster ad Smith, 2001).

Different factors play a role when coming to ensuring that the learners receive quality education such as, the curriculum, the teacher, language and many other factors. Kristin (2018) states that parent income, parent's level of education, gender and race are some of the socioeconomic issues that affect education. This study analyses how socioeconomic issues affect the learner's education, the factors that will be observed in this study are, poverty, parent unemployment, parent education, and the location of the school.

"The majority of the schools in poor and developing countries are still characterised by an inferior quality education and poor learner outcomes owing to an array of contextual realities and factors amongst them high poverty levels

and lack of adequate educational facilities and resources in schools” (Mojapelo, 2018:1)

2.6 Poverty

Du Plessis (2014) explains that some of the greatest challenges South Africa faces is rural poverty and education. Rural school principals face a number of challenges that are unique to their environment.

The United Nations (1998) defines poverty as “A violation of human dignity it is a lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It is not having enough to feed, clothe a family not having a school or a clinic to go to, or a job to earn ones living. Poverty means insecurity, powerlessness, and exclusion of individuals, households or communities.” Poverty is generally of two types: (1) Absolute poverty is synonymous with destitution and occurs when people cannot obtain adequate resources (measured in terms of calories or nutrition) to support a minimum level of physical health. Absolute poverty means about the same everywhere and can be eradicated as demonstrated by some countries. (2) Relative poverty occurs when people do not enjoy a certain minimum level of living standards as determined by a government (and enjoyed by the bulk of the population) that vary from country to country, sometimes within the same country.

Poverty is a prevalent factor in rural areas, and to some extent it affects the education system especially learners from poor communities and families. According to Birdsong (2016), cognitive capacity is not just a matter of genetics, but it can be strongly influenced by external factors such as prenatal drug use, environmental toxins, poor nutrition, and exposure to stress and violence. All of these are more prevalent in low-income households and affect cognitive development from the prenatal stage through adulthood. The statement above sheds a light on how external factors have a strong influence on the overall performance of a learner, and how this influence can go as far as affecting the biology of a learner (in terms of their cognitive development). Learners can also face stress because of the circumstances that they may be facing at home, their focus in school could be affected. Van der Berg et al (2012) states that Children with educated and wealthy parents who scored poorly in the perform badly at the beginning tended to catch up, whereas children with lower educated and lower-income parents who scored poorly were unlikely to catch up and are an at-risk group. The implication here is that learners who have educated family members are more exposed and therefore have higher chances of learning. However, this does not guarantee that those learners will do well in school as there are other factors at play, same as that statement does

not imply that learners who do not have educated family members are doomed for failure, as some learners are resilient, they are able to rise above their challenges. However, exposure to educated people does add a familiarity to learning, and therefore affects the learner's performance directly or indirectly.

In Creswell (2006) study the focus is on how socio-cultural factors and the availability of basic resources as well as the socioeconomic background of learners, can affect academic excellence of a learner. In this he concluded that having a proper understanding of background factors that affect the learner's performance, could be good policy indicators, in concerns that it will inform policy makers to formulate policies that are more focused, and tailor made for the specific setting of the schools. For instance, certain programs will not yield the same results in schools situated in more affluent communities and schools in rural areas.

Policies and programs have to be context specific considering the language barriers and the issue of access to resources, for example the involvement of gadgets such as tablets and computers would be easier for learners in model C public schools to adapt to, compared to rural schools where the teachers would first need the training to use those gadgets, then train the learners and possibly the parents as well, because they may have not been exposed in the same way. Therefore, it is crucial for the government to deal with schools in a context specific manner keeping in mind that each school is bound by the challenges or the privileges that are experienced by their communities and families.

"Children growing up in poverty often experience life as a series of volatile situations over which neither they nor their caregivers have any control. Thus, they fail to develop a conception of themselves as free individuals capable of making choices and acting on them to shape their lives, instead reacting to crises that are only magnified by their poor ability to plan or reflect. This doesn't just affect educational success – studies have shown that a low sense of control over one's life has major health impacts in all areas, regardless of finances or access to healthcare" (Birdsong, 2016: 14).

According to Van der Berg (2012), knowledge critical for conceptual development, and the acquisition of these it is shaped in the early years by the nature and quality of interactions in the home and community, and by the quality of inputs from the school.

Is a concept that refers to how the socioeconomic background of learners affects their educational outcome, and therefore causes an inequality. This concept argues that the

socioeconomic (SES) factors have an impact on education, its emphasis that the location of the school and the material resources which are available to the learner's impact on the learners academic achievement. It implies that schools in rural areas have bad academic outcomes because of their poor socioeconomic backgrounds whilst schools which have learners from a stable socioeconomic background tend to produce good academic outcomes, therefore leading to an issue of inequality in education. The American Psychological Association (2017) states that socioeconomic status encompasses not just income but also educational attainment, financial security, and subjective perceptions of social status and social class.

Socioeconomic status can encompass quality of life attributes as well as the opportunities and privileges afforded to people within society. Socioeconomic status affects the overall human functioning, including our physical and mental health. Low SES and its correlates, such as lower educational achievement, poverty and poor health, ultimately affect our society. According to Marks *et al* (2007) the critical component in socioeconomic inequality in education is the material resources. **Material resource** focus on the roles of poverty, income, and wealth. Therefore, the different access to material resources generates a difference in student or school performance. For instance, schools situated at desirable districts tend to have better access to material educational resources. "In contrast, poor families may not be able to afford basic educational resources, such as a student desk and text books and tutors" (Marks et al: 106, 2007). Another emphasis is on the role of **social capital** which investigates how social relationships; stronger connections between students, schools, parents, and the local community promote educational success, for example this can be identified in the form of parental expectations, student and teacher obligations. Marks et al (2007) argues that children do better in schools if they have a more closely-knit community around them, where parents, teachers, and the local community interact and facilitate educational success.

The socioeconomic inequality in education theory is relevant for this study, as it emphasis on the causes of poor academic outcomes in schools which are situated in rural schools. It highlights the importance of material educational resources in the school's performance. Using the Top down and the socioeconomic inequality theory aids to substantiate the problem highlighted in this study and to analyse the causes. The two theories link in terms of one looks at how the dominance of the authorities in planning

affects the effectiveness of the policy or program implemented, while the other focuses on how the community loses sense of ownership due to top down approach programs.

The American Psychological Association (2004) argues that the environment influences whether the cognitive outcomes of a person will be poor or good. Therefore, early attention to physical and psychological development could improve cognitive ability. According to the American Psychological Association (2004), low SES is related to poor cognitive development, language, memory, and consequently poor income and health in adulthood. The school systems in low-SES communities are often under resourced, negatively affecting students' academic progress and outcomes.

Inadequate education and increased dropout rates affect children's academic achievement, perpetuating the low-SES status of the community. Also, children from low-SES families are less likely to have experiences that encourage the development of fundamental skills of reading attainment, such as vocabulary. American Psychological Association (2004), states that a Child's initial reading competency is correlated with the home literacy environment, the number of books owned by the parents. However, poor households usually have less access to learning materials and learning experiences, such as books, computers, mind stimulating toys, skill-building lessons, or tutors to create a positive literacy environment.

Students who do not complete their upper secondary education, have fewer life prospects. OECD (2012) states that these students typically have lower income jobs in the long run, and therefore struggle to adapt to a rapidly changing knowledge-based economy, and they face higher risks of unemployment. Other disadvantages that lack of equity and quality in secondary schools is that it limits the capacity of the national economy to grow or innovate, it also increases crime and affects social cohesion amongst others.

2.7 Looking into the challenges that rural schools face

As discussed above the education system in South Africa is not doing great, and more of the challenges faced by the system affect rural schools mostly. As it is well known that rural areas in South Africa are marginalised and under resourced, and the education system there is still struggling as most underperforming schools are found in rural areas. According to Du Plessis (2014), the challenges faced by rural school's stem from a number of sources, from

within the school division structure from a community perspective, and from the school setting itself. After eighteen years of democracy, rural schooling has shown little improvement. Du Plessis (2014), also argues that rural schools find it challenging to adapt to change, these schools struggle in establishing and sustaining educational changes, therefore that is one of the challenges that leads to rural schools producing underperforming learners, it may be because the teachers still have not adapted to the changes. An example of this could be the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (Caps) system. McKay (2015), explains that the matric pass rate declined in 2014, which was the year of the learners that started the Caps program. The challenge was that the program needed more administration work from the teachers compared to their previous policy OBE, in terms of the specifics of the content which is taught and the assessment. As Du Plessis said, it is challenging for rural schools to adapt and to sustainably implement new policy's, which explains why most rural schools in Limpopo and the Eastern Cape performed poorly on 2014.

The characteristics of rural areas have an influence on the quality of education of the schools. Du Plessis (2014) states that rural areas are isolated and typically underdeveloped, and are characterised by widespread poverty, which results to poor disadvantaged schools. The lack of basic infrastructure for sanitation, roads, electricity, information and communication, in rural areas and schools also critically affects the schools. According to Du Plessis (2014), the socio-economic realities of rural areas put learners in rural schools at a disadvantage. Another factor which affects schools from the poor socio economic which characterises rural areas identified by Du Plessis, are the predominant uneducated parents. During the apartheid regime Black people especially, those residing in rural areas which were previously known as homelands, lacked the opportunities, development and resources that one would normally find in a more affluent community. In addition, many rural communities lack the professional help, support, governance structures, books and learning materials that they need to provide the necessary support and care for learners. Phewa (2016), identifies that learning is a socio-cultural construct, implying that the learners' social and cultural backgrounds and circumstances should be considered, because it assists the learner to draw on what they already know to stimulate their thinking and learning during the learning process.

As rural schools carry a stigma of helplessness powerlessness, and inefficiency, the teachers and principals are usually not included in decision making process in the bureaucratic level of education. The local staff is typically used to implement policies and programs without them adding any input into them. This process could lead to stress and failed implementation,

because the perspective of the local officials has not been considered instead a mandate has just been imposed on them. According to Du Plessis (2014), rural principals feel that there is a sense that the system is not set up to assist, but rather the system is there to mandate, appraise and control when expectations are not met.

Rural schools, according to Wright (2007), serve a vital role in recreating communities in highly mobile, industrialised society. Further, according to Wallin & Reimer, rural schools are often plagued with educational problems such as isolation from specialised services, limited accessibility to quality staff, development and university services, teacher shortages, and decreasing enrolment which leads to decreased funding.

Teacher shortage and poor teacher quality is one of the most predominant factors which is identified as a cause to high academic performance and productivity of rural schools. Phewa (2016), in his study laid emphasis on how important social and emotional support from teachers and parents is to learners, and their motivation to stay in school and persevere through. Creswell (2006) argues that this does not mean that social capital is unimportant for educational outcomes but supports McNeal's (1999) contention that the social relationships surrounding the student are important for behavioral outcomes such as dropping out of school but less important for cognitive outcomes, such as achievement.

Du Plessis (2014), highlighted a critical factor, that most of the time studies that are presented about school district issues, do not consider the circumstances of rural schools. That therefore contradicts the South African Schools Act of 1996 (SASA, 1996), which requires that schools and learners should be developed on an equal basis.

There are numerous challenges to quality education that can be identified, however each school has their own unique challenges according to the school setting the nature of the neighbourhood which the school is in, as well as the socio-economic background of the learner. Therefore, it is crucial to look into context specific issues which face a specific area, in order to come up with a context specific solution. There is a prevalent issue of violence in South African schools, where cases of learners injuring other learners or teachers always appear in the news. Elijah Mhlanga (2019) from Department of Education said that this violence among learners is a social issue.

2.8 Factors that contribute to poor academic performance

Van der Berg & Van Rensburg (2012), performance in earlier years predicts later performance; and, secondly, that gaps in cognitive ability emerge during early childhood as a

consequence of differences in family background and, over time, these gaps widen. Thirdly, children with educated and wealthy parents who score poorly in the early tests tend to catch up, whereas children with lower educated and lower-income parents who score poorly are unlikely to catch up, therefore socio-economic issues contributes to underperformance. Also the performance of learners in grade 8-10 is said to also determine the success of learners in grade 12. Therefore it is crucial for educators be strategic when teaching these grades, because that's when positive habits that could increase the chances of success in grade 12 can be instilled.

Schools where the learners underperform usually have a problem with teachers. Either teachers generally feel ill equipped to provide adequate support, or there is an inadequate number of teachers in a school.

2.9 Getting into the discussion about 'Quality teachers in rural schools'

When analysing the low performance of schools, 'teacher quality' is a topic that is commonly brought about. The quality of the teachers is usually blamed for poor learner performance, Spaul (2015) asserts that teachers in third world countries are usually not well skilled to do their job. This is evident especially in South African rural schools where the teachers are not skilled in teaching the learners how to operate a computer, or in some cases they are not well informed about the subject that they are teaching.

Teachers play a crucial role in the learning experience of every learner because they are responsible of delivering information and facilitating the learning experience. The performance that learners produce is not fully influenced by teachers, learners must carry most of the weight, as teachers cannot 'spoon feed them'. However, one of the most important factors affecting student learning is the teacher. Years of research on teacher quality support the fact that effective teachers not only make students feel good about school and learning, but also that their work results in increased student achievement. (Pamela D. Tucker and James H. Stronge, 2005).

2.2.1 Factors that affect the quality of a teacher

Teaching and learning is ever changing along with technological advancements, the education system always has some changes. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to be continually trained so that they can always be up to standard. Because it is a challenge for older teachers as they have been trained in a different education system, therefore some of

them struggle to adjust to the different curriculum changes and new additions to teaching and learning which then affects the learner.

Another factor is more on the teacher's character and work ethic, some teachers are just not passionate about their job and therefore do not put in their maximum effort in ensuring that the learner succeeds. This may be because the teacher is not motivated, they may have chosen a wrong career path. Or in some cases the teacher may be disheartened by the environment or culture in which the school is in, issues such as violent learners, teenage pregnancy, high dropout rates and low-class attendance could also affect the teacher's enthusiasm. As Mcupe (2018) explains that being a university graduate teacher in a rural school is challenging, as they are continually threatened by the learners, and struggle with the difficult living conditions and lack of basic resources. Mcupe (2018) also highlighted that there is a shortage of textbooks at their school, were at times there will be one textbook for five (5) learners to share.

Another challenge identified by Groepe (2008), is that English medium of instruction is a barrier to teaching and learning, especially where both the teachers and learners have limited proficiency in it. Groepe (2008), argues that using English as a medium of instruction disadvantages African language speaking children, in terms of gaining confidence in the language of instruction and in understanding lesson contents presented in English. These challenges usually impact negatively on learners' cognitive development and academic achievement, and also research has proven that learners' ability to participate meaningfully in school activities is linked to their proficiency of the language of instruction at school. In rural areas the language is a barrier especially to the youth, as most of them do not have not been exposed to the language until they started school. Also, most of the teachers in rural schools teach using a vernacular language, which becomes a struggle because the learners must translate the content to English during their assessments. Therefore, using a vernacular language to teach other subjects puts the learners at a disadvantage because it limits the learners from learning the language, and, they continue to struggle with trying to formulate a discussion in English.

Another major factor that affects teacher quality is the issue of 'the young versus the old teacher'. Younger teachers who just graduated tend to be more active and passionate with new ideas on things that could change in making the school more successful. However, the older teachers who have higher positions may suppress that passion and have no desire to

change their way of doing things. Armstrong (2015), in his study highlights that age plays a role in teacher efficiency, he explains that younger teachers tend to be more effective and tend to do well in tests than their older counterparts. “Changes in teacher education in the late 1990s and early 2000s may explain the difference observed in the later data set in the performance of younger teachers relative to their older counterparts” (Armstrong, 2015: 5). Most of these factors are a matter of work politics, however they have a strong implication of the impact that a teacher will have in the teaching and learning process.

Education research (2003), undertook a study in Tennessee which reveals that students who were placed with highly effective teachers for three years in a row significantly outperformed comparable students on a mathematics assessment. Teacher quality has a lasting effect on student learning. Data from Dallas reveals that a student who has an outstanding teacher for just one year will remain ahead of her peers for at least the next few years. Unfortunately, the opposite is true as well: if a student has an ineffective teacher, the negative effect on her achievement may not be fully remediated for up to three years. A study of third-grade teachers in an urban Virginia school district found that students of teachers ranked in the top quartile of effectiveness score approximately 30 to 40 scale-score points higher than expected on the Virginia Standards of Learning Assessment in English and mathematics.

Effective teachers are one of the most important factors which influence student achievement. Although other factors such as curriculum, class sizes, funding, family and community involvement all contribute to school improvement and student achievement, the most influential factor is the teacher. Choosing effective teachers is critically important for schools trying to improve their performance.

2.2.2 Teachers versus policy

Another factor which was overlooked by the post-apartheid policy makers was the teachers. It is known and has been discussed by several scholars that the quality of teachers in rural schools is not the best. Business Tech (2015), the department of education took note of the report by the Auditor-General in terms of the high number of unqualified and under-qualified teachers for the year 2013. Another challenge in terms of teachers is that most graduates prefer to teach at schools that are situated in urban areas rather than rural areas, and that leads to the shortage of teachers in rural schools especially for critical subject such as mathematics and science. Therefore, there is a policy gap in terms of who are the teacher who are to implement equal education. Because the issue of unqualified teachers plays a major role in

the learning process, because if the teacher is not well informed and not intentional about teaching in a manner that will help rural students, then there will be less improvement.

Some of the faults in the policy making, was mainly caused by the influence of external factors, which may be a result of globalisation and political discourse. Spreen and Vally's (2010), says the policy rhetoric rested on social reconstruction discourse that offered 'idealised versions of teachers, students and parents as the state would like them to be, without the requiring to meet its obligation of delivering support from that would enable the change to occur. While policy ideals were mainly about creating a vision for social change through rights-based legal and equity-based educational frameworks, they were not about doing what would be necessary to alter the status quo fundamentally by changing access to these institutions (Spreen and Vally, 2010).

Deventer (2008), states that in the climate of rapid educational and political change teachers not only need training and re-training to be effective, they also need new knowledge and skills to deal with a new curriculum change. Another common trend in public schools is finding that any teacher can teach any subject, even though they do not have the appropriate skills or expertise to teach it. According to Deventer (2008), the choice of teachers assigned to teach a certain subject, as well as the rationale underlying the choice, is a crucial aspect in determining the status and practice of the subject. This also goes for teachers who resent teaching a subject as they do not only do injustice to the subject, but they can scar learners for life.

The relationship between teacher characteristics (both qualifications and demographic characteristics) and student performance is important for education policy. Ensuring that teachers who are best suited and most able to enhance student performance are employed is a key responsibility for policy makers.

Inclusive education is fundamental to ensuring educational quality and equality. The teacher's role in this type of education is essential as without their ideal participation it would not be possible to fulfil the objectives of inclusive education. According to Peske and Haycock (2006), rural learners underachieve in school because the schools that are supposed to serve them short-changing them in the one resource they most need to reach their potential, which is high-quality teachers. They also explain that research has shown that when it comes to the distribution of the best teachers, poor and minority students do not get their fair share.

Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to be qualified and to understand rural learners and their needs, also for them to be strategic about encouraging and motivating them. Dreyer (2017), Often with inadequate training and given little support themselves, they are expected to be sensitive to inclusionary practices and to offer a multilevel and multimodality curriculum, while at the same time challenging learners with educational and social experiences, which are consistent with their abilities.

2.2.3 What about the role of parents in influencing good academic performance?

There are several factors that contribute to the performance of a school, educators and parents also play a critical role in impacting the school. The parents tend to play a huge role in terms of shaping the interest of the learner to their studies. According to Mahuro and Hungi (2016), the involvement of parents in their children's learning process in rural Uganda, has shown to significantly increase the learners' literacy scores, by 6 and 12 percentage points, respectively. "This implies that parental participation plays a fundamental role in motivating children to improve their academic grades" (Mahuro and Hungi, 2016: 1). Therefore, for students to reap maximum benefits in an education system, the initiative to improve the quality of education and learner performance, should not rely solely on the learner-teacher relationship but it should be inclusive of active parental involvement.

There are different ways in which parents can be involved in their children's learning process. According to Kerr (2018) parents can be involved by assisting with homework, meeting with teachers and attending school events are just and in other ways. The research shows that when parents don't take an active interest in these activities, their child's performance is most likely to suffer. Kerr (2018) argues that parents who regularly communicate with their children about their assignments have a positive impact on their learning and their performance, whereas children of uninvolved parents are less likely to complete homework, which negatively impacts their performance.

Another critical factor is for the parent to create a learning environment at home, to enhance the learner's abilities. Kerr (2018) asserts that a setting in the home that is conducive to learning can have a positive impact on grades, but parents who are disengaged are less likely to provide this. This inadequate environment can be something as simple as not having a quiet place to concentrate, or a much greater parenting problem, such as abuse or neglect.

It is crucial for educators to recognise the importance of parental involvement in education. As such involvement may raise the standard of young people's education. Hamunyela (2008)

states that if schools encourage parental involvement skilfully and with welfare of learners as the focus, it guarantees, a remarkable educational growth and significant academic improvement of learners, an increment in teacher's morale and effort, and a tremendous growth in parental support for schools and learners learning. Hamunyela (2008) study explored the parent involvement in the learner's study in rural Namibia. The findings of this study showed that the involvement of parents in the learner's education is crucial as it motivates the learner and leads to good academic performance. Hamunyela (2008), identified that the parents of the learners in rural Namibia hardly take part in the learner's education, they would rather participate in non-academic activities such as sports. Hamunyela also explains that this is because of the perception that the community has about educators being enough to lead the school to success, therefore there is a gap in policy to identify the importance of parental involvement in the learning process. Parents can also be involved in the school by being part of the school governing body. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (No. 84, 1996) which came into effect at the beginning of 1997, emanated from this White paper. In terms of this Act, all public state schools in South Africa must have democratically elected School Governing Bodies (SGBs) comprising parents, learners, educators, non-teaching staff and school principal. Their functions include creating an environment conducive to teaching and learning, developing a mission statement for the school, promoting the best interests of the school, ensuring quality education for learners, safety and security of learners, deciding on school-uniform policy, disciplinary action and policy regarding determination of school fees.

Other scholars have argued that there is a downside to the parental inclusiveness approach as some parents may be reluctant to take part. However, other findings reveal that despite successful and appropriate planning and implementation of parental involvement in low socio-economic status areas, in practice this meets with a lack of parental support and resistance parents from distressed backgrounds is the most problematic and difficult aspect of changing and improving learners' education in schools.

2.2.4 How effective are educational policies in addressing the challenges facing rural schools

According to South Africa's constitution as well as the United Nations, education is a basic human right, "Everyone has the right- (a) to a basic education; and (b) To further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible" (Constitution, 1996: 1257).

Policy processes are supposed to be representational, and accountable, all stakeholders concerned should be highly considered and consulted in order to ensure that the outcomes presented with equity. Therefore, policy interventions are crucial because they assist in addressing or redressing the socio-economic and demographic backgrounds of learners in rural schools.

The African National Congress government entered the scene to govern South Africa in the dawn of democracy, the main objective during that time was to redress the injustices of the apartheid regime and create a Nation where all citizens had equal opportunities to prosper. In terms of the education system several policies were put in place by the democratic government to change these inequalities through education, (Letsoalo and Timaheus, 2011). For instance, section 29 of the bill of rights in the constitution of South Africa 1996, states that every citizen has a right to basic education, including adult basic education and further education. Letsoalo and Timaheus (2011), discuss how the constitution guided the country's overarching socioeconomic policy framework to focus on education, that the policies may address the inequalities in education which have been inherited from the apartheid era.

Through those policies, "the new government has integrated the schooling systems and homeland administrations that were once separated along racial lines into a single system with a unified resource allocation mechanism and equal pay structure for teachers" (Letsoalo and Timaheus, 2011: 2). In this regard, South Africa has excelled in setting governance system which encourages local and community participation in schools, by integrating the structure school governing bodies (SGBs) which comprises of teachers, learners, parents and other stakeholders. Cross (2002) discusses that there are new norms and standards for school funding and professional development educators, and a National Qualifications Framework which harmonises vertical and horizontal mobility of learners throughout the education system. Within the schooling system, most significant of these developments was a radical departure from apartheid through an outcomes-based curriculum reform, (OBE) 2005.

The discussion above illustrates the importance of policy making and implementation in developing the desirable or positive outcomes in the education system. However as highlighted previously education in South Africa more specifically in rural areas still faces widespread issues which result in low academic performance. Thus, more in depth policy making is needed to address the issue of inequity of the education system, and to address other pressing issues that rural schools face.

2.2.4 Equity

Inclusion and equity in development agendas and the right of all children to education is asserted in numerous international treaties and texts and has been affirmed by both legally binding and non-binding instruments. States therefore have an obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the right of all learners to education (UNESCO, 2014). According to Tutters, (2017), some schools are not able to give all the learners a fair chance of learning that promotes excellence to all the learners, because the teachers are not trained to combat social and economic factors that affect a student's ability to meet the challenges of academic life. Even those who believe strongly in the value of equity work and are committed to creating positive change are often ill equipped to deal with the challenges of this work. Moreover UNESCO (2014) shows the contrast between children from wealthier families compared to those from poor families are four times more likely to be out of school and five times more likely not to complete primary education (Global Education Monitoring Report, 2016). While the situation is most critical in the developing countries, the issue of inequality is also present in many wealthier countries, the main cause of those inequalities is mainly the increase in globalization and international migration.

Equity in schools more especially rural schools is critical and needs to be taken into consideration by policy makers. UNESCO (2017) outlines that Education policy can influence and support inclusive thinking and practices by establishing the equal right of every individual to education, and by outlining the forms of teaching, support and leadership that lay the foundation for quality education for all. Bringing the principles of equity and inclusion into education policy also requires engaging other sectors, such as health, social welfare and child protection services, to ensure a common administrative and legislative framework for inclusive and equitable education. Collecting, collating and evaluating evidence on children's barriers to education access, to participation and to achievement, with attention to learners who may be most at risk of underachievement, marginalization or exclusion.

2.2.5 The shortcomings of policy making in rural schools

The national policies of education are inclusive of both urban/model C schools as well as the rural schools. Also, rural schooling in South Africa has come a long way from Bantu education and mud schools, to schools with a developed curriculum and better infrastructure, and those changes occurred because of the shift in the policy making space. However, emphasis must be raised on the fact that there is still a lot more work that needs to be done in

terms of policy making and zooming in more into rural schools because most of the problems that the South African education system faces are predominant in rural, and town ship areas.

The countries education system has been ranked as one of the worst in the world, and statistics show that most learner's knowledge and age/grade is disproportional. Meaning that they do not know the basic things that they should know at their age/grade, the emphasis is laid on the inability to read and the lack of basic knowledge in Mathematics that they should at their phase of learning (Spaull, 2013). OECD (2012), argues that having a correct educational approach is a key ingredient in ensuring high performance and equity in schools despite the socioeconomic backgrounds of schools and learners. Therefore, implementing a more inclusive and tailor-made educational system could be a solution that leads to pupils attaining high levels of skills and knowledge depending on their own ability and drive, not by their socioeconomic background.

With that said, there has been some gaps in policy making that need to be filled to attempt to solve the problem at hand. Unfortunately, this gap between policy and implementation results in the needs of many learners not being adequately addressed.

Spren and Vally's (2010), discusses how the post-apartheid educational policies were focused on equity, redress and redistribution, with the aim of promoting education for all. The ideology behind these policies was to create a schooling system with equitable classrooms, schools, and communities. The implication was "that everyone would now have access to the same (exemplary) educational provisioning and support as the formerly all-white schools" (Spren and Vally, 2010):436). The South African government invested in the idea of having an equal education system in South Africa, therefore the policy process was deliberate. However, it was not perfect as it is evident with the state that disadvantaged schools are in. Spren and Vally (2010), states that the policy planning process of the ruling party was made under the false impression that there were no conflicting interests to the idea of recreating South Africa's schools. Policy makers failed to consider the challenges or the hurdles that could halt the progress of redressing and recreating South African schools especially in rural areas. For instance, the level of poverty in rural areas was partially investigated that is why public schools in rural areas are free and have feeding schemes. However, being from a poor background and having poor uneducated parents does at some level affect the chances of a learner to succeed in school, this may not be the case for every learner however it is a real issue in rural schools.

Because learners from these backgrounds have lack of support and motivation to finish or to try and excel in school, as Creswell's (2006), highlights that learners from families that are educated tend to do well in school because they are used to the culture of learning other than learners from poor backgrounds. Therefore, they may be more results in terms of rural learners staying in school, and producing quality academic performance, if policy would consider ways of keeping rural learners interested and educated in learning. An example for this is a Non-profit organisation called 'Columba Leadership' that runs dynamic leadership programmes at schools located in economically disadvantaged areas with the goal of helping learners to become self-motivated, work-ready and highly employable, by peer-peer leadership programs. Hackland (2018), explains that most schools that have embraced youth engagement as part of its culture have managed to achieve positive academic results. For example, Manyangana Secondary School, Manyano Secondary School, Sibusisiwe Secondary School, Ahmed Timol Secondary School and Mandisa Shiceka Secondary School, among others, have maintained a pass rate of over 90% for the past several years (Hackland, 2018).

This organisation has helped a lot of learners from disadvantaged communities to stay in school, and to attain academic excellence and taught them skills that will help them after schooling. Thus, programs such as this need to be considered by policy makers to ensure that learners from disadvantaged schools are motivated, because free education alone will not help them, learners need environments that are conducive to learning. Another shortcoming in policy making is the lack of community participation during the policy process. Du Plessis (2014) states that there is an on-going debate that principals are being marginalised and ignored by education bureaucracies. Rural principals feel that there is a sense that the system is not set up to assist, but rather the system is there to instruct, assess and control when expectations are not met.

2.2.6 Theoretical Framework

Theories are formulated to explain, predict, and understand phenomena and, in many cases, to challenge and extend existing knowledge within the limits of critical bounding assumptions. The theoretical framework is the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study. The theoretical framework introduces and describes the theory that explains why the research problem under study exists. The Conflict theory and the top down approach theory has been adopted in this research as the outlook of this study.

2.2.7 Conflict Theory

The conflict theory has been formed because of Karl Marx's work in the 1800, it claims that society is on a constant competition of resources, and that those who are wealthy have possession of most resources and they oppress the poor. The conflict theory has been used to explain various social imbalances such as poverty, structural inequality, class conflict as well as war and revolutions. Coser (2003) explains that the central concerns of conflict theory are the unequal distribution of scarce resources and power. What these resources are might be different for each theorist. According to Shornack (1987), Conflict theory believes that the progress of equality is liberating for all concerned. It investigates views recent developments as resulting from efforts by social categories lacking material resources to liberate themselves by redressing the inequality. Shornack (1987) explains that the Conflict theory ideology plays a prominent role in public discussion of issues related to the family today. For example, there is a perception that people who engage in criminal acts are people who had the least influence from traditional norms. Shornack (1987) highlights that research tends to focus on how social predicaments are a result of lack of research, government funding and lack of awareness. However there needs to be a focus on the family and the community in which people are from, because that is where their attitude, desires, aspirations and outlook on life is shaped.

This study uses conflict theory to investigate how the family structure and the rural environment affect the learner's academic performance. This theory will also assist in analysing the conflict, between the socioeconomic background of the learner and their academic performance.

Therefore, this theory anchors the argument of this study, that there is a link or a dependence of academic excellence in secondary schools, with the external factors, for instance the learner's background, socioeconomic factors, and the environment amongst others plays a role to determine their academic success.

2.2.8 Top down and Bottom up Approach

Top down approach is a model structured around the use of professional leadership to plan, implement and evaluate development programs (Larrison, 1999). Applying a top down approach to a community program means that the leadership structures focus on planning the developing program and implementing the services, with minimal input from the community. Larrison (1999) argues that a top down approach in a community program changes the

perception, behaviour and the standard of living of the residents. To elaborate further on this statement when the government plans and implements a policy without the input of the community, changes in that community are bound to occur they maybe resistance or just the behaviour of not taking charge because they do not feel like it's their responsibility. In contrast involving the community in development program planning and implementation brings a feeling of ownership to the community, and it also helps policy makers to have a clear idea of the problems they face and the context specific solution that is needed.

Top down approach in this study is perceived as a method which is used by policy makers in the education system. Where there is a lack of community participation in the policy making process, which often leads to the government not fully addressing the issues that are crippling the education system in South Africa.

Most policy makers use the top down approach in policy making, and the implication of that is that policies are imposed upon people, without their proper consent. Whilst the bottom up approach includes community participation and consultation during the policy process and this approach is crucial considering that South Africa is a democratic country and that the policy needs to be suited to the beneficiary's conditions to ensure successful implementation.

This study has adopted the Top down and bottom up theory to assist in analysing the roles of different stakeholders in the schools. For example the role of policy makers, educators, parents and the school governing body in determining the academic performance of learners in rural schools.

[2.2.9 Top down approach in relation to rural public schools](#)

South African Schools are governed by the principle and the School Governing body, and each Province has a Department of Education which is responsible to keep the education system in place. The central government provides a national framework for school policy, but administrative responsibility lies with the provinces. Power is also given to elected school governing bodies, which have a significant say in the running of their schools. Therefore, the central government formulates policies intern the principle and the school governing body are responsible to implement it.

Educational policies

South African schools are currently using the Curriculum assessment policy (CAPs), which is a national education policy which was formulated by the Department of Education. This

policy gives direction on what is to be included in the curricula of a school in each grade and provides the guidelines on how it should be assessed. The implementation of CAPS meant that textbooks had to come with a detailed teacher's guide that gave a week-by-week breakdown of what needed to be covered for each subject in each grade.

However, as every policy the CAPs policy is not without short comings, News24 (2015), released an article which highlighted that the changes that came with the CAPs policy increased the workload on teachers, it was also followed by a decline in pass rates. Criticism about the CAPs include matters about how the policy causes the teaching and learning process to be rigid, as the learning and assessment material has already been structured nationally.

According to Maharajah *et al* (2011), CAPS was implemented as an important step to achieving educational reforms in South Africa especially between former resourced and under-resourced schools. The CAPS system brought about changes in the methods of assessments, time that learners must spend in the classroom from grade R-12 and new teaching approaches. However, as mentioned previously this policy was not without flaws. Maharajah *et al's* (2011), study reveals that the teachers are often frustrated by the curriculum changes due to lack of clear technical expertise to carry out teaching responsibilities, and that the teachers often lack the theoretical knowledge and are usually unfamiliar with principles informing the implementation of curriculum change.

The curriculum changes that have been implemented in the name of educational reform have all fallen short in achieving their goal to a certain extent. This is not to overlook all the developments that have occurred in education since 1994. It is to highlight that so much more could be achieved by including a bottom up approach in policy making. The bottom up approach would enable the policy makers to have a clear view of the obstacles to the policies success, and then have policy alternatives. For instance, if the CAPS policy adopted a bottom up approach, through consulting the schools, the policy makers would be aware that the teachers had the capacity and the resources to implement the policy. Maharajah *et al* (2011) argues that, complicating the implementation of CAPS has been the shortage of subject specialists to support teachers in primary schools during curriculum implementation and the shortage of teachers who specialise in mathematics and physical science. This again is another issue which could've been avoided if thorough community participation and monitoring and evaluation were enforced during policy formulation.

Therefore, CAPS has proven to be unreliable in achieving the goal of educational reform, especially in rural school because of the lack of favourable conditions including resources, suitably qualified and experienced teachers, and the support from the DoE. Maharajah (2011) identified that teachers are not adequately trained for implementing CAPS, in his study he identified that the teachers felt that they were not adequately consulted before CAPS was implemented. The implication of the discussion above is that the failure of CAPS is in part due to the lack of consultation or participation of teachers in the policy formulation process. bureaucrats need to be involved in the policy making process to ensure successful policy implementation, because the people at the grass roots level know better about what is needed because that's what they do daily, therefore it is essential to consider them in policy making process, to apply a bottom up approach instead of the top-down approach.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the different challenges which rural schools face that could be detrimental to the learner's academic achievements which were outlined in literature. It also depicted how the education system works in South African, and its shortfalls with an emphasis on rural schools.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study has adopted a qualitative research approach, and it will use both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data will be collected and analysed from the sample group through interviews. Secondary data will be collected from literature and internet sources, such as journal articles and books to enhance the study. Therefore, this chapter will give an elaborated outline of the methods of data collection that will be used to inform this research study. It will start by explaining the research design which will be adopted, the sampling technique, issues of reliability and validity as well as the limitations.

3.2 Research design

This study has adopted a qualitative approach, as using qualitative techniques is more fitting for the nature of this study.

3.2.1 Qualitative approach

It is qualitative because the nature of this research seeks to find out the experiences and the in-depth opinions of the study population. A qualitative approach will enable the researcher to explore attitudes, behaviours and experiences, by conducting in depth interviews. Moreover, it helps the researcher to understand the research problem from the view point of the local population.

3.2.2 Qualitative vs quantitative

SEEP-Aims (2000), states the quantitative approach, allows for the measurement of many subjects' reactions to a set of questions. Because each question has a limited set of answers, therefore the results can be compared and analysed statistically; they also can be generalized to a larger population within known limits of error. Whereas the qualitative methods provide the context which gives a full understanding those results. They capture what people have to say in their own words and describe their experiences in depth.

A qualitative method provides greater richness and more detailed information about a smaller number of people (SEEP-Aims, 2000). For qualitative researchers, a setting is important, because they are concerned with a context. It places an emphasis on understanding through looking closely at people's words actions and records. Thus, qualitative research examines the patterns of meaning which emerge from the data and these are often presented in the participants' own words (Creswell, 1994). Qualitative research is subjective and depends much on what the researcher sees and hears, and much rests on his / her powers of

observation and listening. In qualitative studies the researcher needs skills for interviewing and must show understanding and empathy with the interviewee, through active listening, checking and identifying. Qualitative researchers wish to discover how understandings are formed, how meanings are negotiated and how roles are developed (Cresswell, 1994).

3.3 Overview of the study area

Rural areas in South Africa are remote areas which were previously known as homelands, these areas have a population of predominantly black people, and rely more on agriculture. Leibbrandt (1988), states that households in the black rural areas derive a large proportion of their income from their family members who work in the urban, industrial centres. Other common income streams come from agricultural activity. According to Ngomane (2012) over half of households hold in the former Homeland areas rely on social grants, or remittances for their own livelihoods, but these are not strategically utilised to sustain the rural economy and inequality. Molefe (1996) states that most rural areas do not have adequate resources such as water, educational facilities and employment opportunities. This is caused by the inequitable distribution of resources in South Africa which has resulted in urban areas enjoying a higher quality of life at the expense of the rural.

Ga-Sekgopo village is a rural area which is at the North-Eastern part from Polokwane in the Limpopo Province. Like most rural areas in South Africa Ga-Sekgopo is characterised with inadequate access of basic resources. This area also has high unemployment and illiteracy rates. With most people relaying on minimum wage labour in the farms close by. This area being a rural area is faced with many disadvantages, such as the lack of basic needs and infrastructure, such as running water, adequate sanitation, adequate health centres and roads. Education in Ga-Sekgopo is heavily dependent on the government, the village has five high schools which are all public schools. Those five high schools rarely achieve a hundred percent pass rate from their grade 12 learners. This may be an indicator of the low academic which is produced by these schools.

Figure 3.1: Map of Ga-Sekgopo



<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Ga-Sekgopo/>

3.5 Data collection techniques

Interviews will be used; the questions will be structured in terms of the themes of the objectives. Literature will also be used to collect the data.

3.5.1 in Depth-Interviews

In depth interview technique are optimal for collecting data on individuals' personal histories, perspectives, and experiences, particularly when sensitive topics are being explored.

The interview questions will be based on the research objectives; however, they will aim on deriving an in-depth view of the participants, and their main purpose is to answer the research questions.

The interview questions will be structured differently in accordance to the position of the interviewee, and the type of data the researcher would want to derive from that person. For instance, the teacher and the former learner will be asked different questions, however the questions will be around the same theme, to get a full perspective from the different groups on each theme.

Qualitative interviewing, using semi-structured questions, makes use of open-ended questions to encourage meaningful responses (Patton 1990). Open questions are so-called because the respondent is not confined to a limited number of responses. There that approach will be useful in collecting data that can be used to inform this study.

3.6 Sampling technique

Random sampling is a non-probability sampling method, which depends on the characteristics of the study population and the objective of the study. Non-probability sampling is a sampling technique in which the researcher selects samples based on the subjective judgment of the researcher rather than random selection. Crossman (2018) asserts that random sampling can be very useful, in situations when you need to reach a targeted sample quickly. In this type of sampling, participants are selected or sought after based on pre-selected criteria based on the research question. The samples are selected based purely on researcher's knowledge and credibility. In other words, researchers choose only those who he feels are a right fit (with respect to attributes and representation of a population) to participate in research study.

This research uses random sampling because, the researcher already knows which schools will be approached, as there are only five high schools in Ga Sekgopo Village, the researcher also knows the position of the people that need to be interviewed, and it does not necessarily have to be a specific people, the interviewee can be chosen randomly from among others, and they will be chosen in regard to their willingness to participate and their availability.

3.6.1 Sample size

The theoretical population of this research is the high school teachers and the SGB of the Ga Sekgopo village. The sample group are a few people in the study population who will represent, the whole population. In this research, the sample group will be one SGB members of five different high schools in Ga-Sekgopo, as well as one teacher from five high schools in Ga-Sekgopo.

For data collection, the researcher will target the five high schools in Ga-Sekgopo, and in those five one teachers, one School governing body member and two former learners of each of the five schools. In total data will be collected from 20 people who will be selected regarding their availability and willingness to participate.

3.7 Recruitment strategy

The participants will be recruited via face to face interactions and phone calls. The researcher will go to the school and ask the principle to inform the teachers and ask for a volunteer who is available and willing to be interviewed, then an appointment will be set, information about where and when to conduct the interview will be discussed. In terms of the School Governing Body the researcher will ask for referrals from the principle and the teachers who will be interviewed, and then the possible interviewee will be contacted and asked for an

appointment, the same is done for the former student. This method will be effective and convenient because Ga-Sekgopo is a small village where people are familiar with each other therefore it will be easier to get a hold of the relevant people. Prior to the interviews the participants will be informed about the purpose of the research and given clarity that their participation is voluntary.

3.7.1 Analytical approach

This study uses a thematic approach to analyse data. Data will be organised in themes based on the repeated patterns of meaning, which address the research objectives of this study. This approach highlights the views, opinions and experiences of the interviewee. The thematic approach that is used is deductive, meaning that the data will determine the themes that are discussed. Descriptive statistics has been used to analyze data in order to provide an enhanced representation in examining the responses of the interviewee's in answering the question of this study.

3.8 Methods to ensure trustworthiness

Validity refers to the integrity and application of the methods undertaken and the precision in which the findings accurately reflect the data (Smith, 2015).

This study adopts the following strategies to ensure the credibility, validity and to avoid bias of the study: Acknowledging biases in sampling and ongoing critical reflection of methods to ensure sufficient depth and relevance of data collection and analysis; Accounting for personal biases which may have influenced findings; Respondent validation: includes inviting participants to comment on the interview transcript and whether the final themes and concepts created adequately reflect the phenomena being investigated. According to Smith (2015), it is important that all qualitative researchers incorporate strategies to enhance the credibility of a study during research design and implementation.

Reliability refers to consistency with which the research will produce the same results if repeated. Validity refers to accuracy or correctness of the findings. Patton (1999) identify different methods which could be used to ensure the reliability and viability of a research study. For this research triangulation will be used. According to Patton (1999), triangulation involves using multiple data sources in an investigation to produce understanding. Some see triangulation as a method for corroborating findings and as a test for validity. Triangulation of sources consists of examining the consistency of different data sources from within the same method. A highlighted example is the collecting the data at

different points in time in public vs, private settings comparing people with different viewpoints (Patton, 1999).

Patton (1999) emphasises that a single method can never adequately shed light on a phenomenon, and that using multiple methods can help facilitate deeper understanding.

Checking out the consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods. In terms of this research data will be collected by conducting interviews, it will be compared to the literature that has been collected to show if there is a consistency or not.

3.9 Limitations

The main limitation of this study is the time constraints, as the research focuses on schools, the main challenge is accessing the educators, as one must consider the school schedule, the season of tests and exams demands the attention of the teachers, therefore it is challenging to find an appropriate time to interview the teachers outside of their school obligations and personal time. Therefore, the researcher must ensure that the interviews are very short and that they are done outside of the exams, tests, workshop or marking periods.

Chapter summary

A qualitative approach will inform this study on the perspective of the local people of Ga-Sekgopo regarding how socio-economic issues impact on the learner's academic performance. The teachers, SGB's and former learners of the schools in Ga-Sekgopo will be interviewed to give a clear perspective on the schools as they are directly involved in these schools and have broad knowledge of the challenges faced as they are in the grassroots.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis & presentation of Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of this study and analyse the data that has been collected. It will also give a brief explanation about the purpose and objective of this study. It gives an overview of the sample, the themes and an outline of the questions and the responses. The focus of this study was to investigate how socioeconomic issues affect good academic performance in rural areas, as well as to investigate the challenges that rural schools face and how those challenges impact on the academic performance of learners. The findings from the interviewed Educators, learners and School Governing body members, are presented and analysed according to the dominant themes that emerged from interviewee's views in relation to the research questions.

One on one in depth interviews were conducted, where each participant read and signed the consent form prior to answering the questions. The in-depth interviews occurred for 15-30minutes depending on the different participants. The in-depth interview approach was used specifically using the general interview guided approach, this was so that a general understanding of the interviewees' opinion on the matter would be captured through open ended questions with probing by researcher where necessary to delve into participant's individual experiences, perspectives and context (Berry, 1999). To limit subjectivity, one participant from each of the Secondary schools was interviewed. The data was collected in textual form based on observation and interaction with the participants, in-depth interviews. The textual data was not converted into numerical form and hence not statistically analysed. The educational policy research question is predominately addressed by the extensive literature review in Chapter 2 and supported further by the themes that emerged from the interviews. The remainder of the research questions have been addressed primarily by the themes that emerged from the interviews. The limitation of this study is that not every socioeconomic issue was presented and analysed due to time constraints the research had to focus on a few points.

The objectives of the study were to:

Objectives

- To examine how socioeconomic factors, affect grade 8-10 learners
- To identify the challenges that cause low academic performance in Ga-Sekgopo

- To assess how educators and parents contribute to the learner's academic performance
- To investigate how Educational policies address the issue of low performance in rural areas

The data that will be analysed will be from 15 participants from Ga-Sekgopo Village. The sample consists of:

- Five (5) Educators, one from each of the five Secondary schools in Ga-Sekgopo.
- Five School governing body members, one representative from each of the five schools
- Then five former learners, one representative from each of the schools

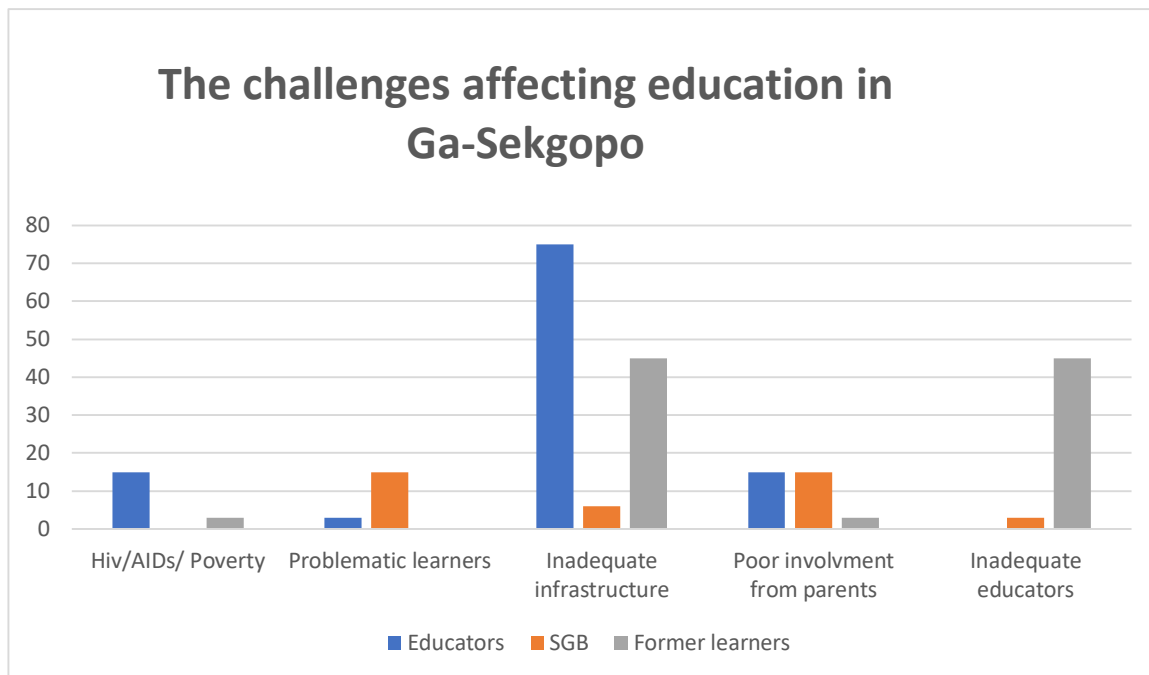
The table below is representative of the interview respondents who had a view on a particular theme. The columns are representative of the identified themes, whilst the rows are indicative of the different interviewees. The totals at the bottom represented by certain number indicate the number of interviewees whose views contributed to the specific theme. The theme with the highest number of respondents indicates the dominant theme.

Presentation of the interviewee's responses

Table 4.1: The Responses of the interviewees on the challenges that secondary schools are facing in Ga-Sekgopo.

	Issues identified				
Respondent	HIV/AIDs/Poverty	Problematic learners	Inadequate infrastructure	Inadequate educators	Poor involvement of parents
Educator 1	✓	✓	✓		
Educator 2			✓		
Educator 3		✓	✓		
Educator 4			✓		✓
Educator 5			✓		
Responses from the School Governing Body					
SGB 1		✓		✓	✓
SGB 2			✓		
SGB 3			✓	✓	
SGB 4			✓		
SGB 5			✓		
Responses from the former learners					
Former learner1				✓	
Former learner2			✓	✓	
Former learner3	✓			✓	
Former learner4			✓		✓
Former learner5	✓		✓		✓
Total:	3	3	12	5	5

Figure 4.1: The challenges affecting education in Ga Sekgopo



The two tables above depict the common challenges which were identified by the interviewees. As depicted in the graph above Inadequate infrastructure has the highest percentage, meaning that it is a prevalent problem which affects education in Ga-Sekgopo. 75% of the Educators mentioned that this area is problematic, 60% of from the SGB and 45% from the former learners said the same. The second prevalent challenge that was identified was the issue of inadequate educators, 45% of the former learners and 30% of the SGB members asserted that educators are part of the problem regarding to rural education. Ironically 0% of the educators who were interviewed identifies educators as part of the problem. Which implies that educators do not see themselves as part of the problem, on the contrary they point to external factors, which is questionable as there has been widespread research on the issue of lack of quality teachers, especially in South African rural areas. The third prevalent factor was poor involvement of parents followed by problematic learners. The last one being HIV/AIDs and Poverty, 15% of the Educators mentioned that HIV/AIDs and poverty in learners is a problem, and often becomes a barrier to the learning process, 10% of the SGB members and 3% of the learners who were interviewed identified HIV/AIDs and poverty as a barrier to learning. The challenges that were identifies are discussed and categorized in themes below.

Question 2 Do you think those challenges are faced only by schools situated in rural areas

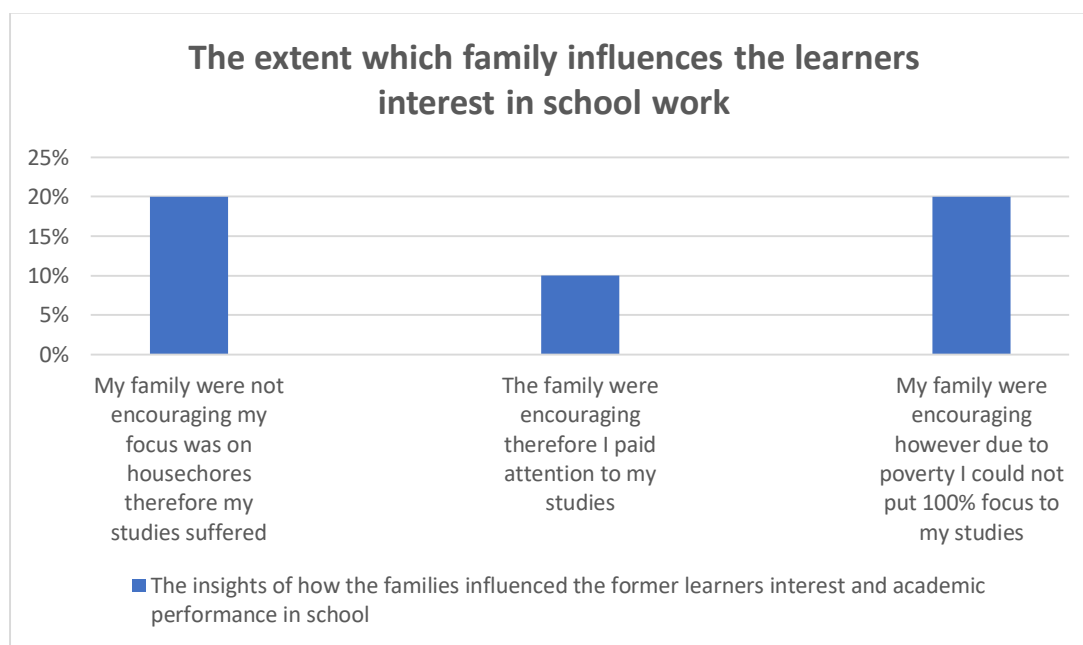
Table 4.2: The responses of interview question 2

	Responses from the Educators	
	No, some schools in urban areas also have similar challenges as rural schools.	Yes, because schools in urban areas have more access to basic resources and more, means to help the learners to succeed.
Educator 1	✓	
Educator 2		✓
Educator 3		✓
Educator 4		✓
Educator 5		✓
Responses from the School Governing Body (SGB)		
SGB 1		✓
SGB 2		✓
SGB 3	✓	
SGB 4	✓	
SGB 5	✓	
Total:	4 (40%)	6 (60%)

Those who responded by saying that urban schools also face similar challenges justified their responses by highlighting that, some schools in urban areas also have a challenge with violent learners and the issue of HIV/AIDs. Those who agreed with the latter, argued that in urban areas most parents are involved in the learning process. Educator 2 states that most urban areas have access to resources such as water, libraries, electricity, roads, sports fields, basic facilities and good service delivery. Schools in urban areas are usually easily accessible to the residents. Educator 3 says that “schools in urban areas perform well because they have more resources”. Rural schools are far from amenities and residents unlike urban schools, and, they are challenged with lack of basic infrastructure, which is not a dominant issue in urban schools.

Question 2 for the former learner, was that: To what extent did your family or social structures, influence your interest and input into your school work?

Figure 4.2: The responses on the extent family influences school performance



The table above shows that out of the five (5) former learners that were interviewed 2 of the respondents mentioned that their families were not fully involved or encouraging towards their schooling, however the parents were more concerned about the contribution of their children to house chores, and as a result those learners did not perform well in school.

One of the respondents mentioned that their family were fully engaged in their schooling “despite their lack of education they wanted me to do well in school and to matriculate” Said one of the respondents. This responded also mentioned that they managed to get a bachelor pass in their grade 12 however they did not get a chance to further their studies, because of lack of awareness and understanding of tertiary institutions, thus the respondent became a handy man right after completing grade 12 in order to help out financially at home.

The last two respondents said that their families did encourage them to work hard in school. However they were not 100% involved for instance the parents did not bother to check if the learner is doing their homework, or to follow up with any of their school business. Due to their low socio-economic status the respondents said that every day after school they had to go around selling the tomatoes that their parents planted in their garden, just so they can have

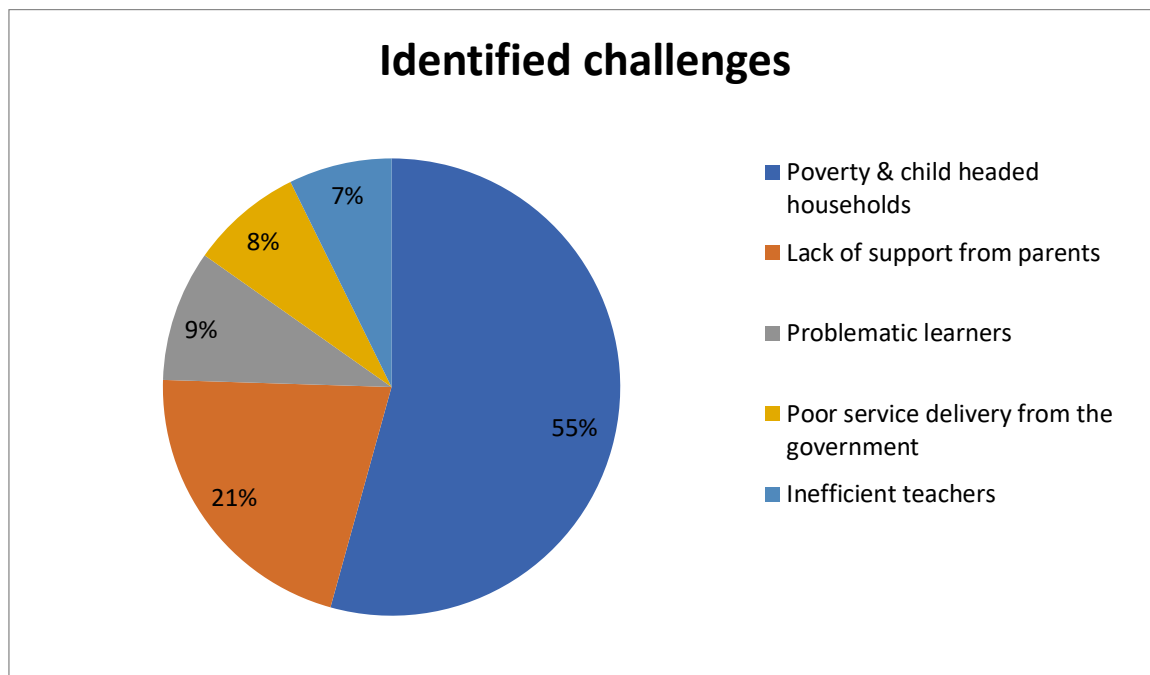
pocket money. Which then took away time for them to focus on their school work. According to Khumalo and Mji (2014) states that external factors have a causal effect towards the academic performance of learners.

Former learner 1 explained that they did not receive enough support from their parents in term of their studies, which lead to her repeating failing 3 grades in high school. The interviewee mentioned that they experienced a lot of abuse from their parents, and they also were responsible for many chores like going to fetch water at the dam. That lead to fatigue and took their focus from school.

Former learner 3, says that their parent's involvement had a positive influence on their studies, as their support encouraged them to work hard in school. Also, his family prioritised his education, always making sure that they create an environment that is conducive to studying for him.

Question 3 for the Educators was that what are some of the issues that cause learners to underperform?

Figure 4.3: The pie chart on the Educators responses on the cause to learner's poor academic performance



Analysis of the pie chart

As it is visible in the pie chart, poverty seems to be a prevalent issues that has been identified by the educators, with 4 out of five of the Educators that were interviewed stating that poverty is a huge factor that causes for learners in rural schools to underperform.

‘Poor service delivery’ was also a major factor which the educators identified as a cause to poor academic performance to learners, with 4 out of 5 educators saying that. Rural areas in South Africa are usually victims of poor service delivery from the government, and judging by the responses from the interviews it does have a negative impact to the learner’s academic performance.

This was followed by the ‘problematic learners’ response with 3 out of 5 educators mentioning that learners cause a challenge not only to the educators but also to their own performance. One of the educators that were interviewed shared that some of the

learners bully the teachers, in some cases they go to an extent of physically beating the teachers. Some of the learners are also said to vandalise school property and their textbooks which worsens the problem, since these schools are already having trouble with service delivery and a shortage of infrastructure. One of the educators made a note that statistically in their school male learners tend to underperform more. Female learners tend to be easier to manage and are more focused in learning compared to their male counterparts who show less interest in the learning process. Also that learners miss school a lot and therefore miss out on learning as this miss a lot of classes. Two out of Five of the Educators said that inefficient educators and a lack also plays a role in poor academic performance.

Question 4: Do you think a school being in a rural area has an impact on the overall performance of the learner?

Table 4.3 The responses of question four

Interview responses from the Educators, School Governing body and former learner interviewee's.			
	Yes, Ga-Sekgopo Village as a whole including the schools has a critical issue of poor service delivery	Yes: Because the parents in rural areas are not as supportive as those who are in urban areas.	No: Learners in rural schools have an equal chance to succeeding academically as learners in urban areas
Educator 1	✓		✓
Educator 2		✓	✓
Educator 3	✓		
Educator 4		✓	
Educator 5		✓	
Responses from the School Governing Body			
SGB 1	✓		
SGB 2	✓		
SGB 3	✓		
SGB 4			✓
SGB 5		✓	
Responses from the former learners			
Former learner1	✓		
Former learner 2	✓		
Former learner 3	✓		✓
Former learner 4		✓	
Former learner 5			✓
Total:	8	6	3

Question 5 asked to the educators: What impact do educational policies have on rural public schools?

Table 4.4: The educators' responses about interview question 5

Educator	Response
Educator 1	The feeding scheme policy has been helpful, as well as school security and health policies and the language policy. He mentioned also that the policy on HIV/AIDs guides the teachers to treat learners which are infected cautiously, and to ensure that they relate to social workers, clinics and psychologists.
Educator 2	The environmental policies are not intensified, in terms of the cleanliness, sanitation and the infrastructural issues, and the bushes are not being maintained. Therefore, the interviewee said that there more issues that need to be covered by government policy regarding rural schools, for example issues like violent learners, drugs, and alcohol and teenage pregnancy need to be investigated
Educator 3	Policies are essential because they improve the teaching and learning process. The policies created by the school committee are said to be helpful as all the parties affected are consulted during the formulation. A complain about government policies that was raised was about how the some of the members on the school governing body if not all, have a hard time understanding the government policies, as at time the policies can be ambiguous.
Educator 4	Government policies have prohibited corporal punishment. As a result, teachers struggle to discipline learners and are ill informed of other discipline alternatives, therefore there is a gap in policy for that.
Educator 5	They help to guide the teaching and learning process, although not all of them are agreeable.

4.3 Analysis

The findings from the interviews that were conducted in this study are consistent with existing literature that related to the research questions. Several of the dominant themes from this study were also predominantly found in existing literature. Other responses which were mentioned include teenage pregnancy, learners who are on drugs and high failure and teachers having affairs with learners. The following section will discuss the linkages between the discussed theory in the literature review section and the emerging themes from the findings of this study.

There are themes that were continually being mentioned as determining factors of achieving academic excellence, for learners from rural schools. These themes in their order were; inadequate infrastructure, Inadequate educators, problematic learners, poor involvement of parents, the impact of poverty and HIV/AIDs. There were other factors that were mentioned by the interviewees however, the ones identified above were repeatedly mentioned in almost every question, also these themes also appear in the literature discussed in chapter 2.

4.3.1 Inadequate infrastructure

The struggles of poor infrastructure in rural schools can be traced back to the apartheid era. Khumalo and Mji (2014) assert that the problems related to infrastructural development were inherited from the apartheid era. In that system, all developmental issues related to African people were either minimal or non-existent in many areas of life. This means that those who were in rural areas, including schooling, were even more neglected by that system. Therefore, people who lived in rural areas have limited access to opportunities to gain information, skills and experience necessary to develop and equip them to contribute towards economic growth. Lolwana (2004) argues that the lack of resources is a critical factor in education because it may negatively affect the learning and teaching processes within the classroom. It is reported on the one hand, that lack of facilities and under resourced schools are directly associated with the academic failure of learners. The lack of basic resources in rural schools reflects that there is poor service delivery in those areas.

As observed in the interview responses inadequate infrastructure was the most dominant challenge which was identified as a barrier to good academic performance in Ga-Sekgopo Secondary schools. Most of the respondents, mentioned that there is a shortage of infrastructure in their schools, which highlights that this is a major issue that rural schools face. One of the Educators that were interviewed mentioned that there is a shortage of classrooms in their schools which leads to overcrowded classrooms. He said that “it is a

challenge to control an overcrowded class, and to ensure that everyone understands the content that is being taught”. Inadequate sanitation infrastructure was also raised, the interviewee mentioned that learners usually fall into the pit latrine toilets. Another struggle is that the textbooks that the government sends are usually not enough for the learners, and the learners usually must share their books. Khumalo and Mji (2014) argue that Infrastructure is an integral component of the learning and teaching context. Because a school’s infrastructure enables learners and teachers to access a wide range of tools, services and resources to support teaching and learning. For instance, information technology using computers could be useful for teaching, learning and administrative purposes.

Another educator who is a maths and science teacher for grade 8-10, mentioned that the shortage of infrastructure affects the teaching process, as their school does not have a laboratory, therefore it is a challenge to teach learners about things that they have never seen, and it is hard to teach them theoretically about science experiments without practically taking part in them. Khumalo and Mji (2014) argue that rural schools are characterised by poor infrastructure, and that rural parts of provinces such as the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo after years of being a democratic state had not experienced any major infrastructural development as acknowledged by the Republic of South Africa Department of Education [RSA DoE] (2009).

This situation means that learning may rely solely on what the teachers tell learners. As a result, the learners are left extremely disadvantaged because they remain ignorant of everything they are not directly told (Collier 2005). With no media centres and internet connections, learners in these rural schools have very little opportunity to discover ideas and information for themselves. It is argued that rural learners lack access to artefacts, the availability of which could have exposed them to necessary information useful in developing their self-expression (Banda & Kirunda 2005). About resourced classrooms on the other hand, it is opined that suitable and well-maintained buildings have a direct bearing on effective learning and teaching (Kruger 1999). This essentially means that a positive and conducive classroom atmosphere has significant and direct influence on the performance of teachers and learners.

Therefore, it is evident that there is a link between the learner’s academic performance and the availability of infrastructure. Khumalo and Mji (2014) confirm this argument by stating that, factors affecting rural learner academic success have been identified as poor

infrastructure, poverty, and lack of supportive academic discourse. The physical environment affects learning, as it is argued that while infrastructure backlogs of classrooms may be addressed, if the issue of poor sanitation is not catered for, then learning and teaching problems will persist (Dryden & Vos 2005). In a related manner, it is pointed out that the realities of rural life related to poverty, lack of basic facilities and infrastructure in schools also play a negative role in attracting suitably qualified educators (Mabogoane & Pateli 2006).

4.3.2 Inadequate Educators

The results from the interviews conducted display that there are critical issues that need to be investigated around Educators. The interviewees expressed their concern about how some of the Educators are notorious for being absent from school and missing classes. Former Learner 3 says that a week would go by with certain teachers not coming to teach on their period. One of the SGB members raised a concern on educators who do not have enough knowledge of the subject that they are teaching. Teacher 5 highlighted that some teachers struggle to teach learners with the material that the government gives, they struggle to understand and adjust to the new curriculum. This is in line with the discussion about the quality of educators in chapter 2. Where it was mentioned that the efficiency of educators in teaching in learning is determined by several factors including that they stay updated about the changes that are occurring in the schooling system especially the curriculum. Which has appeared to be a problem as, educator 3 mentioned that some of the educators are not in agreement with the new curriculum, and at times they struggle to follow the study material which has been given to them to teach. Stofile et al (2011) sheds light on how teachers in rural schools tend to have a lot more on their plate, as it was highlighted that due to poor parental involvement, teachers are left to deal with the learners 'personal challenges'. For instance, the Educator 1 spoke about assisting a learner who had HIV/AIDs with connecting to social workers. That is not the only incident where educators end up taking on other roles to assist the learner, at times this requires them to shift from being an educator.

One of the main challenges that have been highlighted concerning educators in chapter 2, is the willingness for educators to teach in rural schools. This factor could also be the cause of lack of motivation among the educators. As was highlighted in chapter 2 that Mcupe (2018) echoes that being a university graduate teacher in a rural school is challenging, as they are continually threatened by the learners, and struggle with the difficult living conditions and lack of basic resources. Which shows that the poor living conditions and the remoteness of

rural areas is not appealing for young educators to go and work there, leaving rural schools with second best educators or educators who are not willing to settle in those schools. Rural teachers have to work in conditions with fewer resources and have less control over the curriculum, which eventually leads to frustration (Collier 2005).

4.3.3 Problematic learners

The issue of problematic learners is quite problematic in South Africa, it has been discussed in Chapter 2 of this study, and it also seems to be on the headlines of the news almost every week, with that said it can be concluded that this issue needs urgent attention. The educators that were interviewed revealed their concern as well as defeat in terms of problematic learners. Educator 1 said that “The learners are bullies, they go to the extent of beating the teachers, and the hard part is that government policy restricts corporal punishment, leaving us with no effective means to discipline them”. The other educators also expressed their grievance in not being able to discipline the learners out of fear of that discipline being taken out of context and reported to the authorities, jeopardizing the educator’s job. Another educator also mentioned that the learners also vandalise the school property, and they are also violent towards each other. Other predominant challenges with problematic learners is that were mentioned are, teenage pregnancy, high drug and alcohol use, high absenteeism and disrespect of educators amongst others.

The headlines that appear in the news about learners doing inhuman acts, highlight that there is a critical problem that needs to be solved among the youth in South Africa. Kreifels and Warton (2019), state that school violence is a violation of the constitution of the Republic of South Africa (No. 108 of 1996). According to Khanyile (2018) the increased level of violence in society is manifesting itself in schoolyard assaults and fights and the use of corporal punishment, despite it being banned, this in the wake of a series of disturbing videos and violent outbursts at schools of educators beating learners and vice versa have emerged in recent months. According to South Africa’s regulatory board for teachers, it has noted a slight increase in the number of corporal punishment cases, sexual abuse of both male and female pupils in schools, and the assault of teachers within the school environment. In its 2016/17 annual report, the South African Council for Educators (Sace) said that it had received 678 reported incidents. Of these cases, 113 were for verbal abuse and harassment, while 99 were for sexual misconduct and 256 for corporal punishment.

4.3.4 Poor involvement from parents

One of the formal ways which parents can get involved in their learners' schools is by joining the School Governing Body. Which involves being on the board with the school Principle and making decisions about the school. Mncube (2009) explains that the SGB is are accorded active and responsible roles to encourage tolerance, rational discussion and collective decision-making. However, at times that also fails as "Parents at some rural schools are reluctant to participate in the decision-making by School Governing Bodies (SGBs) as a result of their low educational level or of power struggles in SGBs" (Mncube, 2009: 83). Therefore, their lack of participation limits the voice of parents in the school.

Another way that parents can contribute to their learner's education, is by encouraging them at home to study, do their homework, to assist were they need help. To create an environment that is conducive for learning at home. Depending on the parent's affordability they could hire a tutor for the subjects that challenge the learner, or buy supplementary material to assist the learner, etc.

However, the findings of this study show that parental involvement in the learner's education is not always in place. In the context of rural schools, it appears that at times parents are more invested in trying to sustain a living than to encourage schooling for their children. This is evident were former learner 3 during the interview mentioned that, every day after school he and his siblings need to go out knocking door to door to sell vegetables that their parents' plant. Educator 5 mentioned that the home environment of the learner affects their learning process e.g. drunkard parents and many house chores. This teacher also mentioned that poverty in the family and abuse are some of the issues that their learners are affected by. Stofile et al (2011) that at times parents are too exhausted to take part in their learners schooling, as their focus is to sustain the family financially.

Some cases parents are fully invested in ensuring that their children succeed academically. Learner Former 1 said that his parents always encouraged him to work hard in school they even cut down his chores to ensure that he focuses. He mentioned that he managed to complete his matric with a bachelors pass however, he did not manage to pursue a tertiary education because he and his family were not well informed about how that works, they could not afford it, nor did they think of it as a possibility for him. Therefore, he resorted to be a handy man to contribute financially at home. As much as this learner received encouragement from his parents and managed to complete his matric, however due to his parents' socio-economic disadvantage he couldn't go further in his studies due to financial

constraints. Stofile et al (2011) explains that in terms of the involvement of parents in schools, is at times hindered by poverty, because most of the parents work long hours and do not have room to be active in the learner's school. Therefore, parental involvement in rural schools has a different dynamic, because in most cases the parents have a low education, there are usually ill informed about the opportunities that are available for their children. Therefore, furthering one's education may seem more like a luxury than a necessity for their children, thus they resort to encourage them to take up work after they matriculate or even prior to that in some cases depending on the financial need of the family. Literature that was presented in chapter 2 show that parental involvement is an essential factor in ensuring that the learners' academic achievements.

4.3.5 The impact of poverty

Chapter 2 of this study revealed, how poverty can have an impact on the learner's academic performance. The results attained from the interviews reveal that poverty is a critical problem, as most if the educators identified that poverty is a major cause for underperforming learners. This links with the former learners' who mentioned that they had to focus on making money to sustain a living, therefore education came second. Stofile et al (2011), argues that poverty prevented learners and parents (or guardians) from full participation of the education provided by the schools. In addition, poverty had the effects to disempower both learners and parents as partners in education, as well as constraining the quality of teaching. The literature in this study touched on the definition of poverty, Van der Berg (2008) describes two types of poverty that have adverse effects on education. These are absolute and relative poverty. Absolute poverty, according to this author, implies absence of financial resources required to maintain a certain standard of living. Van der Berg (2008) asserts that absolute poverty results in poor home circumstances for learning (for example, no books, lighting, or places to do homework), and it affects children's physical wellbeing and ability to learn, these effects are associated with low parental education, and limits resources for investing in education. Poverty results in an absence of the freedom to participate in society.

Children from low Socio-economic status (SES) families do not perform as well as they potentially could at school compared to children from high SES families, (Considine and Zappala: 2002). Educator 1 highlighted the issue of poverty and HIV/AIDs, as they have a lot of learners who are orphans, and learners who come from poor families, as well as learners who are infected with HIV/AIDs. He mentioned that it is a challenge because those learners

tend to require extra motivation and support, the teachers usually go an extra mile by trying to provide for the learner's personal needs and going to social workers to ask for assistance, in the effort of getting those learners to achieve academic excellence, which in turn affects the teaching and learning process. Educator 3 said that some learners struggle to concentrate in school because of their family issues such as poverty, and also there are many cases of child headed households.

4.3.6 The impact of HIV/AIDs on academic performance

The HIV/AIDs epidemic is not one of the factors that was emphasised on. Due to the fact that there is a widespread awareness of the disease, its impact has decreased. However, to a certain extent HIV/AID's is still a dangerous epidemic. Educator 1 mentioned that HIV/AID's affects the academic performance of learners. He made an example of one of his learners who had a hard time in school, and he as the teacher observed that the learner had deeper issues therefore they resorted to involve social workers to solve the issue. Therefore it is evident that HIV/AID's awareness in schools should be an ongoing activity. Guo et al (2012) asserts that there educational disadvantages among children affected by AIDS, including school enrolment and attendance, school behaviour and performance, school completion, and educational attainment. However Guo (2012) study reveals that HIV/AIDs impact on the learner is reliant on other factors such as family support, family structure and the families 'economic background'. Implying that HIV/AID's has a negative impact mostly on learners who come from poor families, those who do not receive any support or come from child headed households. Educator 5 mentioned that in their school they do at times deal with learners who are from child headed households, which parents may have been victims of HIV/AIDs, Therefore, parental HIV/AIDs also has an impact on the learner.

Chapter Summary

This study reveals the socio-economic issues have a strong influence on the academic success of a learner. However, schools should a safe space for every learner to break away from their poor socioeconomic status and learn, education is there to open a door of new opportunities and possibilities for the learner. However, it seems that the situation is dire because it appears that even the schools in rural schools are heavily influenced by the socioeconomic issues plaguing the area which the school is located. Ga-Sekgopo Village is a disadvantaged area there is poor service delivery of basic services, the area also struggles with accessing clean water and still use gravel roads. The schools there evidently have a shortage of basic infrastructure; textbooks and classrooms. This is an illustration of how the socioeconomic

issues that are dominant in an area also affect the schools. The schools being funded and run by the government should not reflect the struggles that the communities have however, they should become a solution for the community.

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This study analysed how socioeconomic issues affect the academic performance of learners in rural schools, focusing on the Ga-Sekgopo area. Therefore, this chapter will present a summary and conclusion of this study. In addition it will present the recommendations for the problems that were presented in the previous chapter.

Conclusion

In chapter two of this study, the literature revealed that there are a number of factors that influence the academic performance of a learner. In addition the resolve was that external factors have a major influence on the performance of the learner. Meaning that there are external factors can affect the cognitive ability of the learner, or they can destruct a learner from dedicating themselves to school or just rob the learner of the opportunity to learn and excel. In the context of rural schools socioeconomic issues are the prevalent external factors that affect the learner's academic performance.

There are a range of socioeconomic issues, however the ones that were highlighted in the literature include: Poverty, unemployed parents, illiterate parents, poor access to basic resources and information and etc. The argument is that learners who come from low socioeconomic status background are most likely to underperform in school, because of the effect of low socioeconomic status. Other than the families, schools that are located in rural areas appear to be disadvantaged, as they struggle with service delivery from the government, and lack access to basic resources and education material that the learners need. Therefore, remoteness of rural areas, and the low socioeconomic status of most of the households in these areas, has a detrimental impact on the learner's academic performance.

Data was collected through interviews for this study, the Educators, School Governing Body and the Former learners of the High Schools in Ga-Sekgopo Village were interviewed. The findings from the interviews, confirm the arguments that were raised in chapter two about the causes of underperformance in rural areas. The interviews also shed a light on how the high schools in Ga-Sekgopo Village face major issues of inadequate infrastructure, poor quality educators, inadequate participation from parents and Poverty. Moreover it was highlighted that socioeconomic issues have a dominant influence in the academic performance of a

learners, as well as the location of the school, for example a school in a rural area will get affected by the challenges that the area faces. As the schools in Ga-Sekgopo have a major shortage of basic resources, it means they have trouble with fulfilling their role meaning that the schools are not running efficiently, which automatically affects the learners.

Therefore, even after 25 years of South Africa being a democratic state, and the government formulating numerous policies to address the imbalances in the education system. Most of the basic issues are still very evident, and the situation is still partially the same in rural schools. Which raises a question of whether these numerous policies are being strategically implemented in rural areas.

The literature in this study shows that the government and the communities are aware of the critical issues that are affecting rural schools and limiting the success rate of the learners. Either way the problem persists as there are headlines every week about issues in rural schools which are just an illustration of the inefficiency in rural schools. For instance, the prevalent cases of school violence, are an implication of a gap in policy.

The issue of poor infrastructure and poor-quality educators is also definitely a fault in policy formulation, as the provincial Department of Education is tasked with governing the schools and distributing funds and resources. However, the dire situation in rural schools reflects that there is poor policy formulation. Therefore, there needs to be a monitoring and evaluation system in place in rural schools. To ensure that the schools run efficiently.

Therefore, if rural schools are run efficiently, that may minimize the impact of the low socioeconomic issues in the learner's academic performance. This means that rural schools need to be support structures, and they should be tailor made to cater for learners from poor backgrounds and provide motivation for learning as well as support for the learners which they may not be receiving from home. This could be done by deploying social workers in each school to assist learners to be able to assist learners to cope with the socioeconomic issues that they face.

5.2 Recommendations

Rural schools should not reflect the circumstances of the rural area in which they are situated. Learners from rural areas face enough challenges at home, therefore the school needs to be a place that provides hope for these learners, instead of reflecting poverty and inefficiency.

Educators

The first critical issue that needs to be attended to is that of the educators in rural schools. The South African government prioritizes education and a large sum of the nation's budget is designated to education. However, the Department of Education needs to ensure that the money is spent strategically. For example, the Educators workshops need to be prioritized, the content of these workshops should also be restructured, to be more rural schools related, and to provide supporting structures for the educators.

In regards to the graduates who do not prefer to work in rural schools. Having a rotation structure could be helpful in this case, having the educators rotate schools for different terms could be an option. Also accepting volunteers from Non-profit organizations, and international organisations to come and assist in tutoring the learners in rural schools, teaching them sports, motivating them and assisting them to choose careers. That could advance the standard of rural schools and lift of the dependency to the government and the educators.

Learners

Several issues were revealed when coming to learners in rural areas from both, the literature and the interviews. It appears that some learners are very violent towards each other and towards the educators. Another issue was learners who underperform, tend to be absent and do no focus in class, due to family issues/ HIV/AIDs. These issues become a burden to educators and end up taking their time to teach the learners. In this regard, it would be useful to have social workers deployed at each rural school to assist the learners to deal with the problems that they face. In that way removing a weight from the educators and also freeing the learner to be able to fully participate in school. Social workers could also assist the violent learners, because there could be underlying matters that cause learners to be violent, therefore social workers as well as law enforcement could be a viable solution to this issue.

Parents

The issue that was raised the most about parents in rural areas, was that they are not involved in their children's schools, which could be because of work, or disinterest. A viable solution would be for the government to ensure that adult's schools are running in rural areas. For the parents this could open doors for them, as some of them do not have a basic education, it could also assist them in valuing education.

Government

Policy makers have a huge role to play in formulating policies for rural schools. The government also needs to ensure that there are funds that are allocated to resources of rural schools, such as computers, textbooks, study guides, sports fields and the likes. Also the government needs to partner with Non-government organisations (NGO's), Non Profit organisations (NPO's) and Community based organisations (CMO's) to ensure that rural schools are well supported. Lastly it is critical for the government to have a monitoring and evaluation framework, to ensure the efficient running of rural schools. Every policy implementation needs to be evaluated, and also the use of the funds by every provincial Department of education needs to be audited. To ensure that the funds are not being mismanaged.

A viable model for improving the efficiency of rural schools and minimizing the impact of socioeconomic issues in the learner's education. Would involve the factors depicted on the cycle below.

Figure 4.4 Cycle of improving the academic performance of learners in rural schools.



Future research

This study had a number of limitations. Future research could look into the use of technology in rural schools, as the fourth industrial revolution is dawning in South Africa. Most rural schools still do not have access to computers or tablets, to both the learners and the educators, what measures is that government putting in place to prepare rural school learners and educators for the fourth industrial revolution. Another matter that needs to be looked at, is weather the curriculum of South Africa is relevant in preparing learners to take part in the global economy.

Chapter Summary

The argument is that if the rural schools become strong structures that bring about change and learning and hope in rural areas, the impact of the family's socioeconomic status will be minimal, as the learner will be receiving all the support that they need from the school. This study revealed that rural schools have a critical issue with quality educators. It is evident that there is a struggle with retaining good educators in rural schools, as young graduates prefer working in urban areas where the living conditions are more convenient. Perhaps the government could partner with NGOs or initiate programs that bring international educators to teach at rural schools.

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Appendix 1

Consent form



Dear Participant

I am master's Student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus. And I am undertaking a research project titled: **Analysing the equity of the South African education system in rural schools: A case study of Ga-Sekgopo High Schools.** And I am interested to know your views regarding the topic.

Please note that:

- The information that you provide will be used for scholarly research only.
- Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have a choice to participate, not to participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your views in this interview will be presented anonymously. Neither your name nor identity will be disclosed in any form in the study.
- The interview will take a maximum of 10 minutes.
- The record as well as other items associated with the interview will be held in a password-protected file accessible only to us and the lecturer. After a period of 5 years, in line with the rules of the university, it will be disposed by shredding and burning.
- If you agree to participate, please sign the declaration attached to this statement (a separate sheet will be provided for signatures)

Please contact 213514234@stu.ukzn.ac.za or my supervisor is Dr. Siyabonga Dlamini who is located at the School of Social Sciences, Howard College Campus, and Durban of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Contact details: email dlaminis15@ukzn.ac.za, for further information

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

Mapula Baloyi

213514234

Signature

.....

Date

.....

Appendix 2

DECLARATION

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

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....

.....

Appendix 3

Research instruments

Interview questions

To teachers

1. What are some of the main challenges that the school is facing
2. Do you think those challenges are faced only by schools situated in rural areas
3. What are some of the main denominators of underperforming learners?
4. Do you have struggles with service delivery, if yes do think that affects the overall performance of a school
5. Do you think that a school being located in a rural area has an impact on the overall performance of the learner?
6. Do you think education policies have an impact on the learner's performance?
7. What measures do you take to improve the learner's performance?
8. What gaps do you think education policies have in relation to rural public schools?
9. How is the grade repetition rate in your school between grades 8-10?
10. How is the dropout rate between grades 8-10?
11. What is the percentage of learners who make it to grade 12?

To the School governing body

1. What are some of the main challenges that the school is facing
2. Which challenges do you think are only dominant in rural schools?
3. What role does the family structure play in affecting a learner's performance?
4. What measures do you take to improve the learner's performance?
5. Do you think that a school being located in a rural area has an impact on the overall performance of the learner?

To Former learners

1. According to your experience could you point out some of the main challenges that rural schools face.
2. To what extent did your family or social structures, influence your interest and input into your school work?
3. Do you think that the above had an impact on your academic performance?

4. Do you think attending a rural public school affected your academic performance?
5. What are some of the efforts do you think your family, and educators made to ensure that you achieve good academic performance, and what do you think they should've done (which they did not do) to assist you in achieving good academic performance.

Appendix 4

Ethical clearance

TM



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04 February 2019

Ms Mapula E Baloyi 213514234
School of Social Sciences
Howard College Campus

Dear Ms Baloyi

Protocol reference number: HSS/2231/018M

Project Title: An analysis of how socioeconomic factors affect the performance of learners in rural schools:
A case study of Ga-Sekgopo High Schools Grade 8 — 10 Learners.

Full Approval — Expedited Application

In response to your application received 29 November 2018, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted FULL APPROVAL.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shamila', followed by a dotted line.

Dr Shamila Naidoo

cc Supervisor: Dr Siyabongna Dlamini cc. Academic
Leader Research: Prof Maheshvari Naidu cc. School
Administrator: Ms Nonhlanhla Radebe

