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**RESEARCH
IN BASIC
EDUCATION**
IN SOUTH AFRICA

CHAPTER 3

The impact of poverty on basic education in South Africa: A systematic review of literature

Vitallis Chikoko and Pinkie Mthembu
University of KwaZulu-Natal

Abstract

In this chapter, we examine how poverty has impacted upon basic education in post-apartheid South Africa. Our position is that without rooting out poverty, South Africa's very noble transformation agenda for society in general and education in particular, may not come to fruition. After all, education is the major instrument of such transformation. Education has great potential to drastically reduce or even eradicate poverty, but poverty can drastically reduce one's success in education. The knowledge gap we saw was that while post-apartheid South Africa has made tremendous strides in fighting poverty in education, the impact thereof is not sufficiently evident. Through a three-stage systematic literature review process, we settled for and discussed seven themes: poverty and reading achievement, poverty and school dropout, poverty and returns to schooling, poverty and the post-apartheid education policy landscape, poverty as a categoriser of schools, poverty and the implementation of inclusive education, and lastly, poverty as a trigger for self-emancipation. We conclude that poverty remains a great enemy to South Africa's educational aspirations. While reading literacy is the backbone of all learning, sadly, due to poverty, many learners are unable to achieve such foundation. Some of the country's otherwise well-meaning landmark education policies are difficult to implement fully in poor contexts. Thus, poverty has rendered the same previously disadvantaged communities to be at risk. In the latter communities, education is inevitably of low quality. Low-quality education has a negative ripple effect on the employability of students therefrom. We recommend that the struggle should be two-pronged: fighting poverty on one hand, and crafting and implementing ways to improve the quality of education on the other. In that struggle, schools and communities need to drastically shift from deficit to asset-based thinking and doing.

Introduction

South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 identifies poverty as one of the country's greatest enemies which must be fought and defeated. According to its Foreword, the NDP is a plan for the country to eliminate poverty and inequality by 2030. Goal 1 of the United Nations' (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development is to eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere by 2030. Jim Yong Kim (2015), President of the World Bank Group, had the following to say about poverty:

To end poverty, boost shared prosperity, and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we must use development financing and technical expertise to effect radical change. We must work together to ensure that all children have access to quality education and learning opportunities throughout their lives regardless of where they are born, their gender, or their family's income (Education 2030, Incheon Declaration, p. 12).

Tarabini (2010) rightly argues that reducing poverty remains a matter of concern in the world because the number of poor people continues to rise. Without disrupting poverty, it is not possible to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all', or any other SDG for that matter. There is therefore a strong relationship between education and poverty.

In this chapter, we seek to address this question: How has poverty impacted upon basic education in post-apartheid South Africa? The knowledge gap we see is that while post-apartheid South Africa has made tremendous strides in fighting against poverty in education, there seems to be not enough evidence regarding the impact thereof. As Salisbury (2016, p. 43) rightly puts it, '...South Africa continues to have one of the most unequal distributions of income and wealth in the world'. We thus couch the chapter against the backdrop that in all its efforts to transform society the post-apartheid South African government has had and continues to fight poverty in its various forms without which fight there may be no meaningful and sustainable transformation to talk about. Because education is a major instrument for transforming any society, it is befitting that we scrutinise how poverty is impacting upon education. As we attempt to address the said question, we shall also seek to draw implications for educational policy.

We commence the chapter through three preliminary issues. First, we attempt to explain the concept of poverty in the context of the chapter. Second, we briefly explore the interface between education and poverty. Third, we highlight the systematic review methods we adopted and justifications thereof. From there we cast the literature review evidence through seven themes namely: poverty and reading achievement, poverty and school dropout, poverty and returns to schooling, poverty and the post-apartheid education policy landscape, poverty as a categoriser of schools, poverty and the implementation of inclusive education, and lastly, poverty as a trigger for self-emancipation. In response to the research evidence from the seven themes, we then discuss briefly what we learn therefrom regarding the impact of poverty on education after which we close the chapter with concluding remarks.

We wish to identify one limitation of the chapter. It was our plan to discuss every theme drawing from more than one piece of research evidence. However, we did not always find such evidence in large quantities. In cases where we use single studies, this was after we were satisfied that such work was topical enough to represent the theme in question.

Methods

Search strategy and sources of information

For this systematic literature review we adopted Khan, Kunz, Kleignen and Antes' (2003) five steps. These steps include framing the review question(s), identifying relevant work, assessing the quality of studies, summarising the evidence and interpreting the findings. We cast our net as wide as possible. This enabled us to read a wide variety of literature written in English published between 2009 and 2019 in Google Scholar, Ebscohost, Sabinet, JSTOR and ERIC databases. Key search phrases included 'poverty and education', 'impact of poverty in education', 'effects of poverty in South African schools', 'effects of poverty in learning', 'poverty and academic performance for children in South Africa', 'poverty in deprived communities in South Africa', 'vulnerable children impact on education', 'inequality in education', and 'socio-economic status and education'. The searches yielded works including reports, policy analyses, journal articles, working papers, book chapters, research reviews, books, unpublished theses, position papers, and national and international conference presentations. Not only did we realise that it would not be possible to harness all such works, we also became convinced that among these many types of literature, peer-reviewed journal articles would constitute some of the strongest and most reliable sources of evidence. Thus, the chapter is based on evidence from peer-reviewed journal articles. We resolved to settle for a ten-year period. We felt that most works older than 2009 were not likely to adequately represent the current state of affairs, particularly given the many interventions the Government of South Africa and other agencies have implemented to transform education.

We originally collected 1 090 articles, and subsequently added to this from references of some of the articles we read, giving a total of 1 127.

Study selection process

We followed a two-stage process. We firstly read abstracts and summaries on the basis of which we rejected 803 articles using the following exclusion criteria: (i) not focusing on poverty and inequality (121); (ii) not education focused (192); (iii) not focusing on South African schooling (223); (iv); only had abstract (113); and (v) published prior to 2009 (154).

In the second stage, we evaluated eligibility of the remaining 324 articles. We individually conducted readings and applied the following criteria for inclusion: i) a paper had to be about post-apartheid basic education (primary and secondary schooling) in South Africa, ii) a paper should have been about poverty or inequality in education or related issues, and iii) a paper had to have been published within the period 2009–2019. After a series of iterative discussions between the two of us, we decided to settle for 21 articles on two criteria: they were the most relevant; and the quantity was manageable.

Data analysis

In line with our research question, we independently used an inductive content analysis approach to analyse the impact of poverty on basic education in South Africa. We then generated data categories through developing common understanding between the two of us. Finally, we organised the data into themes on which basis we wrote the chapter.

Understanding the term ‘poverty’

Quoting Barrientos (2010), Mokomane (2011) reports that in developed countries, social participation and inclusion policies view poverty as the inability of certain people to minimally take part in their communities’ social life. In developing countries the ‘resourcist’ perspective dominates, where poverty is defined as an individual’s or family’s inability to command resources to sufficiently satisfy basic needs. Looking at these two, Mokomane rightly argues that all in all poverty is an inability by an individual, household, family or entire community to sustain a minimum and socially acceptable standard of living. Currently, extreme poverty is measured as people living on less than US\$1.25 a day (The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Goal 1, item 1.1).

While income and material deprivation go a long way in defining poverty, scholars generally agree that the concept is more nuanced than that – it is multidimensional. In this connection, the UN, as quoted by Mokomane (2011, p. 3), offers the following definition:

A denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one’s food or a job to earn one’s living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living in marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation.

Chapter 3

We see therefore a number of manifestations over and above lack of income and productive resources, including but still not limited to, ill health, limited or lack of access to education and other basics, inadequate housing or even homelessness, and lack of participation in social and civic decisions.

Drawing from Noble et al. (2007) and Townsend (1987), Maringe and Moletsane (2015) identify what they found to be the most widely used notions of poverty, which are quite consistent with the notions expressed in the preceding paragraphs. One is income poverty, a situation of low or no income. While South Africa is quite a wealthy country compared to other countries in its 'league' of development, a large proportion of its population suffers severe income poverty. This explains why there is currently debate about the possibility of introducing a minimum wage of R3 500 per month (Chikoko, 2018). The fact that about 14 million South Africans (about a quarter of the total population) rely on government social grants for their upkeep is typical evidence of income poverty. With a Gini co-efficient ranging from 0.660 to 0.696 (Bhorat, Online), South Africa is one of the most consistently unequal countries in the world. Those in the population positioned at the wrong end of the continuum suffer excruciating income poverty.

Material poverty is another. This includes such infrastructure as buildings, transport, water, power supplies, and roads. In schools this may include classrooms, staffrooms, libraries, laboratories and other specialist rooms, and toilets with running water (Maringe & Moletsane, 2015). In South Africa's township settings (high population density settlements in urban settings) for example, most schools therein suffer material poverty because of extremely large enrolments. Classrooms overflow, teacher-learner ratios are big, making teaching and learning largely ineffective. In those and other school contexts such as rural settings, specialised buildings may either be in short supply or ill-equipped. Regarding transport, in the latter contexts, while some schools along main roads may enjoy government-sponsored learner transport and are therefore very accessible, others off the main roads do not have such facility, and therefore suffer such material poverty. In some such contexts, when it rains heavily, teachers reportedly leave their cars some distance away from their schools and walk to work. In some South African schools, material poverty is suffered as a result of vandalism and other forms of unruly behaviour that sees property such as doors, windows, water pipes and other infrastructure either broken or stolen.

Capability poverty is a third type. This refers to inability to accomplish a given task due to lack of requisite knowledge and skills. For example, schools require qualified and competent teachers, among other things, to be able to achieve successful teaching and learning. The apartheid system left a legacy of poor education among black South Africans especially. It is therefore not surprising that the teaching competence of some teachers today is questionable. This is arguably

a major factor contributing to the poor performance of the majority of public schools in the National School Certificate examinations year after year. Not only are teachers' capabilities questionable in some cases, school managers' leadership and management capabilities to run their institutions are equally suspect. Thus, we argue that many a school in South Africa suffers capability poverty.

Health poverty is yet another. This relates to a high prevalence of diseases in a given context. It may also entail the prevalence of poor infrastructure where people therein have to travel long distances to health facilities. South Africa has a high prevalence of HIV and AIDS. In such context, those suffering other forms of poverty are likely to be most affected by HIV/AIDS. The most vulnerable are usually people living in remote areas and those in high population density settlements. In South Africa, like in other countries, particularly in the developing world, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has devastated many families, robbing them of parents and breadwinners, resulting in child-headed families and in some cases homelessness.

Nutritional poverty is the last in this series. This is not only to do with a shortage of basic food, it also entails situations of low levels of knowledge about basic nutrition on the part of families and communities. After recognising the prevalence of nutritional poverty among the vulnerable population in the country, South Africa has rolled out a feeding scheme in all needy schools. However, this scheme can only go some distance in addressing the nutritional challenge but cannot totally end such poverty.

Highlights of the education–poverty interface

Emphasising the importance of investing in education as a strategy towards reducing poverty, Tarabini (2010, p. 204) had the following to say:

International bodies, northern and southern governments and even non-governmental organisations agree on emphasising the virtues of educational investment as a key strategy in the fight against poverty and achieving development.

Drawing from Green (2007), Tarabini further reports that globalisation has involved both winners and losers in terms of how different regions of the world have fared in the global market. The net effect has been the widening of the gap between the richest and poorest nations. Economic growth alone has proved to be insufficient as the dominant solution for achieving development and ending poverty and inequality. Education has attained international legitimacy as a workable strategy in the fight against poverty. This knowledge-based world economy places education at the centre of both national development and competitiveness (Tarabini, 2010).

Similarly, emphasising the crucial role of education in development, the South African National Development Plan 2030 (p. 296) has the following to say:

South Africa has set itself the goals of eradicating poverty, reducing inequality, growing the economy by an average of 5.4 percent and cutting the unemployment rate to 6 percent by 2030. Education, training and innovation are critical to the attainment of these goals.

According to UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report (2017, p. 9), 'Many studies have shown a strong association between poverty and education regarding both school attendance and learning outcomes'. This report indicates that the rates of out-of-school primary and secondary school learners are highest in poor countries. The report shows that the primary out-of-school rate is 19% in low-income countries and 3% in high-income countries. In lower secondary it is 38% and 2% respectively. In upper secondary school it is 62% and 7% respectively.

In the preceding paragraphs we have attempted to show evidence that there seems to be global agreement that education is pivotal towards stimulating development and reducing poverty. Tarabini (2010, p. 210) puts it well that there '... is no doubt that poor people would be in a worse position if they had no access to education'. However, this same author hints that there are limits to education as a priority strategy in fighting poverty. In the author's words:

If more and better education is not parallel to more and better jobs, if poor people have no options to take advantage of the educational investment, if only access to school for poor pupils is guaranteed, without substantially altering the school and social conditions under which the schooling process takes place, there is a risk of obtaining a better-educated population but that is still as poor as before. A population highly disappointed by the impossibility to fulfil the 'educational promise' (p. 210).

In the section on poverty and returns to schooling, we pursue this matter in greater depth. But to sum up this section on the link between poverty and education, we argue that education is a commodity that must be purchased. Even where a nation has declared free education, the nation in question must purchase education on behalf of its people, the beneficiaries. Where this happens, especially in developing countries, due to other demands competing for resources, governments can only go some way and would expect parents, communities and other stakeholders to play some role towards purchasing education. Inside schools and classrooms, learners from poor families are often vulnerable because they are not likely to have all the learning materials required. Such vulnerability is likely to negatively impact on their attention levels. Such learners' school attendance may be irregular. Such irregularity is likely to lead to school dropout. This explains why as UNESCO's Global Monitoring Report above shows, the rates of out-of-school

primary and secondary school learners are highest in poorer countries. Therefore the poorer a community is, the weaker the quality of education it is likely to be able to provide to its people. Turning to the other side of this debate, through developing in the learner, knowledge, skills and positive attitudes, thus increasing chances of one finding employment and therefore sustaining one's own and one's family's livelihoods, education is an instrument for fighting poverty. Therefore, education has great potential to drastically reduce or even eradicate poverty, but poverty can drastically reduce one's success in education. What does the literature say about whether or not basic education is reducing poverty in South Africa? How has education been impacted upon by poverty? These two questions constitute the knowledge gap this chapter seeks to contribute some insights towards.

The impact of poverty on reading literacy achievement

Drawing on evidence from preProgress in International Reading Literacy Study (prePIRLS) 2011, Van Staden and Bosker (2014) studied factors that affect South African reading literacy achievement among Grade 4 learners. They used selected items from the prePIRLS 2011 learner, parent and teacher questionnaires in a two-level model '... to determine the effect of learner aptitude, opportunity to learn and quality of instructional events on reading literacy achievement' (p. 1). These authors rightly argue that reading literacy is one of the most crucial abilities learners should acquire as they progress through their early school years. They further position reading literacy as a foundation for learning across all subjects. Such literacy is not only at the centre of learning in school contexts, it is also required for one to participate more meaningfully and extensively in one's community and society (Van Staden & Bosker, 2014). The latter authors say reading literacy refers to the ability to understand and use appropriate written language forms, to construct meaning from a variety of texts, and to read to learn as well as to read for enjoyment. Reading literacy is particularly important to South African education as the country seeks to transform its national education system from the traditional rote learning approach towards a constructivist school of thought and practice where learning is to be an active process of sense making.

In their own words, Van Staden and Bosker (2014, p. 1) have the following to say regarding the results of this study, among others:

The results point to the statistical significance of engaged reading and cultivating motivation for reading among learners from an early age, specifically through parental involvement in introducing early literacy activities as foundation of reading literacy by school-going age.

These authors report that the results of their study are consistent with those of other previous studies. For example, they cite Geske and Ozola (2008b) who established that higher reading literacy is likely to occur in cases where children come from families where reading is valued. They further cite Senechal and

Young (2008) who found parental involvement to be crucial in children's literacy development, with more dividends accruing when parents tutored their children. They also cite Becker and Luthar (2002) who found

...evidence of the achievement gap that still pervade[s] patterns of achievement among disadvantaged learners and others, despite concentrated efforts to improve inferior academic outcomes in countries across the globe (p. 7).

Currently, it is not contestable that the majority of South African public schools are located in poor communities largely in rural and township contexts. The South African government's landmark decision to quintile schools according to levels of poverty in their surrounding communities, and to fund schools accordingly, is testimony to the gravity of poverty among many South Africans, particularly amongst the formerly oppressed black majority. Poor schools constitute the majority in the country. The majority of the latter schools is still under-performing in terms of learner performance in the National Senior Certificate examinations as well as in learner retention throughout the 12 years of formal schooling. Given the crucial role of learners' reading literacy ability in their academic achievement levels, given the poverty among the majority of parents in South Africa, and given the crucial role parents play towards their children's reading literacy achievement levels, it is not surprising that the majority of South African public schools underperform. Thus, we argue that parental poverty has had and continues to impact negatively on the academic performance of the majority of learners in South Africa.

How poverty is impacting on school dropout

In South Africa, Grades 1-9 comprise a band of compulsory schooling. Section 3(1) of the South African Schools Act of 1996 stipulates that all children must attend school from the first day of the academic year in which a learner reaches seven years until the last day in which one reaches fifteen years or the ninth grade whichever comes first. Within the latter band, South Africa has a very high rate (over 95%) of learner participation (Hartnack, 2017). 'Most school dropout in South Africa occurs in grades 10 and 11, resulting in 50% of learners in any one cohort dropping out before reaching grade 12' (Hartnack, 2017, p. 1 quoting Spaul, 2015). Interestingly, research evidence shows that poorer provinces such as Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the Free State record a higher proportion of Grade 1-9 learners in school than wealthier ones such as Gauteng, Northern Cape and Western Cape. The tendency is that more learners drop out in cities than in rural contexts with the exception of rural farming areas of the Western Cape where the opposite is true (Fleisch et al., 2009). One possible explanation for this apparent contradiction is that schools in very poor communities provide food to learners. If this explanation is anything to go by, we can argue that something bad has reared something good. Poverty reared a response by government to provide food

which, in turn, has apparently kept learners in school at least up to the end of the compulsory band. However, if learners stay in school more for the sake of food than learning, such children are not likely to adequately benefit from the education system. Communities in question are seemingly trapped in continued dependence on government handouts.

Due to social, spatial and economic policies of apartheid which continue to be exclusionary and unjust, thus causing severe inequality (Moses et al., 2017 in Hatnack, 2017), levels of learner dropout markedly differ by race. The results of the 2011 General Household Survey show that only 44% of Black and Coloured youth between ages 23-24 had attained a Senior School Certificate compared to 83% of Indian and 88% of White youth (Spaull, 2015). How learners experience poverty in school and in their daily lives will impact upon their decision to drop out or stay in school. Learners who feel unequal to their counterparts are likely to absent themselves more frequently and eventually drop out. Spaull (2015) reports that teenage pregnancy among many black South Africans living in poverty serves as a strong risk factor for dropping out of school. Branson, Hofmeyr and Lam (2014), also report that a number of researchers (Gustafsson, 2011; Grant & Hallman, 2006; and Strassburg et al., 2010), indicate that pregnancy is a common reason female students give for dropping out. While Government policy says such learners must not be excluded, other attendant problems, such as the phenomenon being a stigma among one's peers, may still cause dropout.

Hartnack (2017), drawing from De Witte et al. (2013) reports that repeating a Grade or Grades is one of the most, if not the strongest predictor of school dropout. Being older than one's classmates comes with stigma. Older girls are more prone to pregnancy. Older boys and girls, particularly those from poor families, are likely to face the need to work. Other factors such as learning disabilities aside, learners from poor families are more likely to repeat Grades than those from affluent ones. As Spaull (2015, p. 37) rightly reports, over 75% of South African learners are from low socio-economic status families. They attend poorly performing schools that offer them poor-quality education. Because these learners attend struggling schools, many of them become struggling learners. Struggling learners in equally struggling schools are at higher risk of dropping out than those in better performing schools (Branson et al., 2013, in Hartnack, 2017).

Schools in poor communities are often under-resourced (De Witte et al., 2013). This includes such challenges as inadequate desks and chairs, shortage of text books, limited or no libraries and other resources, shortage of specialist teachers or even teachers in general, and so on. Such schools often endure large class sizes. They are also likely to have weak leadership. Overall, such schools' social and economic capitals are low. All these challenges impact negatively on teaching. The net effect is likely to be what De Witte et al. (2013) call 'a troubled learner'. Such learner is more likely to drop out of school than stay.

Chapter 3

Drawing from Gustafsson (2011), Hartnack (2017) rightly argues that the South African curriculum's focus on maths and science skills at the expense of other subjects makes school difficult for those learners whose aptitudes are aligned elsewhere. While vocational subjects are part of the national 'menu', due to shortage of teachers, they may not always be readily available in the schools that need these subjects most. This may cause learners to lose faith in the school system the result of which may be dropping out of the system.

Lambani (2011) investigated the cause of teenage pregnancy in Thulamela Municipality in the Limpopo province of South Africa. She randomly selected and interviewed ten young mothers of an average age of 18 years all of whom had children on their backs, having come to a shopping complex to receive the child support grant (CSG). All these young mothers were reportedly school dropouts. On why they had fallen pregnant at an early age, Lambani reports that the participants said it was largely due to pressure from friends who enticed them with the prospect of receiving the CSG. The friends impressed upon them that through the CSG they enjoyed financial freedom to buy clothes and groceries of their choice, as opposed to depending upon their parents.

The down-stream effects of falling pregnant at such an early age obviously outweigh the benefits of accessing a child support grant. However, what we learn here is that in a context of poverty, such logic may not prevail. In this case, poverty conquered these young women's minds to the extent of abandoning the schooling project and all its attendant prospects. We know it is government policy that girls are free to return to school after giving birth, but it seems this is a matter easier said than done. Ranchhod et al. (2011) found that childbearing had a direct effect on the mother's decision to drop out.

Branson et al. (2014) found that not keeping pace at school is a major determinant of who drops out. They also found that in South Africa, falling behind at school was strongly related to one's socio-economic status as well as school quality. They conclude that better quality schools can partially cushion struggling learners from dropping out, thus suggesting that improving school quality could play a role in reducing dropout.

The evidence suggests that learners in poverty-stricken school contexts are more likely to fall behind in school than those in better-resourced environments. Thus they are more likely to drop out than those not falling behind. Worse still, the former schools are ill-equipped to help their learners move out of the falling behind bracket. Therefore poverty is implicated in learner dropout in a big way.

Inglis and Lewis (2013) studied adolescents at risk of dropping out in a high-risk community secondary school in Western Cape Province. Through a qualitative, case study research approach, they sought to understand the subjective experiences of adolescent learners in that regard. They define 'at risk' as situations where certain dynamics may cause learners to drop out of school. In the context they studied,

such dynamics included dysfunctional families, poor schools, substance abuse and negative social interactions. Findings reveal that the adolescents experienced several barriers to learning embedded within interconnected contexts, which placed them at high risk of dropping out of school. These included single-parent families, conflict in families, little or no parental support, substance abuse and emotional challenges. These barriers encapsulate all the types of poverty we identified earlier in this chapter. To illustrate, we can associate conflict with capability poverty. Drug abuse relates to health poverty. All the barriers boil down to material, income and capability poverty.

Therefore we can safely argue that poverty puts communities, schools and learners at risk. Learners at risk are likely to drop out of school. Communities and schools at risk are likely to be suffering capability poverty to be able to turn around the dire situations in which they find themselves.

Poverty and returns to schooling in post-apartheid South Africa

During the apartheid era in South Africa, there existed a yawning economic gap between whites and the rest of the population. In the initial post-apartheid years, there was hope that with increased levels of education among all population groups of the country, there would be fairer labour market practices and greater labour mobility, which would see a significant reduction in the large gaps in earnings between white South Africans and other racial groups.

In a study on education and inequality in South Africa, Salisbury (2016) utilised a newer data set than those used in previous studies from the 1990s, to calculate both the social and private returns to schooling. Specifically, Salisbury examined whether the returns for African and Coloured nationals have improved since the initial 1990s post-apartheid era. Salisbury reports that during the latter era, returns for Africans and Coloureds were higher than in previous decades. However, the overall picture still favoured whites. To illustrate, Salisbury (2016) reports that as of 2008, remuneration outcomes for Africans and Coloureds continued to lag behind those of white South Africans by more than 20 percent. Salisbury's 2016 study is important in that although the gap in economic outcomes between races as reported above is no longer an institutionalised feature of the South African society, but despite massive increases in the past two decades, in average educational attainment by the formerly oppressed population groups of the country, racial differences persist.

Out of the study, Salisbury concluded that on average, white South Africans earn 369 and 355 percent more than Africans and Coloureds respectively. When this is translated into returns per additional year of schooling, whites earn 23 percent more compared to 16 and 19 percent for Africans and Coloureds respectively. Salisbury argues that if this discrepancy persists, the macro inequality situation in South Africa's economy will get worse over time. This author reports that one of

the major barriers against progress towards equality is to do with the undervaluing of the productive characteristics of Africans and Coloureds compared to whites. As we indicated earlier, average education levels among African and Coloured groups continue to rise. However, Salisbury rightly argues that this achievement will not reduce economic disparities so long as those years are valued less than those for whites. Although there may still exist salient racial discrimination, Salisbury raises an important point that the situation may be a reflection of lower quality of education obtained by Africans and Coloureds during their school years particularly regarding the productive skills employers reward. Therefore, additional schooling on its own will not necessarily translate into additional earning power and, by implication, better life.

Low-quality education is a function of a number of forms of poverty including income, material and capability poverty. Poor parents and communities will suffer income poverty, preventing them from adequately providing for their children's educational needs. Schools in poor communities will suffer material poverty, thus negatively impacting on the effectiveness of their services. Teachers in resource-scarce schools may not be the best professionals available as they may suffer capability poverty, thus making their teaching ineffective. The net result is low-quality education.

Poverty and the new educational policy landscape in post-apartheid South Africa

We have also detected the impact of poverty on education through an analysis of post-apartheid educational policies and implications for attempting to implement them. In this regard, we draw from a journal article by Christie (2010). Christie reports that because apartheid educational policies were structured along unequal racial lines, the post-1994 government had to shoulder a two-pronged responsibility: to dismantle the old structure and design and implement a new system. The author cites specific landmark policies in this regard. The National Education Policy Act of 1996 set decision-making structures. The South African Schools Act of 1996 established governance frameworks. The Education Labour Relations Act of 1995 set the framework regarding teachers' conditions of service, codes of conduct as well as duties and responsibilities. These and other policies, Christie (2010, p. 702) argues, were designed to end apartheid and establish a new dispensation in education. They constitute '...an elegant cartography but one not necessarily suited to the complex and uneven terrain that required change'.

Christie (ibid) cites the area of school governance as one of those characterised by such complexity and unevenness. A school's School Governing Body (SGB), comprising of the principal (*ex officio*), elected parents, teachers, non-teaching staff, and in secondary schools, students, is given extensive powers. These include determining the school's admissions policies, deciding the school's language policy, determining school fees, determining choice of subject options, recommending

the appointment of staff, acquiring and controlling school assets and opening and maintaining a school account, among others. Christie (2010, p. 702) rightly argues that while this rich list of powers requires considerable amounts of time and expertise for a school to implement, ‘...it goes without saying that South African schools are vastly unequal in terms of the human and financial resources they are able to draw on in implementing policies at school level’. She further argues that while parent bodies of the well- functioning schools (former white and Indian schools) have leveraged their resources and social capital to their schools’ advantage, including being able to hire additional teachers and therefore offering broad and rich curricula, the majority of schools (former black) find themselves serving communities too poor to pay basic fees, have their teachers working in difficult conditions, and governing bodies therein are often unskilled. Therefore, although both the rich and the poor schools operate within the same governance structure, the terrain is grossly uneven. Thus it goes without saying that the quality of the governance outcomes will differ markedly. This is how poverty is impacting upon the otherwise very noble school governance policy.

The second area Christie identifies is that of Labour Relations. She reports that a new dispensation to regulate teachers’ conditions of work had to be put in place, largely to replace the hitherto conflictual one where schools and the entire education system were sites of political contestation. The powerful South African Democratic Teachers’ Union (SADTU) is a product of the teacher militancy then. Today, what we see on the ground is that SADTU is represented most in the majority of schools serving former black communities and therefore the historically generally poorer population of the country. Schools in the latter communities often experience teacher strikes some of which stretch for weeks of no teaching and learning. While this happens, schools in more affluent communities (largely former white and to some degree Indian) will be in full scale teaching and learning. In our experience as educationists in South Africa, we know that teachers, like most professionals, tend to send their children to the more affluent schools in search of a better quality education which of course is more expensive and out of reach of poorer families. What it means therefore, is that while a teacher from the former school context is on strike, their own children will continue to learn in the latter school context. This state of affairs shows that children of poorer families are likely to suffer less teaching-learning time, let alone the quality thereof, compared to their counterparts in contexts where strikes are almost non-existent.

The third and last area Christie identifies is performance management. This is to do with ensuring accountability, in this case on the part of all civil servants. Christie reports that after the breakdown of apartheid, and because of continuing disparities between schools, a number of accountability systems were agreed upon. In education, these included Developmental Appraisal in 1998, Whole School Evaluation in 2001 and Performance Management in 2003 (Christie, 2010). The

three were integrated in 2003 to form the integrated quality management system (IQMS). This performance management system, as Christie (p. 706) rightly puts it, ‘...requires a complex system of paperwork and a time-consuming monitoring system’.

The complexity and time-consuming nature of the performance management system are to be expected. After all, education is a complex affair involving a multiplicity of stakeholders, among many other factors. However, we borrow the main argument from Christie that schools in South Africa do not function equally. Many schools remain dysfunctional. Well-functioning schools can successfully implement the complex performance management system, but the same is unachievable in dysfunctional schools which are often characterised by such misconduct as teacher and learner absenteeism, late coming and early knocking off, weak grasp of content by the teachers and of course subsequent poor learner performance in both national and international tests and examinations. These ills are rife in the poorer communities of South Africa. We can therefore safely argue that poverty is implicated in the unevenness of the terrain in different schools and communities of the country. Christie (2010, p. 708) succinctly sums up the impact of the new educational policy landscape as follows:

It is by now a well-established criticism of South Africa’s policies that they are more suited to the well-functioning parts of the education system and have unintentionally widened inequalities.

Poverty as a categoriser of some schools

Maringe, Masinire and Nkambule (2015) studied the specific challenges that schools in multiple deprived communities in South Africa face. They conducted the study in three selected schools against the backdrop that in South Africa, even decades after the dismantling of apartheid, ‘...the “two-nation” metaphor continues to rear its ugly head in the education sector, as it does in other spheres’ (p. 364). In other words, the hitherto poor and marginalised communities have largely remained in that state. The authors view multiple deprivation as the combined impact of a multiplicity of indicators of poverty negatively impacting on the quality of people’s livelihoods. Drawing from international and local census data, and as we reported earlier on in this chapter, these researchers identify multiple deprivation indices including income, material, education, employment, living environment and health deprivation (Nobel, et al., 2009, in Maringe, Masinire & Nkambule, 2015).

They identified what they refer to as distinctive features of schools in multiple deprived communities. First, a shared framework of community poverty. The schools are situated within a 10 km radius. They are trapped in a context of low-paid jobs in mines, farms, a game park, self-employment, high levels of unemployment, high adult illiteracy and HIV/AIDS. Second, a culture of under-

performance. Because of this, learners often fail to qualify for further and higher education, employment and training. The schools also fail to attract a critical mass of new learners. Morale among teachers and school managers decreases, and so does communities' confidence in the school as well as their commitment thereto. Third, a shared context of inadequate teaching-learning resources. These include learning spaces such as classrooms and books. Fourth, staff instability. These arose due to factors such as conflict and fluctuating teacher-pupil ratios resulting in some teachers being redeployed. Those teachers redeployed to these multiple deprived schools are often the troublesome and not-so-competent ones who have not much choice. Fifth and last, physical but not epistemological access. While the South African government has made tremendous strides to provide access to schooling for every child, the plethora of challenges we identified in the other distinctive features above collectively militate against quality teaching and learning in the schools in question.

Poverty and the implementation of inclusive education

Inclusive education is about providing for equity and social justice. This is particularly important in post-apartheid South Africa, as a strategy to cater for the previously severely marginalised learners with special learning needs. Stofile et al. (2011) studied teachers' experiences on how poverty affected the implementation of inclusive education in one district of the Eastern Cape Province. They indicate that the province is one of the poorest provinces in South Africa. Through focus group discussions with teachers as well as individual interviews with school principals, these researchers concluded that poverty was a major barrier to education participation by both learners and their parents.

Participants reported that hunger and poor nutrition among learners was one barrier. As a result, some learners reportedly experienced attention and concentration difficulties, leading to dropout or non-completion. In some cases, learners lacked basic reading and writing materials. This resulted in only a few being able to read and do homework after school. Also, basic infrastructure such as washrooms was often below standard. Learners consumed considerable amounts of time away from classes to attend to hygiene matters. Parents or guardians were largely unable to provide the needed support. This placed enormous pressure on the teachers who often found themselves altering their main roles to attend to learners. This took a toll on the teachers' wellbeing. Teachers reported that they were effectively unpaid social workers over and above their conventional role as classroom practitioners. Because parental participation was either very low or non-existent, teachers were denied parental perspectives and inputs regarding their children. The participants were of the view that the situation should not be interpreted as a lack of interest on the part of parents in their children's education but an indication of the extant poverty that they suffer.

Poverty as a trigger for self-emancipation

While many schools in South Africa, as the bulk of the evidence we presented in the preceding section testifies, have severely suffered from the effects of poverty, research shows that a few have refused to remain in that state of victimhood and mourn unendingly. Instead, such schools have developed and are implementing largely home-grown approaches towards successful teaching and learning.

Chikoko, Naicker and Mthiyane (2015) studied school leadership practices that work in contexts of multiple deprivation in South Africa. This study was triggered by a realisation that the hitherto two main categorisations of schools namely, previously and still advantaged, very functional schools on one hand, and previously disadvantaged, and still so, dysfunctional schools on the other, were no longer portraying the full picture. A middle-of-the-continuum type of schools had emerged, ones that succeeded in severely deprived contexts. In that connection, the researchers sought to understand the nature of leadership in such schools. They found that such schools tended to adopt inside-out development approaches, driven by a conviction that they were and had to be masters of their own destiny; therefore solutions had to be crafted from within. Some of their own assets they brought to bear included time, commitment, and accountability on the part of every 'player'. The schools used their small successes as platforms for bigger, stronger synergies with the local and broader communities. These researchers conclude that the greatest instrument for emancipation in those schools was leadership that shifts minds from notions of helplessness or deficit thinking, towards asset-based thinking.

Similarly, Mbokazi (2015) studied dimensions of successful leadership in selected township secondary schools (townships are a typical example of largely deprived contexts) and came up with four such dimensions. First, the strategic dimension. The school principals were found to have successfully articulated the vision and values of their schools. They created positive climates for achievement. They also invested in capacity-building of stakeholders. Second, the pedagogic dimension. In this regard, the schools focused on managing teaching and learning. Teachers not only worked hard but did so in co-operative ways. Third, the regulatory dimension. The schools had clear disciplinary practices in place. They acted decisively on matters such as late-coming, absenteeism and substance abuse. The schools were also very efficient in managing time. Lastly, the compensatory dimension. The schools invested in building strong links between school and community in general and school and home in particular. This entailed not just fluent communication between the two but also involvement in the affairs of both school and community on the part of both the school staff and parents and other members of the community.

In a conceptual paper, Maringe and Moletsane (2015) report that studies on successful principals in schools facing severe deprivation (which is essentially what

we are calling poor schools in this chapter), develop strong and sustainable ties with their communities, they are philanthropic in approach, they are generous with their time as they engage with stakeholders, work hard to alleviate poverty among learners, and focus strongly on ensuring high-quality teaching and learning.

In a study in KwaZulu-Natal province on the nature of school leadership in a school in a poor context, Bayeni (2018) reports that in order to tackle the school's many challenges, the school principal, working together with both the staff and the local community, transformed the school into both a home and a school for the learners. So a school-based policy was formulated. Because learners' homes were not conducive for them to do homework and further study, all the work would now be done at the school. At the end of the normal school day at 14:30 hrs, learners would be released for an hour to spend at home and required to be back at school thereafter until 18:00 hrs. The school organised both lunch and dinner for the learners out of donations from local businesses. They also provided transport for them to travel back home in the evening. During the extra hours at the school, learners would do homework, receive extra tuition, and do personal study. By the time they got back home, all school work would have been done. This programme entailed the buy-in of teachers and the total commitment of the school management, both of whom had to put in extra hours to supervise and manage the programme.

What we learn here is that the state of poverty can and has awakened otherwise dormant energy where people adopt a 'we can do it' approach. Had such communities not suffered poverty, perhaps the 'we can do it' factor may not have been that strong.

Sound leadership has emerged as one of, if not the most influential factor to explain such success.

Learning from the evidence

Poverty has dealt a severe blow to the foundation for learning. Evidence shows that despite efforts to improve educational achievement for all learners, generally, there remains an achievement gap between learners from disadvantaged backgrounds compared to those from well-provided ones. Reading literacy, which is the foundation of all learning, is better achieved among learners growing up in the latter contexts than those from the former. This emphasises the importance of a child's home in building this learning foundation. However, we contend that in South Africa, many families and communities remain materially constrained to the extent that the situation is not likely to drastically change in the near future. It therefore seems to us that there is a need to build capacity in schools to enable them to go the extra mile in building learning foundations for the disadvantaged child.

Chapter 3

Poverty is a major determinant of learner dropout. Due to material and other forms of poverty, learners from poor backgrounds often feel a sense of inadequacy in classroom and school contexts. They feel a sense of inequality and therefore become learners at risk. Such learners often absent themselves, thus worsening their capability regarding coping with school work, eventually leading to dropout. Thus, poverty seems to have a negative impact on a learner's self-efficacy.

The evidence also shows that poverty is a major determinant of girls falling pregnant. The certainty of one receiving a child social grant from the government after the baby is born and the false financial independence it brings, have reportedly motivated girls to fall pregnant. Once pregnant, most girls drop out of school. What emerges here is that poverty seems to negatively impact on the mind-sets of those affected.

Poverty has a negative impact on the quality of education a school can offer. Due to financial constraints, schools in poverty-stricken contexts are likely to offer only the most basic of curricula. They cannot afford to hire extra teachers. They cannot attract teachers with special, rare skills and expertise. They are ill-equipped to offer broad curricula. But we know that the broader a school curriculum is, the greater the chances that learners of different capabilities and interests may find learning meaningful to them. We can therefore safely argue that the quality of education in poverty-stricken school contexts is largely lower than the one in more affluent communities. The evidence shows that this reality has a direct link with the subsequent social and private returns of education in that, rightly or wrongly, employers tend to undervalue the potential productivity of one who would have studied in poor education contexts. The net effect is that poverty is a big catalyst to continued huge inequalities in the South African society. In complete contrast to the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's adage that no one shall be left behind, poverty is leaving the affected communities, including learners therein, behind.

Poverty is challenging the efficacy of the post-apartheid one-size-fits-all notion of the implementation of some education policies. To illustrate, the broad-based powers given to the School Governing Bodies remain un-exercisable in poor school contexts where the majority office bearers are not only unskilled but also incapable of leveraging society for the betterment of the school. Similarly, the complexity and protracted nature of the performance management system is such that the less knowledgeable and lowly skilled poor school communities are unlikely to be able to implement it effectively. The otherwise noble and democratic policy framework to give voice to labour through unions such as SADTU has had to contend with loss of teaching-learning time mostly in disadvantaged communities due to protracted teacher strikes. Thus, the government is caught between a rock and a hard place to either craft differential policies and run the risk of retrogressing,

or seek to develop capacity among stakeholders who implement these policies, which resources it does not have in abundance.

Poverty has, by default, impacted positively in some schools and their communities by awakening agency in themselves as their own 'liberators' in terms of generating solutions towards improving school performance. This has entailed a shift from deficit thinking to asset-based approaches. Such a shift is quite consistent with the notion of sustainable development.

Conclusion

The evidence we have presented in this chapter is consistent with South Africa's National Development Plan 2030's position that poverty in the country is a great enemy that must be fiercely fought. Reading literacy is the backbone of all learning but sadly, due to poverty, many learners are unable to achieve such foundation. It is not enough for South Africa to have put in place landmark education policies because despite them being well-meaning, they are difficult to implement fully in poor contexts. Thus, poverty has rendered the same previously disadvantaged communities to be at risk. In the latter communities, education is inevitably of low quality. This has a negative ripple effect on the employability of students therefrom as their education is largely under-valued. Therefore the struggle should be two-pronged: fighting poverty on the one hand, and crafting and implementing ways to improve the quality of education on the other. In that struggle, schools and communities need to drastically shift from deficit- to asset-based thinking and doing.

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