

*Educational Distress of a
child from a deprived
milieu*

By

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to:

- My late father PAULOS TENDE NJAPHA;
- My late mother HENRIETTA SBONGISENI BHENGU;
- My late grandfather NATHAN BANTUBANJANI BHENGU;
- My grandmother AMY MALUTHULI BHENGU; and
- All my other family and friends, especially RICHARD THEOPHILUS CELE, for their loving support, encouragement and inspiration during the course of this study

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis *An Educational distress of a child from a deprived milieu* represents my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

.....
T B BHENGU
UNIZULU
January 2009

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SUMMARY

The aim of this investigation was to determine educators' perceptions of the educational distress of children that live in a deprived *milieu*.

An introductory literature review was provided of the characteristics of the child in educational distress. Educational distress surfaces when the quality of the occurring education is intrinsically bad. The child who finds himself within a situation of dysfunctional education thus experiences educational distress. The child's education is impaired by affective neglect while factors in the social environment, such as a deprived *milieu*, compound the problem. Educational problems at home or in school affect the child adversely with regard to his meaningful experiences, knowledge, volition and behaviour, which results in a 'deviate psychic structure.' The child in educational distress experiences lack of security, an obscured future perspective, affective neglect, rejection and unfavourable comparisons.

The life-world of the child in educational distress, which comprises the significant and meaningful physical and psychological environments of the child, was described. Besides the geographical world, the child's life-world also includes his relationships with the self, other people, objects, ideas and religion. Actions of the child in educational distress, such as ascribing significance to matters, i.e. the formation of meaningful relationships, are of insufficient quality. This gives rise to inadequate actions of hoping, planning, gaining insight in his own life-world of never attaining freedom to be responsible. "The child in educational distress reveals signs of being unloved and left alone, a low self-esteem interpersonal distrust, anxiety and depression.

For the purpose of the empirical investigation, a self-structured questionnaire was utilised. An analysis was undertaken of the questionnaires completed by the respondents, namely educators that are employed in schools situated in a

deprived *milieu*. The data was processed, analysed and interpreted by means of descriptive and inferential statistics.

In conclusion a summary of the study and findings emanating from the literature and empirical investigation were presented. Based on these findings the following recommendations were made:

- To inculcate positive attitudes in children from a deprived *milieu*. Educators should be helped to develop ways of assisting these children to change their attitudes.

- To develop and implement involvement programmes for the parents from a deprived *milieu*. Parental involvement in the child's schooling is important for the effective education of the child.

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The family home provides a safe place for experience and the practice of life skills which the child must increasingly and systematically prioritise independently and self-responsibly in the society (Van der Westhuizen, 1995:48). The child's home is the primary educative *milieu* where education takes place spontaneously and informally with parents as first educators of the child. Swanepoel (1990:76) says family values, norms, knowledge and skills are conveyed to children in a spontaneous, unplanned and often haphazard fashion by the parents. Parents as primary educators have a great share in the child's education and the quality of his becoming as an adult (Du Toit & Kruger, 1994:3). When the child enters school, the educational help and support of his parents who remain primarily responsible for his education are complemented by that of educators.

Swart (1993:50-52) says it is the task of the parents to ensure that the child receives maximum benefit from education by offering security and love which he needs to enable him to venture out into the world. The child must receive care for his physical needs by promoting sufficient wholesome food, clothing and shelter. According to Oosthuizen (1992:123) and Swanepoel (1998:81-85) the child must be provided with a good physical home environment e.g. desk, light, magazines and newspapers and must also be supervised and controlled over activities at home so that he lives a balanced life.

The school is a formal education institution where the child is assisted by secondary educators *viz* the school teachers. Griessel, Louw and Swart (1996:69) maintain that the school and home must be seen as supplementary and not substitutive education. The healthy and supportive environment at home results in effective learning at school. Heystek and Louw (1992:21) say

it is expected that parents must take responsibility for the learning of their children and accountability with educators.

Successful education is also created by cooperation between educators and parents (Kruger, 1996:37). The parent is involved with child as a primary educator and the teacher as the secondary educator (Lemmer & Squelch, 1993:100). The school contemplates, extends and formalises the life-world of the child's home hence of education in the family situation.

1.2 ANALYSIS OF A PROBLEM

The low socio-economic status contributes a lot to the educational distress a child experiences at school. Parents affected by poverty fail to comply with the child's needs as Griessel, Louw and Swart (1992:50-52) cite that parents must ensure that the child receives maximum benefit from education by offering security and love which the child needs to enable him to venture out into the world.

According to Naidoo (1996:62) the children from a deprived *milieu* display a poor self-concept and they have very little self-confidence which is often exacerbated by failure in school. They also display poor creativity because the environment of these children offers limited channels for participation in creative activities and language defects are evidence, particularly in the abstract dimension of verbal functioning.

The family forms the foundation on which effective learning at school must be built. However, as a result of various problems the families of a number of learners fall in the lowest socio-economic group and are not able to adequately support them in the demands of formal schooling. Els and Els (1993:171-172) state that children from a deprived *milieu* often experience learning problems. Children with learning problems often regard the school as a cause of their unhappiness. They feel insecure, unacceptable and helpless and because of these feelings become unwilling to do schoolwork.

They show lack of initiative, cooperation, battle to concentrate and become anxious and insecure. These children suffer because they have a low self-esteem and do not believe that they are capable of achieving higher than normal expectations. Pacheo (1996:98) points out that the majority of school-going children in South Africa are born from low socio-economic status characterised by poverty, inharmonious family life, lack of family support and parental control of discipline.

Voster and Van der Spuy (1995:62) cite the following *milieu* factors which may hamper the child's progress and cause educational distress:

- Lack of proper housing.
- Shortage of nutritional food.
- Insufficient clothing.
- Insufficient living space, e.g. no place to study.

Poverty is the basic contributory factor of a deprived community. Many of the lower income families live in overcrowded, run-down dwellings with little or no furniture and inadequate heat or plumbing. The jobs available in low socio-economic areas for the poor provide low income and little or no opportunity for advancement. Poverty often causes despair, frustration and lack of interest. Many of the children acquire the same feelings of helplessness that their parents have developed (Kapp, 1991:186).

Children from a deprived *milieu* often manifest the following attitudes and behavioural patterns in the class and school situation (Naidoo, 1996:63):

- Troublesome in class.
- Often absent or playing truant.
- Sensitive to any reference to their deficiencies.
- Lack of concentration.
- Neglected and untidy in appearance.
- Unpopular because of bad behaviour and poor achievement.

- Reveal a low level of expectation regarding school success, training and future career and have little ambition.
- Identify with undesirable friends.
- Drop-out academically and socially.

Dawes and Donald (1994:95) say that children from deprived communities are affected by parasite diseases which might affect the child's functional capacity, the most obvious being through effects of malnutrition. The parasite disease may impair the child's mental development. According to Naidoo (1996:5) the child who experiences poverty is exposed to the risk of impaired physical and mental development. However, even if the child suffers no permanent physical damage, he is clearly disadvantaged. Some children from poor households are kept out of school to help at home; others take the burden of poverty to school with them. If children are hungry, they cannot concentrate properly at school. If their homes have no electricity, they cannot easily study in the evenings. If girls have to assume the domestic role of cooking, cleaning and child care this leaves less time for their homework (Gunter, 1990:205).

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem that will be investigated in the study pertains to the educational distress of a child from a deprived *milieu*. The following are questions that require answers:

- What are the factors in a deprived *milieu* that cause educational distress in children?
- Which aspects of a child's psychic life are affected in a deprived *milieu*?
- Which methods can be employed to assist educators to help the children from a deprived *milieu* to overcome their educational distress?

1.4 HYPOTHESIS

A hypothesis is a tentative proposition, a prediction suggested as a solution to a problem or an explanation of some phenomenon. It presents the researcher's expectation concerning a relationship between variables within the problem (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1990:12). A hypothesis is merely a suggestion, which through the findings from the research which follows may be accepted or rejected.

The characteristics of a hypothesis include the following (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997:358):

- A hypothesis should not contradict existing knowledge.
- It predicts the relationship between two variables and can be tested empirically.
- It shows that the researcher has mastered the problem and can single out and check the most important variables therein.
- It directs the investigation by indicating the procedure to be followed and the data to be gathered.
- It establishes a reference for the interpretation of results and the drawing of conclusions.

1.4.1 Formulation of hypothesis

The experimental or research hypothesis for this study, which will state the relationship expected to be found by the researcher is formulated as follows:

There is a relationship between the educational distress experienced by children and a deprived *milieu*.

1.4.2 **Null hypothesis**

The null hypothesis (HO) states that there is no relationship between variables and that any observed relationship is only a function of chance. For the purpose of this investigation the null hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

- There is no relation between the educational distress experienced by children and a deprived *milieu*.

1.5 **ELUCIDATION OF CONCEPTS**

For the sake of clarity, it is essential that certain relevant concepts be described.

1.5.1 **Gender**

In this study, all references to any gender include reference to the other gender.

1.5.2 **Education**

Education is a process, in which the practice of education is involved, where a responsible adult leads, helps, supports and accompanies a child to self-actualisation and ultimate adulthood (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1990:71). According to Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:366) education in its pedagogic form, may be defined as the conscious, purposive intervention by an adult in the life of a non-adult to bring him to independence. Education as pedagogic assistance is the positive influencing of a non-adult by an adult, with the specific purpose of offering changes of significant value (Du Toit & Kruger, 1994:5).

For the purpose of this study, education refers to the help and support which the child receives from an adult with a view of attaining adulthood.

1.5.3 **Educational distress**

According to Le Roux (1993:107) educational distress surfaces when the quality of the occurring education is intrinsically bad and is most often the result of poor bonding between the child and parents. Van Niekerk (1992:1) says educational distress is experienced by the child who finds himself within a situation of dysfunctional (stressful) education. A stressful education situation gives rise to experiences fraught with unfavourable meanings for the child.

Without the effective participation of both adult and child in the dynamics of the education situation, the essential meaning of education is not fulfilled and the child will experience educational distress (Naidoo, 1996:11). According to Kapp (1991:115) educational distress implies a dysfunction in the dynamics of education caused by the absence of one or more of the educational relationships of trust, understanding and authority from education situation. Educational distress appears where there is no meaningful association or encounters between adult and child. The educator fails to influence the child in his becoming a responsible adult. Van Niekerk (1992:11) says the following are, *inter alia*, experienced by the child in educational distress:

- Lack of security.
- Affective (emotional) neglect.
- Rejection.
- Unfavourable comparisons.

The above elucidation of educational distress will form the theory on which this study is based.

1.5.4 **Experience**

According to Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:383) the term experience is derived from the German verb *erfahren* which implies the acquisition of knowledge, getting to know, becoming aware of something.

Du Toit and Kruger (1994:19) say experience is related to the emotion of a fluid situation in broad categories of pleasant and unpleasant. Vrey (1990:42) maintains that experience influences involvement in every significant action as well as the quality of the relationship formed. The experience of a situation results in the integration of the specific experience and the meaning that has been attributed to it, giving the meaning an individual-personal dimension.

Van den Aardweg and Van Aardweg (1990:83) see the following as essential components of experience:

- Experience determines the quality of relationships.
- Experience is emotional and is evaluated in terms of varying degrees of pleasantness and unpleasantness.
- The intensity of experiences determines the clarity and stability of the meanings assigned by a person.
- Experience inhibits or incites a person's involvement in every attribution of meaning.
- Experience is a meaningful event, involving the total person who experiences certain feelings and also knows that he experiences them.

Experience in this study will have a denotative and connotative character, which makes experience unique to the one who experiences. References will be made to experiences that are positive (pleasant) or negative (unpleasant) as seen in social relationships (enjoyment, rejection), with objects (success, frustration) and spiritual experience (peace, confusion).

1.5.5 **Deprived milieu**

According to Edge (1998:85) the term 'deprived' is very difficult to define. The concept 'deprivation' is often used as if it were a single syndrome, which is

actually incorrect because in practice there are always degrees of difference with regard to deprivation. A child from a deprived *milieu* has fewer opportunities, which mean there is a deficiency in the child's educational (educative) environment (*milieu*), which restrains him in his adequate actualisation.

Milieu as a concept is defined by Kapp (1991:122) as the dynamic and meaningful relationship between human beings (in this study, the child) and their particular geographical and physical worlds, on which they base their relationships with other (parents and educators in this case).

Hornby (1992:385) says a child is environmentally (*milieu*) deprived when language deficiencies limit his communicative possibilities in the dominant culture, and when his particular experiential background limits him with regard to the acquisition of learning and life content as in the dominant culture, and is therefore unable to meet the demands of modern life.

Pretorius (1987:21) furthermore claims that the child from a deprived *milieu* is characterised, *inter alia*, by the following:

- A geographical and physical inadequacy, especially concerning his physical environment, his residential area, residence, material possessions, etc.
- Communication with his fellow men is of such a nature that it impedes the child in the optimal actualisation of his personal potential.
- The maintenance of an attenuated cultural level.

According to Koplewicz (1996:31) the child in a deprived *milieu* finds himself in a situation that makes it difficult in all respects for his latent, unique potential to be fully developed and for him to achieve accordingly.

Le Roux (1992:12) describes *milieu* as the immediate physical and socio-cultural environment exerting an influence on the person or individual, and also on the person as a member of a group. The term refers to the totality of environmental influences, which affect human development.

According to Morrish (1997:169) *milieu* deprivation is the condition of an individual (child) or population group in society, having to cope with a low socio-economic status, limited community involvement, limited potential for upward mobility, poorly paid positions or unemployment. Poverty, deprivation, *milieu* shortages, psychosocial disadvantages, under-realisation of personal potential, deprivation concerning the dominant culture and consequently attenuated life expectancy (school expectancy and career expectancy) are characteristic of the *milieu* deprived individual.

1.5.6 **Poverty**

Poverty describes the condition under which poor people live. A poor person is someone who does not have an adequate supply of food and clothing (Grolier, 1993:418). According to Kapp (1991:49) poverty is the state or fact of being in want. People are poor if they lack enough income and resources to live adequately by the accepted living standard of their community. Cassiem (2000:1) defines poverty as the circumstance of not having sufficient income or other resources to satisfy a socially accepted minimum standard of living. South Africa is engaged in a high percentage of child poverty. Cassiem (2000:8) describes child poverty as the state where children are lacking resources to satisfy their needs to an acceptable standard of living.

1.5.7 **Life-world**

Vrey (1990:15) describes life-world as the *gestalt* of the individual person's meaningful relationships. The life-world of the child includes all the people, objects, systems, forces, attitudes, norms, self and everything to which he attributes meaning and which he therefore understands. Life-world is the environment in which people conduct both a way of life and a mode of being.

Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:435) say life-world includes among other things, the education reality and the social reality, etc. which are embedded in the encircling reality. Life-world is included in everything that has meaning for a person, not only the geographical world, but all the relationships with self, other people, objects, ideas and religion (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1990:141; Du Toit & Kruger, 1991:15). These relationships may be interdependent and interactive, they are always dynamic and over-increasing and changing. Vrey (1990:21) says this *gestalt* of meaningful relationships contributes a person's life-world. All the child's behaviour and action should be interpreted within the context of his world.

1.5.8 **Relationship**

A relationship is a particular mode in which persons, things, ideas, self and God are mutually connected (Vrey, 1990:20-21). Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:193) say that such relationships are usually dynamic and interactive and are initiated by the individual through his involvement and the assigning of meaning in his life-world. Relationships imply an association between two referents and people are busy throughout life with these associations, giving them meaning to allow the forming of relationships.

According to Le Roux (1992:14) a relationship is the dynamic, truly human stand or alignment with another person or persons, whereby bipolar association or interaction is established and mutual influence is realised. Relationships can be experienced as pleasant or unpleasant and is then either encouraged or avoided.

1.5.9 **Family**

Naidoo (1996:9) describes a family as the primary social group consisting of parents and their offspring. The following characteristics are applicable to a primary in most societies:

- a family consists of persons connected by blood, marriage or adoption,
- the member of the family live together in one household,
- the members of a family interact and communicate social roles in accordance with the norms and value of their society, and
- the family forms and maintains a subculture derived from general culture around it.

1.6 AIMS OF THIS STUDY

The aims of this study are:

- To pursue a study of relevant literature in order to establish the educational distress of a child from a deprived *milieu*.
- To undertake an empirical investigation by means of a questionnaire to establish the educational distress of a child from a deprived *milieu*.
- To make recommendations that may serve as guidelines for the ways of overcoming the educational distress the child from a deprived *milieu* encounters.

1.7 METHOD OF RESEARCH

Research with regard to this study will be conducted as follows:

- A literature study of available and relevant literature.
- An empirical survey comprising a structural questionnaire to be completed by educators from schools.

1.8 FURTHER COURSE OF THE STUDY

Chapter 2 will be a literature review on the educational distress of a child from a deprived *milieu*.

In Chapter 3 the emphasis will be on the planning of the research.

A presentation and analysis of the research data will be provided in Chapter 4.

Chapter 5 will contain a short summary and recommendations.

1.9 SUMMARY

An exposition of the problem, statement of the problem and the aims of the study were given in this chapter. The method of research was explained and certain relevant concepts were elucidated. In conclusion the further course of the study was provided.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The nature and quality of the environment (*milieu*) in which the child grows up is of vital importance for his development (Pringle, 1997:18). The home as a facet of the environment plays a major role in preparing the child for adult life. The family (home) is the first and basic educating agent in the child's life (Morrish, 1997:1997:162). His development is profoundly and extensively affected by the quality of the education offered at home. Family dynamics of which rearing practices are an important aspect, institute a climate that plays either facilitative or an impeding role in the child's progression toward becoming fulfilled human beings. The quality of family life, expressed in a particular physical setting (home) thus determines to some extent, the course and net result of the child's development (Le Roux, 1993:86).

Landman and Roos (Kapp, 1991:51) state that the child in a dysfunctional situation (e.g. the child from deprived community) under-actualises his psychic life. The child from a deprived *milieu* indeed finds himself within a dysfunctional situation. His actions of ascribing significance to matters i.e. the formation of meaningful relationship are of insufficient quality. This gives rise to inadequate actions of hoping, planning, gaining insight into himself and never attaining the freedom to be responsible and thus also of disregarding accepted norms and values (Vrey, 1990:21-23).

Children in educational distress are often unhappy because of the strain put upon them by the circumstances prevailing both at home, and at school. Maree (Naidu, 1996:66-67) states that learners who experience educational distress find themselves in education crises.

When the adult, who is the more responsible person, does not take care that the conditions for adequate education are met, the child is usually affectively, intellectually and morally neglected (Van Niekerk, 1990:26). If any of the pedagogical relationships of trust, understanding and authority is absent from the pedagogical situation, it will result in a dysfunction in the dynamic of the education situation. The child from a deprived *milieu* finds himself in a dysfunctional situation. When an educator and a child communicate inadequately all the acts of upbringing are necessarily performed inadequately (Van Niekerk, 1990:9). The pedagogically inadequate actualisation of the child's psychic life is the inevitable result. From a psycho-pedagogical perspective the child from a deprived *milieu* finds himself in an educational relationship, which is dysfunctional. Dysfunctional education results in the under-actualisation of the psychic life of the child from a deprived *milieu*.

The factors that cause educational distress, the psychic life of the child in educational distress and the experience of children in educational distress will be discussed in this chapter.

2.2 FACTORS THAT CAUSE EDUCATIONAL DISTRESS

Without quality education no child can realise adequate adulthood because man is a being who educates, is educated and is dependent on education (Le Roux, 1992:105). Education takes place mainly in the family (primary education *milieu*) and through the school (secondary formalised education *milieu*). Since education is increasingly confronted by new radical changes in modern society, it is essential that parents, the school and the community create a suitable environment as a safe educational *milieu* for the child. According to Van Niekerk (1992:11) adequate education is impaired by the affective neglect of the child while factors such as the socio-economic status of the family, social environment, community and school, compound the problem. The following is a discussion of factors, characteristics of a deprived *milieu* that contribute to confusion and perplexity in the child with respect of his educational situatedness.

2.2.1 Lack of safety (security)

Educational problems, caused by lack of security, affect a child adversely with regard to his meaningful experiences, his knowledge, volition and behaviour, which results in a 'deviate psychic structure' and educational distress, (Van Niekerk, 1992:11).

If a child is not offered a guarantee of security by his parents (or guardians) as primary educators, he is exposed to danger and no longer exists in close connection with the adults with whom he should have allied by the shared goal of his own adulthood (Vos & Spruyt, 2003:2).

According to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:200) the very fact that a child is accepted and cared for by his mother is a reassuring experience, a safe experience in a strange, changing world. In the presence of his parents the child is safeguarded and from this place of safety the child can venture out to explore. Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:522) say this feeling of safety, this place of security is one of the child's basic needs. Hence the family milieu is paramount to a child's experience of security. A milieu that will provide the child with safety and security in growing up is characterised, *inter alia*, by Vos and Spruyt (2003:2):

- Stable family relationships where attitudes and behaviour are consistent and dependable.
- Adequate provision for the family's financial needs.
- Proper physical, psychological and spiritual care.
- A safe, familiar and adequately equipped living place.
- A known routine.
- Consistent discipline and expectations.

- Set standards of behaviour.
- A stable family life to provide the child with a sense of personal continuity, of having a past and a future.

In analysing the definition of a deprived *milieu* (cf. 1.5.5) it becomes evident that many, if not all, of the characteristics listed above are non-existent in a deprived *milieu*. Failure to provide a safe environment for the child contributes to his educational distress.

A low socio-economic status which includes poverty, inadequate housing, unemployment or poorly paid jobs, etc. are factors in a deprived *milieu* that do not provide the child with the safety and security needed for his optimal becoming (Sosibo, 2004:21).

A child needs physical, emotional, social, cognitive and vocational security for adequate self-actualisation and ultimate adulthood (Pringle, 1997:37). In a deprived *milieu* the requirements needed for a child to feel safe are most often absent and therefore the child becomes educationally distressed.

2.2.2 **Obscured future perspective**

According to Bezuidenout and Joubert (2003:138) most children who live in areas characterised by extreme poverty, poor living conditions and a high unemployment rate have a bleak future outlook (obscured future perspective). Children from a deprived *milieu* face an uncertain future if they do not have proper education in order to seek good employment. In their research Papalia and Olds (1992:331) found that children who are most likely to drop out of school tend to share the same characteristics. Children whose parents are poorly educated, are unemployed or have low-level jobs and thus have a low socio-economic status are 3 to 5 times more likely to drop out than children in more privileged circumstances. More than half of the girls that drop out of school said that they left because of pregnancy. In South Africa many

schoolgirls fall pregnant in order to rescue a child grant to help support their families (RSA, 2001:16).

Jackson (2002:32) cites the following aspects why children from a deprived *milieu* have an obscured perspective of their future:

- Failure to complete a school career because of financial constraints.
- Dropping out of school because of lack of motivation, low self-esteem, minimal or no parental encouragement or having to help support a family.
- Not finding a job because of lack of proper education.
- Parents that are inadequate role models. Unemployed or unskilled parents where earnings are low present a picture of adult life that only makes them aware of how limited their chances are of escaping from the constricting net of multiple disadvantages in a deprived *milieu*.

Pringle (1997:116) says that responsibility is often forced upon the child prematurely in a deprived *milieu*. The child may have to assume *pseudo*-parental roles by taking care of younger siblings or do part-time work to supplement the family income. Being given adult responsibility is likely to be a source of anxiety and burden for the child and his freedom of choice will be severely circumscribed by his lack of educational skills and social know-how. At best the future might offer a poorly-paid job with few prospects and fewer opportunities for exercising responsibilities. There even might be unemployment with its destructive effect on self-respect and self-confidence.

From the above discussions it becomes evident that the child from a deprived home environment has an obscured future perspective. Vos and Spruyt (2003:5) say that if the future is obscured in the child's view there is little to look forward to or to expect and there are no plans or tasks, however small, waiting to be fulfilled.

2.2.3 Affective (emotional) neglect

The term 'affective' refers to how a person is touched or moved with regard to his emotional life (Du Toit & Kruger, 1994:54). According to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:18) affective is an umbrella term and not simply a synonym for the emotions. A child's affective development is concerned with the development of those aspects pertaining to emotions, feelings, passions, moods, sentiments and whims.

Payne (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003:160) describes the poverty in a deprived *milieu* as the extent to which an individual (child) does without resources. The resources necessary for survival and success include financial, emotional, mental, spiritual and physical support systems, relationships and role models and knowledge of hidden rules. Of particular interest is Morei's (2002:9) assertion that children need emotional resources in order to have the stamina to withstand difficult and uncomfortable emotional situations and feelings.

The poverty that is characteristic of a deprived *milieu* is more than economic limitations. Beyond the basic needs of food and shelter a child's needs include emotional needs such as safety, belonging, love and being held in esteem by others as important components to healthy development (Bezuidenhout & Joubert, 2003:168).

According to the CRYR (2002:4) emotional poverty can be seen as the deprivation of emotional resources that normally come from healthy nurturing and supportive human interaction. Children who grow up in a deprived *milieu* often feel emotionally impoverished because of their low socio-economic status and may find themselves in a chronic pattern of deep emotional pain that directly influences their actions and behaviour and cause educational distress.

According to Bernard (1993:417) children that are affectively neglected may:

- Develop a low self-concept.
- Have a negative attitude towards learning.
- Show little or no interest in the acquisition of new skills.
- Develop intolerance for ambiguity and the burden of choice and responsibility.
- Lack the skills of interpersonal communication and transaction.

Vos and Spruyt (2003:5) maintain that children stricken by poverty (deprived *milieu*) face an increased risk of severe emotional distress because of inadequate realisation of affective aspects such as healthy nurturing, safety, belonging and held in esteem by others. Affective distress caused by affective neglect primarily means educational distress and always impedes the child's progress towards adulthood.

2.2.4 **Rejection**

Children from a deprived *milieu* are from a low socio-economic environment. In school not only do they have the task of learning subject matter but their educational distress is increased by having to orientate to the 'middle-class culture' of the school (Bernard, 1993:53). In this school situation the children often experience feelings of rejection because of educators' and learners' disapproval of their lack of cleanliness, wrong school uniform, absenteeism, lack of exercise and textbooks, etc. Vrey (1990:196) maintains that the learner who is not accepted as he is, experiences rejection. A learner from a deprived *milieu* with a poor self-concept and a sense of rejection will also detect discrimination against him as regards the assessment of his schoolwork, friendliness of educators and peers and so forth (Huysamen, 2002:85).

Le Roux (1992:101) says the fact that learners experience the school situation as a situation of educational distress, as a place of failure and reprisal becomes evident in the rejection of learners from a deprived *milieu*. According to Vrey (1990:170) learners who are rejected by their peers and/or educators display a lack of social competence. These learners tend to be reticent, nervous, shy, self-centred, and have little self-confidence.

When an adult (parent or educator) does not spontaneously accept, but in fact rejects a child, the child immediately feels that he is thought of as unwelcome (Vos & Spruyt, 2003:5). The child then experiences insecurity and anxiety and consequently educational distress. Children from a deprived *milieu* experience rejection because of stigmatisation, discrimination and isolation.

2.2.5 **Unfavourable comparison**

Vos and Spruyt (2003:6) maintain that every time a child's efforts to prove or assert himself are negatively compared with those of another child by an adult (parent or educator) emphasis is actually laid on the fact that the one child is less than the other. Pringle (1997:39) says that role models such as parents and educators are often responsible for unfavourable comparisons between children from a deprived *milieu* and other children. In school learners from poor families are compared with better-off learners for not having the prescribed school uniform, required exercise and text books and money to pay school fees. Charken (2000:12) states that children from poor families are often ill-treated and even forbidden to visit or play with the children of families from a higher socio-economic status.

According to Jackson (2002:32) principals and educators often compare learners from low socio-economic status with other school children concerning the following aspects:

- The non-payment of school fees.
- Attending school with an incomplete or incorrect school uniform.
- Being frequently absent from school.

- Not having the required exercise and/or text books for schoolwork.
- Failure to complete homework.

Morei (2002:8) maintains that each time a learner's efforts to prove or assert himself are negatively compared with those of another learner by an educator; emphasis is actually laid on the fact that he is inferior to the other. Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:206) describe self-esteem as the degree of positive or negative feeling that one has on the assessment or evaluation of oneself. The child from a deprived *milieu* that is unfavourably compared with other children will have negative feelings about himself and consequently a low self-esteem. Crain (1992:238) says a low self-esteem tends to make a child more dependent and immature.

2.2.6 **Disregarding the child as a unique person**

Vrey (1990:88) emphasises the uniqueness of the individual child. Genetic make-up determines the initial difference between individuals while biochemical individuality (e.g. fingerprints) remains throughout our lives. Du Toit and Kruger (1994:20) states that the child's self-actualisation begins with genetically determined physical, cognitive, affective and moral possibilities which are unique to each individual. Pringle (1997:159) says that educators (parents and teachers) must always keep in mind that every child is unique and must be understood, accepted and treated as such.

Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:115) maintain that it is very difficult if not impossible to give attention to the differences between learners in large (overcrowded) classes. Any consideration of individual (unique) abilities is lost in the management of a large class group and the aim of education, namely to develop the unique potential of every learner, is unfulfilled.

The learner from a deprived *milieu* also must be regarded as an individual with unique problems such as poverty and illiterate parents.

2.3 THE PSYCHIC LIFE OF A CHILD IN EDUCATIONAL DISTRESS

The psychic life of a child from the educational point of view refers to the affective, cognitive and connotative aspects of an individual (Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:184). According to Vrey (1990:227) psychic vitality is that which prompts action. It presupposes confrontation, cognitively connotation, wants to overcome as a goal he wants to attain. Van Niekerk (1990:10) argues that dysfunctional education *per se* implies the children who suffer an impediment with regard to their development, for example the low socio-economic status of a deprived environment. In other words children under-actualise their psychic life at a level that is attainable or possible for them and thus fail to develop and learn in accordance with their potential (Le Roux, 1993:105). This directly pertains to the models of their exploring, emancipating, distantiating, objecting and differentiating which are in the same event ion adequately actualised in terms of the educational norm.

The following aspects of the psychic life of a child in educational distress will be discussed:

- Affective experience
- Cognitive experience
- Inadequate exploration
- Inadequate emancipation
- Inadequate distantiation
- Inadequate differentiation
- Inadequate objectification

2.3.1 Affective experience

Affective experience is concerned with aspects pertaining to the emotions, feelings, passions, moods, sentiments and whims (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1990:15). Affective guidelines accompany the child's memory, thoughts, concepts, ways of thinking, responses, association of impressions and experiences (Vrey, 1990:23). The child's affective experiences, which

may range from pleasant to very unpleasant, determine his involvement or indifference in the world, his giving meaning to objects, the relationships he forms and the life-world the child constitutes for himself (Du Plooy, Griessel & Oberholzer, 1987:148).

According to Pringle (1997:82) in the affluent middle – or upper-class family affective deprivation is rarely suspected or detected. Difficult behaviour, lack of progress, being uncooperative, disruptive and lack of interest in schoolwork are seen as consequences of ineffective affective experiences in poor families.

The affective climate in the family home depends largely on the success of the parents and lack of money (poverty) often leads to a tense atmosphere if not to open quarrels about money (CRYR, 2002:92). Family relationships are a very real factor in the child's affective experience and emotional stability (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1990:16).

Poverty, which is characteristic of a deprived *milieu*, can influence the child's affective experience through malnutrition, poor environment stimulation, and poor parenting due to worry, preoccupation, discouragement or resentment of their situation (Gouws & Kruger, 1994:99). The primary educators (parents) should assist the child to come to an understanding of each situation, to accept his limitations and to express his feelings and emotions in acceptable ways (Vrey, 1990:69).

2.3.2 **Cognitive experience**

The term 'cognitive' is derived from the Latin word *cognoscere*, which means to know (Du Toit & Kruger, 1991:33). The concept 'cognitive' therefore implies the life of knowing of the human being of which the outcome is knowledge. Cognitive development is the continuous and cumulative development of the intellect and concerns all that has to do with perception, conceptualisation, insight, knowledge, imagination, etc.

Children are continually in contact with the unknown: things, people, and ways of behaving, ideas of concepts. In order to construct their own life-world, children must imbue all of these with meaning, which means they have to orientate themselves to their environment (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1990:39). In a deprived *milieu* children come into contact with those aspects of reality that characterise their environment, and thus have to understand their situatedness. Children living in a deprived *milieu* have to conceptualise and understand their circumstances and its implications.

According to Gouws and Kruger (1994:58) research and theorising about the relationship between genetic and environmental (*milieu*) factors and the cognitive development of the child have produced no clear answers. Jensen (Pringle, 1997:109) attributes 80% of a given population's to genetic factors while Hebb (1998:45) says that heredity and environment are equally influential on the cognitive development of a child. Considerable research done by Jordaan and Jordaan (Gouws & Kruger, 1994:59) shows that heredity has some influence on intelligence. Genetic factors place a 'ceiling' on the intellectual performance of which a child is capable, and that factors in the *milieu* determine how close a child gets to that particular ceiling.

Pringle (1997:117) says educationists are aware of the value of a rich and stimulating environment in the child's cognitive experiences. The parental home should therefore be of such a nature that it could provide the child with educational opportunities that stimulate his cognitive development. Research has shown that a child who comes from a poor socio-economic family and educational setting (deprived *milieu*) does not perform as well academically as children from middle-class homes (Hebb, 1998:51). This can be attributed to the fact that because of a better socio-economic *milieu* a middle-class family provides an advantage with respect to educational resources, language, motivation and experience. This advantage can also be attributed to the quality of attention received by the child in a middle-class family, which is better than that received by children from a lower socio-economic class.

2.3.3 Inadequate exploration

According to Joubert (Naidoo, 1994:566) exploring implies a study of those aspects of reality, which are relatively unknown to the children. Children explore those aspects of reality which reflect both known and unknown characteristics. It becomes clear that as long as children wonder at aspects of reality and anticipate possible development or discoveries, they will explore.

When education takes an unfavourable course, it always gives rise to anxiety. This in turn acts as an impediment to the child in his development. A child from a deprived *milieu* experiences feelings of anxiety and insecurity because of his environmental conditions (Pillay, 2004:5). The feeling of insecurity is often revealed as a reluctance to explore, thus resulting in the inadequate actualising of the child's psychic life. The wheel turns full circle, as the child's anxiety is necessarily increased by the very fact of his inadequate exploration of his world. The opportunities for the child to actualise his psychic life with reference to specific educational contents also diminish because he prefers to withdraw from that which appears to be strange or new (Van Niekerk, 1990:122-23).

As all children, the child from a deprived *milieu* also compares himself with his peers, with their socio-economic status and achievements. The child evaluates himself and his abilities in relation to these norms (Vrey, 1990:25). This gives rise to his self-concept and if the child does not like himself it will have a disastrous effect on exploration.

Sonnekus (Naidoo, 1994:68) says that the child's reluctance to willingly explore also gives proof of the fact that volitional education, directed at developing the child's will, desire and goals, has been neglected. According to Atherly (1990:226) a child with a negative self-concept is so unmotivated that he does not even have the volition (will) to set himself goals, let alone to realise them. A child from a deprived *milieu* does not want to be actively involved in activities (explore) because of his lack of confidence.

2.3.4 Inadequate emancipation

The child is somebody who wants to be somebody; he wants to become a person in his own right. Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:75) say the child strives to experience ultimate emancipation from his educators. Emancipation is reached when the how, where and when of life is determined by personal conviction and a philosophy of life arrived at after many and varied experiences, involvements, influences, reasoning, failures and successes which have been significantly meaningful to the individual himself (Hebb, 1998:112), many of the latter being found and experienced within the context of the family home.

Naidoo (1994:69) maintains that the child moves through developmental phases through which he endeavours to move from a perceived self to an adequate self by formulating a positive identity through the process of emancipation. If this identity seems unattainable as in the case of deprived children, they will eventually accept that it is in actual fact unreachable and they will consequently believe in themselves to be “inferior”. Their emancipation has been inadequate and they have not become the person they have imaged.

At school it is also the very learners whose development has been impeded, who most often have to bear reprisals for acting ‘correctly; and for generally failing to meet the standards (Sosibo, 2004:27). A deprived child can fail to meet the standards not because his cognitive ability is low but because of the leakage of self-confidence and low esteem which results in educational distress. Such learners are further frequently saddled with feelings of guilt, which add to anxiety and uncertainty. ‘Emancipation’ essentially means that children are realising or actualising the potential they are endowed with as human beings, as it pertains to their various abilities. The learners who ‘underestimate’ their potential are consequently limited to actualising only this supposedly ‘inferior’ potential. There is proof of a weakened will in respect of their real potential, especially in an emancipatory sense. This obviously amounts to reluctance to become matured adults (Van Niekerk, 1990:22-23).

2.3.5 Inadequate distantiation

According to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:65) the term 'distantiation' means that when a person looks at a phenomenon (that which appears) he is devoid of any bias, prejudice or preconceived ideas. The attitude of distantiation is necessary so that the said phenomenon can, as it were, speak for itself and thus bringing to light its essential characteristics. No part of the environment (*milieu*) in which a child lives should therefore be emphasised or ignored, but he accepted as it reveals itself as it is.

In this regard Van Moeler (1990:23) maintains that the child in a deprived milieu and thus dysfunctional educational setting, usually inadequately distantiate themselves from their situatedness. This fact has particular implications regarding the way in which the learner will go about learning in the classroom setting and add to the educational distress of the child. In failing to take a sufficient distance from themselves and their circumstances, children are less able to adopt the proper attitude for truly involving themselves with the things of this world which are outside themselves (Sonnekus, 1991:138).

The child's inability to experience matters and ascribe meaning to them in sufficiently dissociated (distantiated), controlled and well-ordered Gnostic manner by means of perceptions, thoughts etc., brings about a further degree of pathic-affective lability (Van Niekerk, 1990:23). Such learners indeed give meaning to the educational content, which is presented to them at school and elsewhere in a grossly inadequate manner. These children do not discover the true meaning, significance and context of the learning content, by reason of their inadequate actualisation of the modes of learning which are especially dependent upon the degree of distantiation, e.g. sensing. Perceiving thinking, imagining and memorising (Sosibo, 2004:28). This implies that learners are unable to sufficiently distantiate or dissociate themselves to get really involved with the learning material. They cannot distantiate from a pathic to an effective level or take distance from an emotional to a Gnostic and cognitive level (Crain, 1992:24).

2.3.6 Inadequate differentiation

A child from a deprived *milieu*, if educationally distressed, encounters enormous problems as far as education is concerned. He also encounters a problem to differentiate. Vrey (Naidoo, 1994:71) maintains that in dysfunctional education setting learners are reluctant to fully actualise their potential and accordingly also reveal reluctance to differentiate. When their cognitive education is neglected they may initially still prove to be willing to differentiate according to their ability. The inadequate disclosure of real facts by the educator does not, however grant learners a sufficient opportunity to really actualise and practise their intellectual potential, by way of differentiation, as the proper guidance and instructions are simply lacking.

2.3.7 Inadequate objectification

The child in educational distress feels rejected (cf. 2.4.4). Naidoo (1994:72) maintains that when children experience rejection they feel that they are not at liberty to 'let go' of themselves, their fellow men and material things in order to view themselves, their parents and other people and the realities of the world objectively. They are consequently unable to discover the factual nature of matters. According to Hebb (1998:72) if that which should be said, done and known is insufficiently modelled to children, they are not receiving adequate and real support toward taking objective stance. Children prevented from performing certain tasks for themselves, saying certain things, discovering the essence of the matter on their own, remain subjectively involved and evaluate life itself from their own subjective viewpoint (Bernard, 1993:44).

2.4 THE EXPERIENCE OF CHILDREN IN EDUCATIONAL DISTRESS

Children in educational distress find themselves in educational crises because their development is impeded by the dysfunctional education *milieu* (Van Niekerk, 1990:24). Their actions of ascribing significance to matters, i.e. the information of meaningful relationships, are of insufficient quality. This gives risk to inadequate actions of hoping, planning, gaining, insight into

themselves, of never attaining freedom to be responsible thus also the disregarding of accepted norms and values (Maree, 1990:4). The ascribing of significance of insufficient quality is clearly evident in the life-world of the neglected children by revealing signs of being involved and left alone, a low self-esteem, interpersonal distrust, anxiety and depression.

According to Lally (Naidu, 1996:67) the level upon which the educational neglected children communicate within their life-world, and give meaning to it, is inadequate for transition to a fully pledged adulthood. Because of the deficiency in communication with the neglected children are often incapable to improve the quality of the impaired relationships that exist in their life-world. This inability to give significant meaning to their life-world in establishing meaningful relationships, results in a discrepancy between that the neglected children are and what they ought to be as human beings in their own right. The learners from deprived *milieu* experience some problems as neglected because they are always neglected at school because of their low socio-economic status.

2.4.1 **The concept experience**

According to Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:383) the term experience is derived from the German concept *erfahren* which means to be in motion, and while being in motion to undergo or experience something. The verb *erfahren* implies the acquisition of knowledge, getting to know, and becoming aware of something. Children learn that experience has a denotative (logical) and connotative (emotional) character, and it is this which makes an experience unique to the one who experiences it. Gouws and Kruger (1994:6) note in this regard 'What I know another person may know, but what I experience is unique to me'. An experience can be positive or negative, as seen in physical perceptions relationships (enjoyment, rejection, acceptance), with objects (frustration, success) and spiritual experience (peace, solace, confusion) – all describe the individual's subjective experience in terms of moods and feelings. Nel and Urbani (1990:106-107) mention that

feelings and willing, different in quality and intensity, accompany each experience.

Experiencing is a way of giving meaning to the world around this and us and can be affected at three levels, *viz.* affective, cognitive and normative (Naidu, 1996:69). According to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1988:83) children directly experience a situation and become recipients of the values and meaning of that particular situation. No-one can select his experiences that when one undergoes a certain experience, meanings are assigned which acquire a personal dimension. With personal involvement experience will have a conative dimension. It is through children's numerous experiences of reality that their own life-world comes into being. Without sufficient experience the children's life-world failed to come into being (Bernard, 1993:34).

Due to the fact that man is essentially a being related to other beings it stands to reason that one can only understand his experience by studying him in relationship with himself, others, things around him and God. Therefore all experiences of children take place within

- their relationship with themselves;
- their relationship with others;
- their relationship with objects, ideas; and
- their relationship with Religion.

2.4.2 **The formation of relationships**

A meaningful life-world is created when children, by attributing meaning, form relationships with themselves, other people, objects, ideas and religion. To attribute meaning to a relationship implies much more than mere understanding. The quality of both meaning and involvement is determined by what children subjectively experience, and both are components of self-actualisation which because of the need for educational assistance is guided actualisation. The relationships formed by children are therefore an

expression of the life-world that forms their psychological space and reality to which they are orientated (Nel & Urbani, 1990:14; Vrey, 1990:21).

Children from a deprived *milieu* that are in educational distress experience difficulties in the forming of relationships (Behr, 1982:20). Disturbed family relationships, for example caused by poverty, result in problematic relationships that are formed by the children within and outside family structures. The educationally neglected children view the behaviour of all adults as the same. A poor relationship between adults and children is characterised by mistrust, and therefore children find it difficult to trust adults. The absence of love may also result in children being reluctant in the forming of relationships. Vos (1994:77) maintains that impaired relationships experienced by the children have an outcome 'defence' attitude by the forming of relationships. The children's longing for love and acceptance are overshadowed in the forming of meaningful relationships. Pringle (1997:65) states that an inability to build and maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships is characteristic of educationally neglected learners from deprived *milieu*.

(1) Relationship with self

Knowledge of one's identity consists of recognising and identifying oneself and a formation of self-concept. Vrey (1990:25) says by comparing themselves with their peers, with the achievements in handling natural or cultural objects, children evaluate themselves and their abilities in relation to norms. All give rise to the self-concept and a polarisation effect of self-acceptance or self-rejection (Raath & Jacobs, 1990:1, 12). Positive feedback and concomitant experiences of success resulting a positive evaluation of the self, and negative feedback and concomitant experiences of failure result in a negative evaluation (Du Toit & Kruger, 1991:37). The majority of neglected children from a deprived *milieu* suffer from a negative self-concept because they feel they are not wanted and therefore their deeds and actions are worthless. Children in educational distress experience their self-concept,

which becomes the focal point of relationships, as negative and thus fail to establish meaningful relationships.

Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1988:84) maintain that no children can truly become an adult without a definite and clear self-concept. The way people respond to each other is partially determined by physical characteristics. The educational neglect caused by deprived *milieu* often also includes physical characteristics. Educational neglect often includes physical negligence of the children (Pringle, 1998:66). Children who hold a negative body image of themselves experience difficulty in developing a positive self-concept. Le Roux (1987:73) indicates that under-actualisation of physical (motor) abilities compound this negative body image when children from deprived *milieu* compare themselves with other children.

(2) Relationship with peers

To be accepted in a peer group is very important to all the children. Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:166) state that peer group plays an important role in assisting children (also children from deprived *milieu*) to realise their personal identity, provide a safe place to try out certain behaviours and note the reaction they get and is an ideal setting in which to discuss the most intimate secret and private thoughts. Within the peer group children from a deprived *milieu* often experience the recognition, safety and acceptance that lack at home. Allison (1989:3-4) mentions that children who are unable to obtain recognition from their parents are more easily influenced by peers and form close-knit group *cliques*. The children in educational distress have a great need for acceptance which is often 'satisfied' in a *clique*. *Cliques* provide more intimate relationships than peer groups and a greater measure of security.

According to Van der Merwe (1987:3) these children share feelings of rejection, anxiety, insecurity, anger, hopelessness and sadness. Harper (1985:4) indicates that where the family background is inadequate, a vacuum exists and the peer group fills the void created by poverty. An educationally

neglected child from a deprived *milieu* that is vulnerable and lacking self-confidence and experience, and in need of love and acceptance, becomes especially more susceptible to peer group pressures (Bacher, 1986:16). To the educationally neglected child joining a *clique* or 'gang' provides a structured lifestyle, a sense of belonging and consistency, protection and recognition, status and acceptance. All the needs these children have of being deprived are because of poverty and neglect (Botha, 1998:7).

(3) Relationship with objects and ideas

Children are always coming into contact with objects and ideas in their life-world. To assign meaning to objects, involvement and experience are necessary and children enter into relationships with them (Du Toit & Kruger, 1991:14). These relationships are also extended, adapted and refined during involvement through attribution, assimilation and accommodation, with the result that the children's understanding of and orientation toward ideas and objects in their world is improved (Vrey, 1990:177-178). The relationships that children from a deprived *milieu* establish with objects and ideas in their impoverished environment can only lead to more bewilderment and intensify their educational distress. Children in educational distress may have limited experience with objects and ideas because of inadequate education through parental problems caused by poverty (Kapp, 1991:430).

(4) Relationship with religion

Farrant (2001:12) describes religion as the human recognition of a divine being expressed in worship and obedience. Religious beliefs influence human behaviour and provide ethical standards by which people try to live. According to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:194) religion refers to the connection or relationship between man and a divine power. Characteristics of this relationship are a person's faith in, trust upon, respect for a dependence upon a divine being.

Du Toit and Kruger (1994:66) point to the fact that in the relationship between man and his god polarisation also takes place, with the result that a person either believes or does not believe and either has peace of mind, or not. To have peace of mind the child must experience his being-in-the-world as meaningful. However, according to Sosibo (2004:35) in the dysfunctional family (e.g. family in a deprived *milieu*) the religious behavioural example of the parents and the religious experience of the children are meaningless to them.

Children living in poverty (deprived *milieu*) often do not experience religion as a faith and hope to which they can cling in the uncertainties and vicissitudes of their situatedness (Vrey, 1990:182). The deprived child, because of his situatedness, does not see religion as a meaningful association as the reason being that it does not relate practically to the problems experienced by them (Janse van Rensburg, 1994:123). The relationship with religion is seen by the child in educational distress as not continuous with his life-world and inconsistent with his problems. The relationship does not provide faith in and trust upon a divine being to solve the problems in a deprived *milieu* (Sosibo, 2004:36).

2.5 SUMMARY

Children in distress at school are the children who need more individual attention and concern. Some of them will undoubtedly be known to welfare agencies that may be doing much to help them, some may be out of reach for help, some may refuse help, and there will be many who manage to conceal their need for it. Learners who are experiencing educational distress find themselves in educational crises. Their actions of ascribing significance to matter, i.e. the formation of meaningful relations are of insufficient quality. This gives rise to inadequate actions of hoping, planning, gaining insight into himself of never attaining freedom to be responsible, and thus the disregarding of accepted norms and values. The ascribing of significance of insufficient quality is clearly evident in the life-world of the child from deprived *milieu*.

Children are constantly ascribing their personal meanings to the relationship, already established with their parents and educators and are emotionally vulnerable in that respect. Parents and educators should, therefore, take special care in the course of their educative acts that children will consciously know that they are able to learn and achieve, and that their personal work is genuinely recognised. If this is not accomplished, the educational relationship is dysfunctional and this invariably has a negative influence on children's progress towards adulthood that is this development.

The psychic life of learners from the educational point of view refers to the affective, cognitive and conative aspects of individuals. Dysfunctional education *per se* implies that learners will suffer an impediment with regard to their development. In other words, learners under-actualise their psychic life at a level that is attainable or possible for them and this becomes a cause for educational distress of children coming from a deprived *milieu* because of the dysfunctional education they get because of their status of being poor. They are neglected by both peers and educators and thus this leads to low self-esteem and educational distress.

CHAPTER 3

PLANNING OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Research in the preceding chapter on the educational distress of a child from a deprived *milieu* was conducted by means of available relevant literature. This literature study revealed that the child from a deprived *milieu* experiences educational distress at school due to various reasons. In order to investigate the findings in the literature study it is necessary to undertake empirical research. The collection of empirical data will be done by administering self-structured questionnaire (cf. Appendix A) to educators in primary schools. This chapter will focus on the empirical research design.

3.2 PREPARATION AND DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

3.2.1 Permission

With the aim of administering the questionnaire to primary school educators it was required to first request permission from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture (KZN DEC). A letter to ask for the necessary permission was drafted (Appendix B) and directed to the Scottburgh Circuit Manageress, being the area where the research sample would be selected. A copy of the questionnaire (Appendix A) was sent with a letter requesting approval from the department. After permission was granted the circuit manageress for the intended research to be undertaken (Appendix C) the researcher visited the principals of the randomly selected primary schools with the letter of approval, in order to ask their permission to administer the questionnaire to the educators of the school.

3.2.2 Selection of respondents

Schools were randomly selected from the list of primary schools in the Scottburgh Circuit on the KwaZulu-Natal south coast. The circuit includes predominantly rural areas. Educators were randomly selected from each chosen school and this provided the researcher with a random selected sample of 300 primary school educators as respondents, which can be considered an adequate sample for reliable data analysis by means of descriptive statistics.

3.3 DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

3.3.1 Quantitative research

The purpose of the research design is to provide the most valid, accurate answers possible to research questions. Macmillan and Schumacher (1997:34) say that since there are many types of research questions and many types of designs, it is important to match the design with the questions.

Quantitative research methods collect data to be translated into a statistical format. The responses of respondents to the questions in a questionnaire are recorded in coded format, presented in frequency tables, graphs and/or chart formats, analysed and interpreted (De Vos, 2001:208). The simplest form of data analysis is univariate analysis, which means that one variable is analysed, mainly with the view to describing that variable (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995:100). It can thus be stated that where a first-time researcher requires information, quantitative data collection and analysis seem to be the most suitable method. The researcher selected the quantitative approach because:

- it is more formalised,
- it is better controlled,
- has a range that is more exactly defined; and
- use methods relatively close to the physical sciences.

3.3.2 The questionnaire as research instrument

According to Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:504) a questionnaire is a set of questions dealing with some topic or related group of topics, given to a selected group of individuals for the purpose of gathering data on a problem under consideration. Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:190) say the questionnaire is a prepared question form submitted to certain persons (respondents) with a view to obtaining information. Churchill and Petes (Schnetler, 1993:77) have shown that the measuring instrument has the greater influence on the reliability of research data. The characteristics of measurement are best controlled by the careful construction of the instrument. There is however, insufficient appreciation for the fact that a questionnaire should be constructed according to certain principles (De Vos, 2001:89).

A well-designed questionnaire is the culmination of a long process of planning the research objective, formulating the problem, generating the hypothesis, etc. A questionnaire is not simply thrown together. A poorly designed questionnaire can invalidate any research results, notwithstanding the merits of the sample, the field workers and the statistical techniques (Huysamen, 1989:2). In their criticism of questionnaires Berchie and Anderson (Schnetler, 1993:61) object to poor design rather than to questionnaires as such. A well-designed questionnaire can boost the reliability and validity of the data to acceptable tolerances (Schumacher & Meillon, 1993:42).

It therefore stands to reason that questionnaire design does not take place in a vacuum. According to Dane (1990:315-319) the length of individual questions, the number of response options, as well as the format and wording of questions are determined by the following:

- The choice of the subjects to be researched.
- The aim of the research.
- The size of the research sample.

- The method of data collection.
- The analysis of the data.

Against this background the researcher can now look at the principles that determine whether a questionnaire is well-designed. It is thus necessary to draw a distinction between questionnaire content, question format, question order, type of questions, formulation of questions and validity and reliability of questions.

3.3.3 **Construction of the questionnaire**

Questionnaire design is an activity that should not take place in isolation. The researcher should consult and seek advice from specialists and colleagues at all times during the construction of the questionnaire (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1990:198). Questions to be taken up in the questionnaire should be tested on people to eliminate possible errors. A question may appear correct to the researcher when written down but can be interpreted differently when asked to another person. There should be no hesitation in changing questions several times before the final formulation, whilst keeping the original purpose in mind. The most important point to be taken into account in questionnaire design is that it takes time and effort and that the questionnaire will be re-drafted a number of times before being finalised. A researcher must therefore ensure that adequate time is budgeted for in the construction and preliminary testing of the questionnaire (Kidder & Judd, 1986:243-245). All of the above was taken into consideration by the researcher during the designing of the questionnaire for this investigation.

An important aim in the construction of the questionnaire for this investigation was to present the questions as simply and straightforwardly as possible. The researcher further aimed to avoid ambiguity, vagueness, bias, prejudice and technical language in the questions.

The aim of the questionnaire (Appendix A) is to obtain information regarding educators' views of the educational distress of the child from a deprived *milieu*

and the effect thereof on academic achievement. The questions were formulated to establish the nature of the educational distress the child from a deprived *milieu* encounters.

- The educational distress of a child from a deprived *milieu*.
- The effects of educational distress on his life-world.

The questionnaire was subdivided into the following sections:

- Section one which dealt with the biographical information of the respondents, namely primary school educators and consisted of questions 1 to 6

Sections two and three of the questionnaire consisted of closed questions. The respondents were requested to indicate their responses to the statements pertaining to the educational distress of the child from a deprived *milieu*. The primary school teachers have to state their views concerning effects of educational distress on academic work and extracurricular activities in three ways, namely agree, disagree and uncertain. The questions were grouped as follows:

- Section two contained questions on the factors contributing to the educational distress of the child.
- Section three consists of questions on the effects of educational distress of the child.

3.3.4 **Characteristics of a good questionnaire**

Throughout the construction of the questionnaire the researcher had to consider the characteristics of a good questionnaire in order to meet the requirements necessary for the research instrument to be reliable. The characteristics of a good questionnaire that were considered by the researcher are, according to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1988:190), Mahlangu (1987:84-85) and Norval (1990:60) the following;

- It has to deal with a significant topic, one the respondent will recognise as important enough to warrant spending his time on.

The significance should be clearly and carefully stated on the questionnaire and on the accompanying letter.

- It must seek only that information which cannot be obtained from other sources.
- It must be as short as possible, but long enough to get the essential data. Long questionnaires frequently find their way into the wastepaper basket.
- Questionnaires should be attractive in appearance, neatly arranged and clearly duplicated as printed.
- Directions for a good questionnaire must be clear and complete, and important terms clearly defined.
- Each question has to deal with a single concept and should be worded as simply and straightforwardly as possible.
- Different categories should provide an opportunity for easy, accurate and unambiguous responses.
- Objectively formulated questions with no leading suggestions should render the desired responses. Leading questions are just as inappropriate in a questionnaire as they are in a court of law.
- Questions should be presented in a proper psychological order, proceeding from general to more specific and sensitive responses. An orderly grouping helps respondents to organise their own thinking so that their answers are logical and objective. It is preferable to present questions that create a favourable attitude before proceeding to those that

are more intimate or delicate in nature. Annoying and/or embarrassing questions should be avoided if possible.

3.3.5 Advantages and disadvantages of the questionnaire

Data can be gathered by means of a structured questionnaire, *inter alia*, the following ways: a written questionnaire that is mailed, delivered or handed out personally, personal interviews, telephone interviews (Kidder & Judd, 1986:221). Each mode has specific advantages and disadvantages which the researcher needs to evaluate for their suitability to the research question and the specific target population being studied, as well as relative cost. Researcher used the written questionnaire as a research instrument taking into consideration the following disadvantages.

1. Advantages of the written questionnaire

- Affordability is the primary advantage of written questionnaires because it is the least expensive means of data gathering.
- Written questionnaires preclude possible interviewer bias. The way the interviewer asks questions and even the interviewer's general appearance or interaction may influence respondents' answers. Such biases can be completely eliminated with a written questionnaire.
- A questionnaire permits anonymity. If it is arranged such that responses were given anonymously, this would increase the researcher's chances of receiving responses which genuinely represent a person's beliefs, feelings, opinions or perceptions.
- They permit a respondent a sufficient amount of time to consider answers before responding.
- Questionnaires can be given to many people simultaneously, that is to say that a larger sample of a target population can be reached.

- They provide greater uniformity across measurement situations than do interviews. Each person responds to exactly the same questions because standard instructions are given to the respondents.
- Generally the data provided by questionnaires can be more easily analysed and interpreted than the data obtained from verbal responses.
- A respondent may answer questions of a personal or embarrassing nature more willingly and frankly on a questionnaire than in a face-to-face situation with an interviewer who may be a complete stranger. In some cases it may happen that respondents may report less than expected and make more critical errors.
- Questions requiring considered answers rather than immediate answers could enable respondents to consult documents in the case of the mail questionnaire approach.
- Respondents can complete questionnaires in their own time and in a more relaxed atmosphere.
- Questionnaire design is relatively easy if the set guidelines are followed.
- The administering of questionnaires, the coding, analysis and interpretation of data can be done without any special training.

2. Disadvantages of the questionnaire

The researcher is also aware of the fact that the written questionnaire has important disadvantages. According to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:190) and Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:112) the disadvantages of the questionnaire are, *inter alia*, the following:

- Questionnaires do not provide the flexibility of interviews. In an interview an idea or comment can be explored. This makes it possible to gauge

how people are interpreting the question. If questions asked are interpreted differently by respondents the validity of the information obtained is jeopardised.

- People are generally better able to express their views verbally than in writing.
- Questions can be answered only when they are sufficiently easy and straightforward to be understood with the given instructions and definitions.
- The mail questionnaire does not make provision for obtaining the views of more than one person at a time. It requires uninfluenced views of one person only.
- Answers to written questionnaires must be seen as final. Rechecking of responses cannot be done. There is no chance of investigating beyond the given answer for a clarification of ambiguous answers. If respondents are unwilling to answer certain questions nothing can be done to it because the mail questionnaire is essentially inflexible.
- In a written questionnaire the respondent examines all the questions at the same time before answering them and the answers to the different questions can therefore not be treated as 'independent'.
- Researchers are unable to control the context of question answering, and specifically, the presence of other people. Respondents may ask friends or family members to examine the questionnaire or comment on their answers, causing bias if the respondent's own private opinions are desired.
- Written questionnaires do not allow the researcher to correct misunderstanding or answer questions that the respondents may have.

Respondents might answer questions incorrectly or not at all due to confusion or misinterpretation.

3.3.6 **Validity and reliability of the questionnaire**

There are two concepts that are of critical importance in understanding issues of measurement in social science research, namely validity and reliability (Huysamen, 1989:1-3). All too rarely do questionnaire designers deal consciously with the degree of validity and reliability of their instrument. This is one of the reasons why so many questionnaires are lacking in these two qualities (Cooper, 1989:15). Questionnaires have a very limited purpose. In fact, they are often one-time data gathering devices with a very short life, administered to a limited population. There are ways to improve both the validity and reliability of questionnaires. Basic to the validity of a questionnaire is asking the right questions phrased in the least ambiguous way. In other words, do the items sample a significant aspect of the purpose of the investigation? Terms must be clearly defined so that they have the same meaning to all respondents (Cohen, 1989:111-112).

Kidder and Judd (1989:53-540) mention the fact that although reliability and validity are two different characteristics of measurement, they “shade into each other”. There are two ends of a continuum but at points in the middle it is difficult to distinguish between them. Validity and reliability are especially important in educational research because most of the measurements attempted in this area are obtained indirectly. Researchers can never guarantee that an educational or psychological measuring instrument measures precisely and dependably what it is intended to measure (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1990:198). It is essential, therefore, to assess the validity and reliability of these instruments. Researchers must therefore have a general knowledge as to what validity and reliability are and now one goes about validating a research instrument and establishing its reliability.

(1) Validity of the questionnaire

Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:560) define validity as the extent to which a measuring instrument satisfies the purpose for which it was constructed. It also refers to the extent to which it correlates with some criterion external to the instrument itself. Validity is that quality of a data-gathering instrument or procedure that enables it to determine what it was designed to determine. In general terms validity refers to the degree to which an instrument succeeds in measuring what it has set out to measure.

Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:237), Mulder (1989:215-217) and Dane (1990:257-258) distinguish between three types of validity.

- Content validity where content and cognitive processes included can be measured. Topics, skills and abilities should be prepared and items from each category randomly drawn.
- Criterion validity, which refers to the relationship between scores on a measuring instrument and an independent variable (creation) believed to measure directly the behaviour as characteristic in question. The criterion should be relevant, variable and free from bias and contamination.
- Construct validity where the extent which the test measures a specific trait or construct is concerned, for example intelligence, reasoning, ability, attributes, etc.

This means that validity of the questionnaire indicates how worthwhile a measure is likely to be in a given situation. Validity shows whether the instrument is reflecting the true story, or at least something approximating the truth. A valid research instrument i.e. one that has demonstrated that it detects some “real: ability, attitude is itself stable, and if a respondent’s answers to the items are not affected by other unpredictable factors, then each administration of the instrument should yield essentially the same results (Dane, 1990:158).

The validity of the questionnaire as a research instrument reflects the sureness with which conclusions can be drawn. It refers to the extent to which interpretations of the instrument's results, other than the one the research wishes to make, can be ruled out. Establishing validity requires that the research anticipates the potential arguments that sceptics might use to dismiss the research results (Cooper, 1989:120).

The researcher employed the questionnaire as an indirect method to measure educational distress of a child from a deprived *milieu*. Because of the complexity of the respondent's attribute one is never sure that the questionnaire devised will actually measure what it purports to measure. Items in the questionnaire cannot be measured like height, mass, length or size. From the interpretation of the results obtained and the sureness with which conclusions could be drawn the researcher is, however, convinced that the questionnaire, to a great extent did measure that which it was designed for.

(2) Reliability of the questionnaire

According to Mulder (1989:209) and Van Rensburg, Landman and Bodenstein (1994:812) reliability is a statistical concept and relates to consistency and dependability. A reliable measuring instrument is one that, if repeated under similar conditions, would present the same result or a near approximation of the initial result. Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990:194) and Kidder and Judd (1986:4-48) distinguish between the following types of reliability:

- Test-retest reliability (coefficient of stability) – consistently estimated by comparing two or more repeated administrations of the measuring instrument. This gives an indication of the dependability of the results on one occasion and on another occasion.
- Split-half reliability. By correlating the results obtained from two halves of the same measuring instrument, we can calculate the split-half reliability.

In essence, reliability refers to consistency, but consistency does not guarantee truthfulness. The reliability of the question is no proof that the answers given reflect the respondent's true feelings (Dane, 1990:256). A demonstration of reliability is necessary but not conclusive evidence that an instrument is valid. Reliability refers to the extent to which measurements results are free of unpredictable kinds of error. Sources of error that effect reliability are, *inter alia*, the following (Mulder, 1989:209; Kidder & Judd, 1986:45).

Fluctuations in the mood or alertness of respondents because of illness, fatigue, recent good or bad experiences, or temporary differences amongst members of the group being measured.

- Variations on the conditions of administration between groups. These range from various distractions, such as unusual outside noise to inconsistencies in the administration of the measuring instrument such as omissions in verbal instructions.
- Differences in scoring or interpretation of results, chance differences in what the observer notices and errors in computing scores.
- Random effects by respondents who guess or check off attitude alternatives without trying to understand them.

When the questionnaire is used as an empirical research instrument there is no specific method, for example the 'test-retest' method, to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. Therefore it will be difficult to establish to what extent the answers of the respondents were reliable. The researcher, however, believes that the questionnaires in this investigation were completed with the necessary honesty and sincerely required to render the maximum possible reliability. Frankness in responding to questions was made possible by the anonymity of the questionnaire. In the coding of the questions it was evident that questionnaires were completed with the necessary dedication.

3.4 PILOT STUDY

A pilot study is an abbreviated version of a research project in which the researcher practises or tests the procedures to be used in the subsequent full-scale project (De Vos, 2001:178). For the purpose of the pilot study in this research project ten educators were selected from amongst the researcher's colleagues and educators' friends. The pilot study is a preliminary or 'trial run' investigation using similar questions and similar subjects as in the final survey. Kidder and Judd (1986:211-212) say the basic purpose of a pilot study is to determine how the design of the subsequent study can be improved and to identify flaws in the measuring instrument. A pilot study gives the researcher an idea of what the method will actually look like in operation and what effects (intended or not) it is likely to have. In other words, by generating many of the practical problems that will ultimately arise, a pilot study enables the researcher to avert these problems by changing procedures, instructions and questions.

The number of participants in the pilot study or group is normally smaller than the number scheduled to take part in the final survey. Participants in the pilot study and the sample for the final study must be selected from the same target population. For the purpose of this study the researcher conducted a pilot run on his colleagues.

According to Plug, Meyer, Louw and Gouws (1991:149-66) the following are the purposes of a pilot study, and these were also the aim of the researcher in this survey:

- It provided the researcher with the opportunity of refining the wording, ordering and layout and it helped to prune the questionnaire to a manageable size.
- It permitted a thorough check of the planned statistical and analytical procedures, thus allowing an appraisal of their adequacy in treating the data.

- It greatly reduced the number of treatment errors because unforeseen problems revealed in the pilot study resulted in redesigning the main study.
- It saves the researcher major expenditure of time and money on aspects of the research, which would have been unnecessary.
- Feedback from other persons involved was made possible and led to important improvements in the main study.
- The approximate time required to complete the questionnaire was established in the pilot study.
- Questions and/or instructions that were misinterpreted were reformulated.

Through the use of the pilot study as 'pre-test' the researcher was satisfied that the questions asked complied adequately to the requirements of the study.

3.5 ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

If properly administered the questionnaire is the best available instrument for obtaining information from widespread sources or large groups simultaneously (Cooper, 1989:39). The researcher personally delivered questionnaires to selected schools in Scottburgh Circuit and collected them again after completion. This method of administration facilitated the process and the responses rate. A satisfactory return rate was obtained with 270 out of 300 questionnaires completed and collected.

3.6 THE PROCESSING OF THE DATA

Once data was collected, it had to be captured in a format, which would permit analysis and interpretation. This involved the careful coding of the questionnaires completed by the randomly selected primary school educators.

The coded data was subsequently transferred onto a computer spreadsheet using the Quattro Pro 6.0 programme. The coded data was analysed using the same programme in order to interpret the results by means of descriptive statistics.

3.6.1 **Descriptive statistics**

Descriptive statistics serve to describe and summarise observations (Van Rensburg, Landman & Bodenstein, 1994:355). Frequency tables, histograms and polygons are useful in forming impressions about the distribution of data.

According to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1990-:65) frequency distribution is a method to organise data obtained from questionnaires to simplify statistical analysis. A frequency table provides the following information:

- It indicates how many times a particular response appears on the completed questionnaires.
- It provides percentages that reflect the number of responses to a certain question in relation to the total number of responses.
- The arithmetic mean (average) can be calculated by adding all the scores and dividing it by the number of scores.

3.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATION

This investigation was constrained by a number of factors. The following are likely factors that might have influenced the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Although anonymity was required in the questionnaire the possibility exists that, because of the primary school educators' callousness, they might not have been frank and truthful in their responses.

- The formulation of the questions in English, which is not the mother-tongue of most of the respondents, might have results in the misinterpretation of questions which could have elicited incorrect responses.
- To restrict the investigation to manageable proportions, the researcher limited the study to primary school educators of schools which are easily accessible.
- The number of completed questionnaires returned (...) could have been high to render more valid findings.

3.8 SUMMARY

In this chapter the planning and design of the empirical research was discussed and a comprehensive description of the questionnaire as research instrument was given.

In the following chapter the data obtained from the completed questionnaires will be analysed.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter a summary of the previous chapters will be given. This will be followed by recommendations and criticism that emanates from the study, and a final remark.

5.2 SUMMARY

5.2.1 Statement of the problem

In essence this study investigated the educational distress of a child from a deprived *milieu* and the following questions that were answered:

- What are the factors that cause educational distress in a child from a deprived *milieu*?
- How is the psychic life of a child living in a deprived *milieu*?
- Which methods can be employed to assist educators to help children overcome educational distress?

5.2.2 Literature review

Children in educational distress at school refer to the children who are often wretchedly unhappy because of the strain put upon them by the circumstances prevailing both at home and at school. They are the children who need more individual attention and concern. Some of them will undoubtedly be known to welfare agencies that may be doing much to help

them, some may be out of reach of help, some may refuse help, and there will be many who manage to conceal their needs of it.

The child from deprived *milieu* indeed finds himself within a dysfunctional educational situation. His actions of ascribing significance to matter, i.e. the formation of meaningful relationships are of insufficient quality. The quality of the relationship has a direct influence on the success or otherwise of the educational activity. Conversely, the quality of the relationship is also influenced by the success or failure of the education activity.

An educational relationship consists of three very important educational structures, namely the educational relationship of trust, of understanding and of authority. If these structures are not realised, no genuine education situation will be realised, and education cannot be fully actualised hence education becoming dysfunctional.

Educational distress occurs where the quality of education offered is intrinsically bad. The participation of both parties is insufficient in that the essential meaning of repudiation is not fulfilled because learners are not involved in an intimate relationship with educators whose focus is on adulthood.

Children from deprived *milieu* often manifest the following attitudes and behavioural patterns:

- trouble some in class;
- dropout academically and socially;
- often absent or playing truant;
- personal problems;
- social problems;
- sensitive to any reference to their deficiencies;
- poor concentration and under-achievement;
- display evidence of behavioural problems;

- unpopular because of bad behaviours and poor achievement; and
- have feelings of inferiority.

The child from a deprived *milieu* is usually labile, confused and disoriented concerning his Gnostic import experiences. It inhibits the child's desires and initiative in a number of ways. The child from a deprived *milieu*.

- wishes to become someone in his own right but he is held in check and remains small (immature),
- forced to adopt an expectant attitude despite the fact that as a person he is endowed with the initiative to create relationships,
- would like to feel worthy, but feels inferior instead,
- desires stability, seeks understanding but regards himself as misunderstood,
- craves support to realise his full potential, but constantly seems to be dispossessed of his potentialities, and
- wishes to submit to true authority, but experience a total absence of it.

The child from deprived *milieu* experiences educational distress because of the following, which leads to inadequate education.

- Poverty.
- Poor housing for studying.
- Deprivation.
- Hunger.
- Lack of love.
- Illness.

The children from a deprived *milieu* experience the following specific educational errors, which cause distress:

- Lack of security.
- Obscured future perspective.
- Affective or emotional neglect.
- Rejection.
- Unfavourable comparison.
- Inadequate exercise of authority.
- Disregarding deprived child as a unique person.

5.2.3 **Planning at research**

This study utilised a questionnaire, constructed by the researcher as data base. The questionnaire was aimed at primary school educators in mainly rural schools in southern KwaZulu-Natal. The information sought for this investigation was not readily available from any other source and had to be acquired directly from the respondents. When this situation exists the most appropriate source of data is the questionnaire, as it is easily adapted to a variety of situations.

The aim of the questionnaire was to obtain information regarding the educational distress of a child from a deprived *milieu* in the following aspects:

- Factors contributing to the educational distress.
- Learner-educator relationship.
- The involvement of parents in their children's academic work and extracurricular activities.

5.2.4 **Presentation and analysis of data**

In Chapter 4 the data, which was collected from the completed questionnaires was presented in frequency tables. The simplest and most appropriate method to organise the data for this study was to calculate the number of responses to each question according to the codes assigned to the questions and then transforming them to frequency distribution tables which reflect by means of percentages the number of times each question code was obtained. Frequency distributions show the most and least frequently occurring responses and are useful in the descriptive analysis and interpretation of data obtained.

The descriptive statistics were used as basis for the inferential statistics. The aim of the inferential statistics was to make inference (predictions) about the similarity of the sample, which was drawn from the population (educators from primary schools in rural areas).

The chi-square technique (cross-tabulation) was used as the test of significance to compare observed frequencies with expected frequencies in order to establish if any relation exists between the independent and dependent variables.

5.2.5 **Aim of the study**

The researcher formulated specific aims (cf. 1.6) to determine the course of the study. These aims were realised through the literature study, together with an empirical survey consisting of a structured questionnaire. On this basis certain findings are given:

5.3 FINDINGS

5.3.1 Findings from the literature study

From the literature study it was found that children from a deprived *milieu* experience educational distress because of the following factors:

- Lack of safety (security) cause educational problems that affect a child adversely with regard to his meaningful experiences, his knowledge, volition and behaviour which results in educational distress. A low socio-economic status which includes poverty, inadequate housing, unemployment or poorly paid jobs, etc. are some of the factors in a deprived *milieu* that do not provide the child with the safety and security needed for his optimal becoming.
- Children living in a deprived *milieu* have a bleak future outlook (obscured future perspective). These children face an uncertain future if they do not receive proper education in order to seek good employment. If the future is obscured in the child's view there is little to look forward to or to expect and there are no plans or tasks, however small, waiting to be fulfilled.
- The child in educational distress experiences affective (emotional) neglect. Affective neglect is the deprivation of emotional resources that normally come from healthy nurturing and supportive human interaction. Children from a deprived *milieu* often feel emotionally impoverished because of their low socio-economic status and may find themselves in a chronic pattern of deep emotional pain that contributes to educational distress.
- The child from a deprived *milieu* often experiences rejection in school because of educators' and learners' disapproval of them wearing the wrong or no school uniform, being frequently absent, their lack of cleanliness, not having the required school books, etc. If a learner is not accepted as he is, he experiences rejection.

- Educators and learners are often responsible for unfavourable comparisons between learners from poor families and learners from more affluent families. The child that is unfavourably compared with others will develop negative feelings about himself and consequently a low self-esteem and educational distress.
- The characteristics of a deprived *milieu*, such as poverty, can influence a child's affective experience, namely his emotions, feelings, passions, moods and sentiments. Lack of environmental stimulation, malnutrition, poor parenting due to worry, preoccupation, discouragement or resentment of their situation all have an influence on a child's affective experience.
- Children who come from families with low socio-economic status and poor educational setting often do not perform as well academically as children from middle or upper class homes. Children from a better socio-economic *milieu* have the advantage of more educational resources, motivation and experience.
- Through the process of emancipation the child moves from a perceived self to an adequate self by formulating a positive identity. For the child from a deprived *milieu* this identity often seems unattainable and the child might eventually accept that it is in actual fact unreachable and consequently believes he is inferior.
- Children in educational distress experience difficulties in the forming of healthy relationships. Disturbed family relationships caused by living in a deprived *milieu* result in problematic relationships that are formed by children within and outside family structures.
- Most children coming from a deprived *milieu* suffer from a negative self-concept because they feel they are not wanted and therefore their deeds and actions are worthless.

- An educationally neglected child that is vulnerable and lacking self-confidence and experience, and is in need of love and acceptance, are especially more susceptible to peer pressure.
- Children living in poverty often do not experience religion as a faith and hope to which they can cling in the uncertainties and vicissitudes of their situatedness. Being religious in a deprived *milieu* does not provide faith in and trust upon a divine being (god) to solve their problems.

5.3.2 **Findings from empirical research**

- Eighty-one percent (81%) of the respondents in the research sample said that learners from a deprived *milieu* are dropping out of schools to find jobs in order to supplement their family income.
- The majority of the respondents (68%) supported the statements that learners from deprived *milieu* are becoming street children in order to support themselves by begging.
- Most of the respondents (83%) that partook in the research agreed that learners from a deprived *milieu* are insecure about their future perspective. They have insufficient or no money for furthering their studies after finishing school.
- The larger percentage (63%) of the respondents acknowledged that learners from a deprived *milieu* are stigmatised by the educators if they do not have sufficient educational resources. Educators tend to pass bad remarks to these learners because of their low socio-economic status.
- More than sixty percent (61%) of the respondents agreed that learners from a deprived *milieu* are unfavourably compared with other learners by educators.

- Most of the respondents (69%) supported the statement that learners from a deprived *milieu* are rejected by their peer group because of being from lower socio-economic class.
- Most of the respondents (84%) in the research sample said that learners from a deprived *milieu* are performing poorly in their school work due to insufficient resources.
- More than ninety percent (92%) of the respondents indicated that learners from a deprived *milieu* are behind with their school work and are unable to complete their homework because of their poor home conditions.
- The majority of the respondents (89%) said that learners from a deprived *milieu* create disciplinary problems at school for example late-coming.
- Eighty-one percent (81%) of the respondents said that children from a deprived *milieu* are easily influenced to misbehave at school.
- More than seventy percent (73%) of the respondents agreed that learners from deprived *milieu* repeat a misdemeanour after being punished.
- The larger percentage (72%) of the respondents in the research sample indicated that the parents of children from a deprived milieu:
 - do not support their children's sport activities at school; and
 - also do not attend cultural activities in which their children participate.
- Three quarters (75%) of the respondents said that the parents from a deprived *milieu* do not assist their children with the homework.
- According to more than seventy percent (73%) of the respondents the parents from a deprived *milieu* do not consult with educators regarding

their children's academic progress whilst 65% of the respondents said parents from a deprived *milieu* do not discuss problems experienced by their children with educators.

- Seventy-five percent (75%) of the respondents said that school girls from a deprived *milieu* are falling pregnant in order to receive a child grant. They believe it will help them to supplement their family income.
- More than seventy percent (73%) of the respondents supported the statement that children from deprived *milieu* are more at risk of sexual abuse as the perpetrators are giving them money to perform their sexual activities.
- The larger percentage (57%) of the respondents that partook in the research indicated that learners from a deprived *milieu* do not receive assistance from the school, for example funds allocated to poverty.
- The majority of the respondents in the research sample said that they do understand the problems of learners coming from a deprived *milieu*, namely:
 - physical problems (87%);
 - emotional problems (86%); and
 - spiritual problems (80%).

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.4.1 Inculcation of positive attitudes to children from deprived *milieu*

(1) Recommendation

Children from deprived *milieu* need support from educators at school to overcome the distress caused by their low socio-economic status. It is also a vital task for educators to change the attitude of these learners to be positive

towards academic work. The school needs to change the attitudes of all learners to accept these learners as they are and offer help where it is needed. Learners must develop teamwork and take their fellow learners as brothers and sisters and give help if they encounter problems as far as learning resources are concerned. They must lend them whatever they need. The negative attitude developed by learners from deprived *milieu*, *inter alia*, the following factors:

- Low self-esteem.
- Poverty.
- Lack of learning resources.
- Shortage of money.
- Hunger.
- Walk long distances because they do not have taxi fare.
- Educators themselves have a negative attitude towards them.
- Torn or dirty clothing as they do not have means to buy new clothes.
- Do not have learning resources to do homework.

The attitude the educators and other learners have towards the children from deprived *milieu* influences the child's attitude to his schoolwork. The educators are the people who have an important responsibility to help the poor children to acquire adequate learning as the other learners from high economic status. The parents of these learners need to be involved and be given ideas of how they can help their learners and themselves to get money for their children.

(2) Recommendations

The recommendation is that in order to promote positive attitudes amongst the children from a deprived *milieu* the Department of Education and Culture must:

- Convene seminars, workshops and training programmes for educators to provide guidelines in respect of, *inter alia*, the following:

- to inform educator's ways the children from deprived *milieu* should be helped to have a positive attitude towards academic work.
- To teach educators and school managers about the content of White Paper 6 which includes the ways of which the learners from a deprived *milieu* can be helped, *inter alia*, the following:
 - (i) Building a forthcoming and supportive school environment where societal barriers are eliminated.
 - (ii) Diminishing barriers i.e. support learners' achievement or exclusion.
 - (iii) Infusion of continuum of support.
 - (iv) Advocate the restructuring of educational institution.
- The schools should be more than centre of learning but centres of care and support. The part in the education (White Paper) which deals more with children from deprived *milieu* is under societal barriers which includes poverty, negative and harmful attitudes, late admission, violence, crime, impact of HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy must be implemented.
- The school should help the parents' grants by working and cooperating with each other. Department bodies, e.g. social welfare and home affairs. Other parents do not get grants because they do not have birth certificates and other illiterate parents do not have identity books, especially in rural areas. It is the task of the educators to help the illiterate parents so that they get money to educate their children.

5.4.2 **Involvement programmes for parents from deprived *milieu***

(1) Motivation

Today it is widely acknowledged that parental involvement in the child's schooling is a fundamental democratic and pedagogic necessity for a system of education to be effective. Responsible parenthood requires that the parent should become actively involved in the formal education of the child. Effective parental involvement is only possible in a well-informed and diligent parent community which, through parent orientation under the leadership of the school governing body and/or other parental bodies, whether statutory or otherwise, has mobilised itself and is willing to render its services.

By means of parental involvement programmes, parents must be made aware that their rights in respect of their children's education only extend as far as the degree to which they realise and practise their duties. The responsibilities and duties of parents in formal education make guidance for parents essential. Schools and the various parent management bodies therefore have the enormous task of alerting uninterested and uncaring parents to their role in this vital educational function. They need to inspire and equip parents to undertake the school community relation's programme that will attract parents to the school so that they will become acquainted with educators and learn to take an interest in various facets of the school.

Parental training is becoming a necessity because parents have already relinquished too many of their responsibilities to the school. Non-governmental organisations such as Management of Schools Training Programme already indicated that it is possible to train educators and parents to involve parents in school activities.

(2) Recommendations

The Department of Education must train educators to involve parents in school activities. The training programmes for parental involvement should include the following:

- Activities for informal parental involvement that do concentrate on the duties of parents on the school governing body.
- Such training programmes must aim at eliminating ignorance of the rights and responsibilities of parents.
- Tertiary institutions should include parenting and parental involvement as courses in teacher training curricula.
- Principals should improve the way they communicate with parents. Within the constraints of large learner populations it may be necessary to use newspapers, radio and television to announce school activities and invite parents to take part. Announcements over the radio can reach even the parents, in remote areas.
- Communication with parents should be in a medium and language that they understand because illiteracy may hamper a clear understanding.
- In rural areas principals should organise school meetings at appropriate times in consultation with employers (e.g. farmers) and also request the employer to provide transport for the parents. Farmers often provide transport for their workers to go to town and this is arranged to coincide with school meetings

5.4.3 **Further research**

(1) **Motivation**

The research has shown that poverty, characteristic of a deprived *milieu*, has a negative impact on the education of a child. This low socio-economic status contributes to the educational distress the learner experiences at school. Parents affected by poverty fail to comply with the child's educational needs for example, parental involvement.

(2) **Recommendation**

The recommendation is that further research of a quantitative and qualitative nature must be undertaken pertaining to the educational distress of the children from deprived *milieu*. It is necessary that the research studies be conducted to find suitable programmes that will help the learners from low socio-economic status to cope with education. Further research should also be done in secondary schools in urban and semi-urban areas.

5.5 CRITICISM

Criticism that emanates from the study includes the following:

- It can be presumed that some of the respondents who have completed the questionnaires did not answer what is really happening. They answer randomly, without giving reality about the situation the learners from deprived *milieu* really confront.
- The research sample comprised only primary school educators of schools from the former Bantu Department of Education. Dissimilar responses might have been elicited from schools in the former white, coloured and Indian education departments.

6 FINAL REMARKS

The aim of this study was to reach a better understanding of the educational distress of the child from a deprived *milieu*. It is hoped that educators and stakeholders will acknowledge the need for developing and implementing intervention strategies to address the educational distress of learners from a deprived *milieu*. It is also trusted that the recommendations from this study will be considered in order to meet the special needs of the learner from a deprived *milieu*.

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