

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Today, more and more developing countries see education as the "ticket" to remunerative employment and a desirable income (Jones, 1989:1). Education has therefore become inexorably bound up with economic development, social mobility, increased productivity and it is viewed by the State as having substantial political value for meeting populations' aspirations in literacy, skills, credentials and status. Thus education has become a symbol of human progress and a signification of individual success.

Education has also become one of the fundamental principles for the organization of the modern societies, and for the grading of children in terms of their intellectual abilities and potential. In this regard, children who are evaluated, on the basis of examination results, to have superior intellectual abilities and potential are streamed into a particular class and taught differently for their less able and less promising peers. The result of this is that it has created a system whereby pupils, parents and even teachers have to come to attach vital importance to the marks obtained in school work. For example, pupils have become so "marks-conscious" that on getting their marked written work back, the first thing they do is to look at what marks

they scored rather than considering the number of mistakes they made. Similarly, some parents have also become so concerned about the scores of their children obtain that they first thing they do is to ask about the marks their children obtained in an examination or test, or their position in the examination. According to Jubber (1990:1), since so much depends on the answers learners produce in an examination, it is not surprising that questions like "What mark did you get?" and "Where did you come?" are so often asked by pupils and parents. They know that pupils who perform magnificently in tests and examinations have immense educational opportunities open to them to achieve the highest academic qualifications and obtain secure and well-paid job.

Further, Jubber (1990:1) argues that it is generally assumed by teachers, *inter alia*, that pupils who perform very well in tests and examinations and take good positions in the order of merit, come from good homes apparently different from those who perform poorly. Thus, in this study the researcher is concerned with the influence of pupils' family background and learning, home environment on their performance in examination and test results, and class and standard position in Venda schools. The investigator is interested particularly in Venda because apparently nobody has attempted to research on the extent to which a pupil's family background and home environment affect his or her school performance in this country. Furthermore, the focus of this study is on standard 8 pupils because this standard is generally

regarded as crucial in determining the number of pupils who will enter senior classes and eventually write the matriculation examinations. Hence standard 8 class is predictive to what we should anticipate in the future matriculation examination results.

Furthermore, standard 8 pupils write external examinations centrally set by the Venda Department of Education for promotion to standard 9. Over the past few years the Std 8 promotion examination results have been particularly disturbing because a large number of pupils fail to proceed to Std 9 as shown in the table below.

**Table 1.3 : STANDARD 8 PROMOTION EXAMINATION RESULTS:  
1989-1991**

YEAR	NO OF PUPILS WROTE THE EXAM	NO OF PUPILS PASSED	PASS %	NO OF PUPILS FAILED	PASS %
1989	11083	8492	76,6	2591	23,4
1990	13079	6631	50,7	6448	49,3
1991	15581	9571	61,4	6010	38,6
Total	39743	24694	62,1	15049	37,9

Source: Venda Educational Statistics, 1992:6

In 1992, Std 8 pupils, for the first time, wrote Std 8 examinations set internally by individual secondary schools (Venda Educational Statistics 1992:6). However, the results were not better than in the past years. Only

56% of the Std 8 pupils who wrote the internal examinations in 1992 were successful.

There is the general tendency among parents and the general public to blame the high rate of failures at both the junior secondary school and the matriculation level on the lack of appropriate educational facilities such as, lack of suitable classrooms and textbooks and qualified teachers. Although, the paucity of educational facilities may affect the performance of pupils in schools, the researcher is of opinion that parental background and learning home environmental factors are equally important in the education of the child. Hence this study will attempt to discover the effects of the family background and learning home environment on the pupils' performance in school.

Chapter One is concerned mainly with the introduction of the subject with regard to the identification of the problem to be investigated while Chapter Two deals with the various theoretical perspectives on education regarding the role of parents in pupils' education and pupils' perception of what the significant others expect from them. It also discusses pupils' own expectations, the importance of linguistic ability, Marxist analysis of education as a generator of socio-economic deprivation and the various hypotheses to be tested.

Chapter Three discusses the pertinent literature on the subject of the family, further gives different meanings of the family both in the western and Venda sense and examines different types of families, focusing on the type of family which is dominant in Venda. It also explores, in general, the role of the family and specifically its role in Venda, and also especially the effects of the role of the significant others such as the biological father, mother, aunt (makhadzi), uncle (malume), brothers and sisters on pupils' school performance. Furthermore, it examines the functions of education from the Marxist perspective.

Chapter Four defines the learning home environment and material conditions such as housing and nutrition in the home. It also discusses the significance of the language used in the home, availability of enough time for study, suitable learning equipment such as good light, chairs and tables, a study room for schoolwork and pupils' exposure to media such as newspapers, television and radio. It further discusses the analysis of the data, the results of this study and makes a few recommendations.

### **1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the association between family background, learning home environmental conditions and the academic achievement of Std 8 pupils of junior secondary schools in the Thohoyandou

Education Area in Venda, Northern Province. This involves the following problems:

- 1.1.1. the extent to which teacher's expectations are related to pupils' performance in the six major subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.2. the extent to which parent expectations are related to pupils' performance in the six major subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.3 the extent to which pupils' expectations are related to their performance in the six major subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.4. the extent to which family motivation (material and non-material) is related to pupils' performance in the six major subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.5. the extent to which father's education level is related to pupils' performance in the six major subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.6. the extent to which father's occupation category is related to pupils' performance in the six major subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.7. the extent to which parent income is related to pupils' performance of the six major subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.8. the extent to which working father's contact with pupils is related to pupils' performance in the six major subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.9. the extent to which mother's education level is related to pupils' performance in the six major subjects taught at school;

- 1.1.10. the extent to which mother's occupation category is related to pupils' performance in the six major subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.11. the extent to which working mothers are related to pupils' performance in the six major subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.12. the extent to which working mother's contact with pupils is related to pupils' performance in the six major subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.13. the extent to which working mothers who buy groceries, etc, are related to pupils' performance in the six major subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.14. the extent to which pupils' home language is related to their school performance in the six subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.15. the extent to which the language in which pupils communicate mostly among themselves in the classroom is related to their performance in the six subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.16. the extent to which the language in which pupils communicate mostly among themselves on school playfields is related to their performance in the six subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.17. the extent to which English in which pupils communicate mostly in their homes is related to their performance in the six subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.18. the extent to which time spent on household chores by boys is related to their performance in the six major subjects taught at

school;

- 1.1.19. the extent to which time spent on household chores by girls is related to their performance in the six major subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.20. the extent to which chores interference in pupils' school homework is related to their performance in the six major subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.21. the extent to which home with reference books is related to pupils' performance in the six major subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.22. the extent to which pupils who use reference books in the home is related to their performance in the six major subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.23. the extent to which pupils who read other books apart from school textbooks is related to their performance in the six major subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.24. the extent to which time taken by pupils to arrive at school is related to their performance in the six major subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.25. the extent to which balanced food taken by pupils as breakfast is related to their performance in the six major subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.26. the extent to which adequate breakfast is related to pupils' performance in the six major subjects taught at school;



- 1.1.27. the extent to which balanced food taken by pupils as lunch is related to their performance in the six major subjects taught at school;
- 1.1.28. the extent to which balanced food taken by pupils as supper is related to pupils' performance in the six major subjects taught at school.

## **1.2. THE NEED FOR STUDY**

A critical examination of educational statistics of the results of junior secondary school pupils particularly Std 8 are alarming. For example, in 1989 only 8492 out of 11083 pupils who wrote Std 8 examinations could proceed to Std 9, and in 1990 only 6631 out of 13079 were successful, leaving 6448 as dropouts. In 1991, 9571 out of 15581 pupils entered Std 9, and 6010 were unsuccessful (Venda Educational Statistics 1991:6). The numbers of Std 8 failures keep on rising at an alarming rate every year.

The researcher has selected particularly Std 8 for this study as it is a watershed, in the matric student's educational career because pupils who are able to pass Std 8 external examinations eventually reach Std 10 where they write matriculation examinations. This means that Std 8 final examination is apparently a reflection of Std 10 matriculation examinations results (Statistical Results of Std 10 Matriculation Examination 1990:4).

Furthermore, there is a strong need for this study as no research in this area has been conducted in Venda. This study, the researcher hopes, will be able to throw light on the interplay of the major independent variables, that is family's socio-economic and educational background, parent expectations and motivations, both teachers' and pupils' expectations and the material conditions in the home in influencing the academic performance of Std 8 pupils.

### **1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Education whether formal and informal is of fundamental importance to any society. Ogunsanya (1965:124) cites Garset who argued that:

"Man is occupied and preoccupied with education for a reason which is simple, bold and devoid of glamour: in order to live with assurance and freedom and efficiency, it is necessary to know an enormous number of things ... that is the reason."

This view implies that education is an instrument for survival in a world which is developing rapidly. In a sense, therefore, education is an investment which humankind uses to manipulate the environment to his advantage. There is no doubt that education is central to all progress and is highly instrumental in accelerating progress in all human spheres. Nevertheless, many educationists doubt whether education is indeed an investment which yields profits after a number of years. But in Africa it is said that politicians still regard it as an investment (Blakemore and Cooksey,

1981:241). This explains why money allocated to education in some African countries is greater than that given to any other ministry (Coombs, 1969:19). In spite of empirical evidence to support this finding, the practice is still widespread. Venda, for example, spent a very substantial amount of the national budget on education when it was a homeland (Radio Thohoyandou, 19 August, 1991).

This study will attempt to investigate the role of the family background and home environment in the education of the child in a developing country like Venda (now part of the Northern Region of South Africa). The problems that family background and home environment posed and still pose to the pupils' performance in school, will also be considered. This study will concentrate more specifically on the influence of parents' background and material conditions in the home on the academic performance of pupils in schools with a view to establishing the role of parental influence in the child's education.

The researcher has selected the junior secondary school for this study, since the percentage rate of pupil drop-out at this level is very high. Among the variables to be investigated is the home background and the support pupils receive from the home for active and successful academic career.

#### **1.4 DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY**

A study of the school system in Venda shows that it is made of a number of interrelated sub-systems and the most obvious of these are the primary schools, the secondary schools, the colleges of education and other tertiary institutions including the University of Venda. This study will focus on Junior Secondary School system with specific reference to Std 8 pupils in junior secondary school in the Thohoyandou Education Circuit. The study will be restricted to Std 8 pupils because the number of successful pupils who enter the senior secondary school sector gives a fair indication of the pupils who will eventually write the matriculation examinations. If it is expected of them to perform well at school, then parents should provide an educative environment conducive to learning.

The researcher has chosen Thohoyandou Education Circuit because Thohoyandou is a peri-urban town and has secondary schools situated both in the town and in the adjoining rural area. Undoubtedly, secondary schools in Thohoyandou have better educational facilities and achieve better examination results than their counterparts in the rural area, who do not have such facilities.

## **2. METHODS OF RESEARCH**

### **2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

After studying the relevant literature the author first designed a questionnaire eliciting responses covering the following: particulars of pupils, particulars of parents, the pupil's learning home environment such as nutrition, teacher's expectations, parents' expectations, pupil's own expectations, and parental motivation of pupil. The questionnaire which was composed of both open-ended and closed-ended questions, were precoded to facilitate analysis.

The design of the survey is that it examines critically the relationship between independent variables of family background and learning environment, and dependent variables, the pupils' academic performance at school.

The pertinent literature surveyed supports the fact that family background and learning home environment have a considerable effect on academic performance at secondary school level overseas, especially in Britain. As a result the researcher decided to look at this implication by empirically checking the relationship in Venda context. The empirical research, therefore, was undertaken to equip parents as well as teachers with the knowledge of providing a favourable home environment and conducive

school climate in order to improve pupils' academic performance.

## **2.2 SAMPLE**

### **Procedure**

Twelve schools out of thirty-five schools were randomly selected for this study. The total number of respondents were 341, comprising 160 boys and 181 girls were randomly selected from the twelve schools. Their average ages were 16,8 and 16,6 years respectively.

The 341 Std 8 respondents constituted 32% (approximately) of sample size of the total student population of 1068 of the twelve schools and 11% of the total student population of 3100 of the thirty-five schools respectively, in Venda.

Therefore, the 11% of the sample size of the total student population of 3100 of the thirty-five schools in Venda is representative enough since, according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970:620), a sample size of 10% of any population from 3000 and over is representative.

The investigator assigned a number to all the pupils on a composite list of all the Std 8 pupils in the twelve secondary schools. The respondents were then selected, using a table of random three-digit figures so as to avoid

biases and make the selection more representative of the population target.

The researcher chose secondary schools in Thohoyandou Education Area because the schools generally have common characteristics. They are on the periphery of Thohoyandou and readily accessible. With the exception of two secondary schools - Mbilwi which follows a science-based curriculum and Dimani a agriculture-based curriculum- all of them offer the same subjects. The pupils are also, to a large extent, influenced by the social, political and economic changes taking place in Thohoyandou. Besides, schools in Thohoyandou have comparatively better educational facilities such as enough classrooms, furniture, textbooks and equipment, and more stability in staffing. Thus the twelve schools were randomly selected because they were the biggest homogeneous set of schools doing almost the same subjects.

## **2.3 THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

### **2.3.1 The questions**

The questions, which are both structured and unstructured, total one hundred and forty-three items. The first seven questions were used by the author to obtain information about the respondent such as the name of pupil, age, sex, name of school, standard and the location of the school. Twelve

items elicit information about the particulars of the pupil's family, for example, the number of living brothers and sisters (siblings) of pupils, their ages, the number of other wives the father has, the number and ages of children from the pupil's uncle or aunt living with the pupil in the same household, for example, the type of dwelling, the number of rooms in the dwelling and whether the dwelling is owned by the pupil's father, or is a rented or mortgaged house. Seven items elicit information about other people (excluding the pupil's mother and father) who are living with the pupil in the same household. Seventy-seven questions describe the kind of learning home environment in which pupils live and from where they attend school. The questions also seek such information as whether the respondent has a separate study room, reference books, table and chair, good light, a well-ventilated sleeping room, enough time for both sleep and 'school' homework, and the general conditions in the pupil's learning home environment. Seventeen items elicit information about the level of nutrition and health of the pupil, the kind and number of meals taken per day, whether the meals are nutritiously balanced and enough, and the one who prepares the meals. There are fourteen questions which cover the particulars of pupils' father, for example, his level of education, his level of occupation and income, regular remittances from the father; in case of migrant workers, the frequency of father's visits to the home and the number of time of contact he has with the pupil on each visit. Finally, nine questions elicit information about the pupil's mother, her level of education, her occupational and income



levels.

The language used in the questionnaire (see Annexure) is everyday, non-threatening language to reduce the respondents' likelihood of giving wrong responses. The questions are relatively short and easy to read so that they would be understood by pupils of average academic ability. The format assured confidentiality to enable respondents to answer the questions truthfully.

### **2.3.2 Marks of students**

In this study, the marks of the students were used as an indicator of academic performance. The Std 8 pupils in the sample wrote four tests in six major subjects taught at the secondary schools. Each of the six subjects carried a maximum of 200 marks. A pupil was required to obtain a minimum of 40% in each test in order to pass; that is, 40% of 200 (80 marks) in each of the six subjects in a test. Any pupil who obtained less than 40% in a subject was deemed to have failed, or performed poorly in that subject. Thus, for a pupil to pass all the six subjects in the four tests, he or she must obtain 40% of the grand total of the four tests, that is 40% of 4800 (1920 out of 4800). A pupil who obtained anything less than that was deemed to have failed or performed poorly.

### **2.3.3 Gathering of the data**

The author wrote a letter seeking the permission of the Director-General of the Venda Department of Education for the use of the twelve secondary schools in the Thohoyandou Education Area. The purpose of the study was clearly explained to the Director-General who then granted the permission. The researcher then visited the Area Manager (Inspector for Thohoyandou Education Circuit) to inform him of the Director-General's permission to use the schools in this area and to explain the purpose of the study to him. Thereafter, the author visited the Headmasters (Principals) of the twelve secondary schools and arranged with them the time the researcher would visit their schools to administer the questionnaire to the pupils to be selected randomly.

Thereafter, the researcher proceeded with the gathering of the data. Copies of the questionnaires were administered to the pupils selected randomly, and pupils were aided to answer it by the researcher explaining question by question to them.

The questionnaires were then collected (by the researcher) after the respondents had completed them. In all cases, it was duly arranged that respondents answer the questionnaire during the study period in the afternoon at all the schools in the sample in order not to disrupt the normal

classes in the morning. All the schools used have afternoon study periods.

## **2.4 INTERPRETATION OF DATA (STATISTICAL ANALYSIS)**

The questions were precoded to facilitate interpretation of the data. Frequency tables with Chi-square based on statistics were used to determine the relationship between dependent and independent variables.

## **2.5 CONCEPTUALIZATION**

The following variables relate specifically to this study.

### **2.5.1 Scholastic achievement**

Although scholastic achievement is one of the most important goals of educational process, and acts as a major predicting variable of success in modern society (Carmichael, 1964; Coleman et al, 1966; Horn, 1977) as quoted by De Jager (1987:7), the definition of the construct poses many problems. Fourie (1978 in De Jager (1987:8) argues that even though a number of terms are used, a definition of scholastic achievement in terms of theoretical construct is seldom formulated. In this current study, literature relevant to these issues will be presented.

A review of literature reveals that a number of terms are used in various ways to refer to scholastic achievement. A number of educationists (Maqsd, 1980; Nowicki and Roundtree, 1971; Kirk, 1980; Rutter, 1983; Honess and Kline, 1974; Rajamohan and Rajaratham, 1979; Gauden and Otter, 1977; Powell, 1971; Faustman and Mathews, 1980; Anastasi, 1976) in De Jager (1987:7) used terms such as scholastic attainment, scholastic success, scholastic attainment, academic attainment, academic competence, academic performance and academic achievement to indicate the evaluation of an individual's level of accomplishment within an educational environment. Thus the term 'academic' is used within a wider context, but 'scholastic' is used specifically to refer to any phenomenon occurring at school. The term is also used to refer to academic achievement while 'academic performance' can refer to an individual's performance at elementary or primary school (Shaw and Uhl, 1971; Friend, 1972; Lao, 1980; Skuy and Erikson, 1980; Botha, 1971; Bruwer, 1973) as quoted by De Jager (1987:8).

In an attempt to clarify the use of the terms, scholastic and academic, Coetzee (1977) as quoted by De Jager (1987:8) asserts:

"... the concept of scholastic will always refer to achievement at school level while academic performance refers to achievement at post-level."

### **2.5.2 Academic performance**

In this study, academic performance was defined in terms of a pupil who

obtained a "Pass" mark of 40% in each of the six subjects written in a test. Thus a pupil should have obtained 40% of the grand total marks of 1200 (or 480) in the six subjects written in each of the four tests. Hence any pupil who did not obtain 40% in any of the six subjects was deemed to have failed (see the Contingency table).

**TABLE 2 : CONTINGENCY TABLE IN RESPECT OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

SUBJECTS	NUMBER OF TESTS			
	1	2	3	4
1. Mathematics	200	200	200	200
2. English/Afrikaans	200	200	200	200
3. Venda	200	200	200	200
4. Biology/Physical Science	200	200	200	200
5. History/Geography	200	200	200	200
6. Economics/Bus Economics	200	200	200	200
Grand Total Marks per Test	1200	1200	1200	1200

### 2.5.3 Pupils

These will be defined as standard 8 male and female pupils who (under the former Venda Department of Education) are receiving tuition in secondary schools on a full-time basis.

#### **2.5.4 Pupils/students**

These will be used interchangeably.

#### **2.5.5 Dependent ages**

Refer to people aged 0-14 and those who are aged 65 and over. The remaining age groups are economically productive (Zopf, 1984:127).

#### **2.5.6 Family background**

Family background is used to mean socio-economic status of parents and it embraces educational, occupational, prestige and income levels into an average rank usually expressed in terms of social class.

### **2.6 OPERATIONALIZATION**

In this study, the following are the key independent variables and how they were measured.

#### **2.6.1 Parental education**

According to the study undertaken by Fraser (1988:126), children of the parents of middle-class tend to do well academically because of selective wives and the tendency to inherit innate intelligence. Fraser found in his study that parental education, reading habits, income, occupation and living space are all related significantly to Intelligence Quotient and performance.

Usually, it is assumed that parents of middle-class have a set of values that propel the child to perform well in school. Parents in the middle-class, by virtue of their higher educational qualifications, develop achievement-values which are passed on to their children. Rosen (1956:211) notes:

"Middle-class children are more likely to embrace the achievement value-system which states that given the willingness to work hard, plan and make proper sacrifices, an individual child should be able to manipulate his or her environment so as to ensure success."

It is common knowledge that a small middle-class family is gradually emerging in Venda. Parents in this class have higher educational qualifications which enable them to secure reasonably well-paid jobs with (good remuneration). It is therefore assumed that the parents in this category should play an important role in enhancing their children's performance at school. In this study, the expression parental level of education was used to refer to any parent who has received functional education for, at least, 4 years, and who can read and write. Hence 4-year functional education was used to determine the influence of parental education on the academic performance of pupils. A question on the highest level of education was used as an indicator to ascertain level of parental education.

### **2.6.2 Parental occupation**

It is generally accepted that some occupations are open only to people who have particular educational qualifications (Reid, 1984:210). There is the

tendency that the higher the occupation, the longer the time spent in education. Reid (1984:214) also adds that the higher the qualifications, the higher the income. Usually, the occupations in this category attract higher income. In support of this view, Jubber (1990:7) says that the highly educated and occupationally well-positioned parents have the advantage of transmitting to their children, the kind of skills, knowledge and attitudes which encourage and facilitate good school performance. Jubber concludes that they are generally further fortunate in being able to provide the kinds of equipment, resources, experiences and study environment that promotes good school work, and they are also able to send their children to the 'best' schools.

It should, however, be mentioned that it is extremely difficult to measure the occupations of parents in Venda because parents are in a wide variety of occupations. For example, parents are in professional, managerial, clerical, technical, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled, domestic occupations which make categorisation very difficult.

However, Miller (1970:260-269) categorises all occupations into five groups: professional, administrative, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled occupations. Therefore, in this study, the Miller's Occupation Scale (Miller, 1970:260-269) was used as an indicator to categorise the occupations and also, to determine the influence of parental occupation on pupils' academic



performance.

### **2.6.3 Family**

This will be operationally used to refer to a nuclear and extended family where one or both biological or social parents live with their family in the same household.

### **2.6.4 Family/Parents**

These will be used interchangeably.

### **2.6.5 Parents**

These will be used as married/unmarried couple or used to mean somebody who has interest in the child's education, and who devises means to get him or her educated by providing the necessary facilities for him or her to learn. They will also used to refer to husband and wife with children or a child or a husband and wives with children.

### **2.6.6 Household**

These will be used to refer to the basic residential unit with which economic production, consumption, inheritance, child-rearing and shelter are arranged and carried out.

### **2.6.7 Standard 8 External Examination**

Refers to the examinations which Standard 8 pupils write at the end of the year. It is set externally by the Venda Department of Education for the selection of successful pupils into Senior Secondary School.

### **2.6.8 Paid worker**

Is used to refer to anyone who has been working and receiving wages/salary for any unspecified period of time. It includes full-time workers, temporary/casual workers, part-time workers and self-employed workers. This was measured by asking respondents to indicate the monthly income in the questionnaire.

### **2.6.9 Employment**

Refers to any type of work a person does and for which he or she receives a remuneration (Barnhart and Barnhart, 1987:692).

### **2.6.10 Functional educational level**

Is used to refer to a person who can read and write, and who has completed at least, 4-year functional education. Functional literacy aims at developing individual's mental equipment and communication powers as well as their technical and vocational capacities. It offers educative functions to broad sectors of society, promotes the formative part which the major economic activities may play, defines the principle and practical methods of education,

objective by objective and problem by problem, and invites all concerned, not just illiterate adults, to participate in educational activity (Faure et al, 1972:142).

#### **2.6.11 Occupational level**

Operationalized, the term refers to all workers who are in professional, administrative, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled occupations.

#### **2.6.12 Poverty**

Operationalized, it means to a situation in which people lack money to maintain a minimum standard of health and decency should be the normal condition of most people (Horton and Hunt, 1988:381). Thus, poverty may refer to relative deprivation, that is, the inability to maintain the living standards customary in the society. This concept assumes that people are poor only in relation to others who are not poor. Poverty may also refer to absolute deprivation, that is, the inability to afford minimal standards of food, clothing, shelter, and health.

#### **2.6.13 Income level**

Is used to refer to a minimum sum of R260 which a worker receives at the end of the month (Oral - Venda Labour Centre, 10 June 1996). However, some workers receive more than R500 per month. Particularly, those in professions receive more than R1000 per month. In fact, some workers in

some professions get more than R2500 per month.

#### **2.6.14 Parental income**

It is further assumed and accepted that parents who have higher educational qualifications are able to get a better job with a good income and the prospects for promotion and higher income. With a higher income, a parent can provide life-enhancing amenities for the family. He or she can afford to send his or her child to the best school, and even hire a teacher to give extra tuition to the child at home after normal school hours. For instance, in Jubber's (1990:4) research on the effects of socio-economic status on a child's school performance, observes:

"Family income contributes to a child's cognitive development directly and indirectly. Its more direct effects relate to such things such as the relationship between income and nutrition, health, quality of school attended, preschool education, the quality of home as an information environment, the value attached to education, and the ability of the family to supply the kinds of educational support, equipment and experiences which foster school success."

In the same study, Jubber found that children from the poorest homes have proportionately more of their number who are poor performers. It is noticeable from Jubber's study that parental income contributes tremendously to a child's education. Nevertheless, like parental occupation, it is not easy to determine the level of parental income in Venda because of different categories of workers with vast variations of income levels. For

example, self-employed persons, full-time workers, part-time workers, technical workers, clerical workers, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers, and people in professional and managerial occupations earn differential income. Hence, for the purpose of this study, an annual income of R3120 (R260 taken as the minimum wage an unskilled worker in Venda gets per month) (Thohoyandou Labour Centre, Oral: 11 June 1996) was used as the point of departure from other ranges of higher annual incomes to determine the influence of parental income on pupils' academic performance.

#### **2.6.15 Teacher expectations**

A great deal has been written about the effect of teacher expectations on pupils' academic performance and achievement. According to Le Roux (1993:192), research has shown a high correlation between positive teacher expectations and pupil performance. It is also generally said that teacher expectations influence pupils' behaviour. In their study, Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968:48) gave support to the view that once a child is labelled by the teacher and others, a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' operates; the teacher expects certain behaviour from the child and the child responds to the expectations. It is further to be noted that once this pattern is established, it is hard to alter. Therefore, teacher expectations can either help pupils to perform well or poorly at school. For instance, if teachers expectations are favourable towards pupils, they will be stimulated to work hard at school but

where they are unfavourable and discouraging, pupils will be demotivated, and consequently perform poorly. In this regard, Measor and Sikes (1992 quoted in Dekker and Lemmer 1993:13) contend that, not only do teachers' attitudes determine development but also provide important models for pupils.

Nash (1973 in Chapman 1986:109) concluded that teachers' perceptions of pupils greatly influenced their attainment. Similarly, Becker (1963 in Chapman 1986:112) notes that once a teacher has labelled a pupil as a 'lazy pupil', the pupil comes to bear the label and this may adversely affect his or her school performance. And Meighan (1981 quoted in Chapman 1986:113) concludes that in the extreme form, labelled pupils may be isolated and driven into a 'special unit' or the 'sin bin' which can disastrously affect their academic performance.

Nonetheless, what the teacher expects from his or her pupils, is difficult to measure as it is, by and large, subjective and speculative but (nevertheless) a question on what marks pupil thinks the teacher expects from him/her was included in the questionnaire.

#### **2.6.16 Parent expectations**

Generally, parents who are highly educated, expect their children also to be highly educated. These parents serve as role models for their children to

emulate. Therefore parents with high expectations for their children (pupils) provide them with the necessary school facilities, equipment, emotional support and motivation. As a result of these incentives, the pupils try to succeed by working hard at school. Like teacher expectations, it is not easy to measure parent expectations since they differ from parents to parents. Besides, they are also both subjective and speculative. A question about their opinions on their parents' expectations in terms of the marks their parents would like them to get was used to measure this variable.

#### **2.6.17 Pupil expectations**

It is evident that pupils who have the right attitudes and interest in their education, work hard in order to do well at school. They are self-motivated and they hardly need extrinsic motivation in order to work conscientiously. These pupils work diligently and strive to excel in class. Thus, one would say that when pupils have high expectations of becoming, for example, medical doctors, engineers and pharmacists, they work much more assiduously to achieve their objective. By so doing, their academic performance is improved considerably. It should be mentioned that a pupil's expectations are dependent on his or her self-concept. Hence a pupil's self-concept propels him or her to attain the highest academic laurels in his or her educational career.

Le Roux (1994:19) defines self-concept as:

"the complete totality of views on, as well as feelings about all the dimensions of the self. It includes socially acquired knowledge, views and attitudes with regard to the self, an evaluation of the self according to objective standards."

Mwamwenda (1995:372) also defines self-concept as a person's way of perceiving himself or herself and may be either positive or negative. Allied to self-concept, is self-motivation. They are motivated to work hard not because they expect any rewards, but because they are intrinsically interested in working hard. In this way, they are able to achieve success.

In this study, pertinent questions on pupils' expectations about the marks that they would like to get was included in the questionnaire.

#### **2.6.18 Parent motivations**

Seifert (1983:11) defines motivation as the tendency to engage in a certain behaviour or the inner arousal that leads to those behaviours. Thus, motivating pupils means persuading them to do, and to want to do whatever leads to learning. According to Seifert (1983:298), it means persuading pupils to do things on their own accord. Similarly Thorndike (1932 in Mwamwenda 1995:20), in addressing himself to the importance of motivation, in learning, observed that how hard pupils work on a given task, is determined by their level of interest. The greater their interest or motivation, the harder they will work, and the lower their interest or motivation, the less hard they will work. Also, Mwamwenda (1995:259)



defines motivation as a concept used as an explanation or rationale for a way a person or an organisation behaves. The same concept is used to refer to something that is innate in an individual. It is an energiser or a driving force, a desire or an urge that causes an individual to engage in a certain behaviour. In short, by definition, motivation is a concept which can account for why people behave the way they do. And that human behaviour is motivated, either externally or internally; positively or negatively.

Thus, some pupils are intrinsically interested in school subjects and will work hard to succeed without much external motivation. However, there are some pupils who lack intrinsic motivation, and they will only work hard if they have reinforcement either from their parents or teachers. Hence Strom and Bernard (1982 quoted in Mwamwenda 1995:202), assert that the other ways of motivating pupils are to exploit 'the desire to overcome difficulty, the desire to secure social approval, and the desire to excel one's past record.'

The concern of teachers and parents has therefore always been to find ways and means of making pupils attend and respond to learning tasks so that learning itself becomes a source of motivation. It can therefore be argued that pupils work hard when their parents show interest in their work and provide them with the much needed motivation.

In this study, parental motivation was used to refer to both material and non-material rewards, and pupils receive from their parents or guardians. Questions on whether a pupil did receive rewards and the nature of the rewards given, were used to measure this variable.

### **2.6.19 Nutrition**

Diet and health are closely related. It can thus be argued that the diet of a pupil is of direct relevance to his or her intellectual development and capability. For this reason, Mwamwenda (1995:31) contends that the food consumed by pupils must contain all the essential food nutrients such as proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins, water, fat and minerals. In short, pupils must have a balanced diet.

It has also been established by numerous research studies that deficiency in nutrition is associated with poor growth and physical development and inadequate haemoglobin levels. Stifford (1987:3) notes that there is growing evidence that malnutrition has impact on brain development, learning capacity and behaviour.

Swartout (1943:117) maintains that most people understand that the growth and normal development of children and the strength and efficiency of adults depend to a great degree upon what they eat. He explains that from the food we eat, we get the following: first, the materials from which

bones, muscles, nerves, skin, and all other body tissues are built; second, the energy needed to keep every body activity in operation; third, the essential chemical regulators that harmonize both the growth processes and the work of all the organs. If any of the essential food factors are lacking, as they may be in case of a person does not choose the right food or the right combination of foods, good health is impossible. Thus, good health depends on a balanced diet, that is, one that includes a mixture of the five basic nutrients, namely, proteins, carbohydrates, fats, minerals and vitamins that the human body needs to maintain itself. It is therefore generally accepted that a pupil who is well-fed on a balanced diet becomes energetic and is able to work enthusiastically and efficiently rather than a pupil who is poorly fed. Therefore, pupils on a balanced diet, are likely to perform well in school. Hence a good balanced diet was taken to measure the effect of nutrition on pupils' academic performance in school. Questions on what pupils eat (and if they do eat something) for breakfast, lunch and supper were included in the questionnaire.

#### **2.6.20 Time spent on chores**

Generally, boys and girls in Venda perform different household chores after school hours. The girls do the cooking, cleaning of the house, washing and ironing of clothes, bathing young children and baby-sitting, while the boys, mostly, do gardening, weeding around the house compound and taking cattle, and goats for grazing. Of course, they spend different times on these

chores. It can be assumed that pupils who have ample time at their disposal, can do their school homework while those who spend a lot of time on household chores may be unable to attend to their homework. Therefore, the amount of time spent on chores, is of vital importance. The more time spent on doing chores, the less time learners have for their homework. On the other hand, the less time they spend on the chores, the more time they have for doing their school work. So the researcher asked questions on what chores the pupils perform and the time spent on these chores.

#### **2.6.21 Time spent on watching television, listening to the radio and reading newspapers, etc**

Undoubtedly, the mass media are impersonal communications directed to a vast audience. Macionis (1995:138) asserts that the development of mass media occurs as communications technology, first newspapers and, more recently, radio and television, spread information on a mass scale. Furthermore, Macionis (1995:138) says that today, watching television has become a regular routine and, young boys and girls spend almost as many hours in front of the television as they do in school. Indeed, Singer and Singer (1983 quoted in Macionis 1995:139) contend that television consumes as much of children's time as interacting with parents. Macionis (1995:138) states further that the mass media has an enormous effect on our attitudes and behaviour. For this reason, they are an important component of the socialization process.

Macionis (1995:141) emphasizes that television and the other mass media have enriched our lives in many ways, contributing to socialization by bringing a wide range of entertaining and educational programmes. Thus, television, films and other forms of mass media increase our understanding of diverse cultures and provoke discussion of current issues.

It should also be mentioned that television has the potential for developing positive attitudes. In support of the effective role of television, Mwamwenda (1995:208) stresses that television has a strong effect on human reactions, attitudes and sensitivity. He then suggests that it may be relevant to base assignments on television programmes pupils have seen. It should be mentioned further that the influence of television and other mass media, on our lives is profound. They do not only provide entertainment, but provide and shape much of the information which we utilize in our daily lives. They disseminate information on a mass scale and help us in following current issues both nationally and internationally. It can thus be assumed that pupils who watch educational programmes on the television, or listen to educational lessons on the radio or read newspapers can enrich their knowledge by acquiring a great deal of new ideas and information. So, the mass media can serve as useful supplement to the classroom teacher's lessons, and both the teacher and pupils can equally benefit from such programmes as some information that cannot be obtained locally, can be provided by the tele/teachers as well as radio teachers. Newspapers and

magazines also have an added advantage of equipping pupils with new vocabulary, and enabling them to follow trends in national and global affairs. So an attempt will be made to find out the effect of the mass media on pupils' performance in Thohoyandou and questions on whether they have access to television or radios and the time spent per day watching television or listening to the radio were included in the questionnaire.

#### **2.6.22 Type of dwelling and the number of people living in a dwelling**

It is commonly assumed that a congenial learning home environment with a separate study-room, tables and chairs, and a good lighting system can help pupils to attend to their school work better. In this regard, pupils who come from environmentally disadvantaged homes where parents have divorced, or are separated; where there is overcrowding, or a high level of noise emanating from a 'shebeen' nearby and where educational facilities and equipment are non-existent, are likely to become frustrated and demotivated. Consequently, the deplorable conditions in the home can adversely affect pupils' performance in school. Pupils from such an environment often fail to measure up to expectations because of the uninviting and poor situations in which they find themselves.

On the other hand, pupils who come from favourable homes with the necessary equipment and accessories, are likely to perform well in school. They are motivated by the environment in which they find themselves and

as a result they work harder to succeed. Hence, questions about the kind of dwelling with its facilities were used to determine the effect of favourable physical conditions on pupils' academic performance.

### **2.6.23 Reference books**

It is common knowledge that pupils who have relevant reference books in the home, to which they can refer when doing school work, can acquire more additional information and ideas from available reference books than pupils whose only source of reference is the school textbooks. For, pupils who have access to suitable reference books either in the home or in a nearby library, can learn how to search for information and explore new subject areas. Hence, it can be mentioned that such learners are more likely to improve the quality of their work rather than those pupils who only use school textbooks which are, to a large degree, syllabus-based. Thus, while school textbooks provide information specifically for the school syllabus, reference books deal with a wider scope of information on, and even go beyond the scope of school textbooks. Questions on the availability of reference books, students' homes and usage of these books were included.

### **2.6.24 Home language**

Pretorius (1990 in Le Roux 1994:36) asserts that it is commonly accepted that education in the medium of the mother tongue (or home language) is the ideal. It is also assumed that if pupils are taught first to listen and to speak,

as well as to read and to write in their mother tongue, at the early stages in their educational development, they will be able to understand the school subjects and thereby have a solid foundation. Such a foundation may help them to grasp the various subjects when they eventually come to be taught in a second language as the medium of instruction. It is also held that language seen as an integral part of one's cultural heritage will also enable pupils to rediscover and appreciate their cultural values, and admire the exploits of their past traditional warriors and their contributions to their society.

Le Roux (1994:136) once again emphasizes the importance of the mother tongue by saying that, worldwide, many of the problems that have been experienced in the school situation have been attributed to the difficulties of pupils (and also teachers) in having to learn (or teach) in a tongue other than their mother tongue. In the same breath, Mwamwenda (1995:165) points out that most documents argue that pupils are able to understand subjects that are taught in their home language because they can form the correct concepts. Learning in one's mother-tongue does not only enable them to appreciate the richness of their cultural heritage, but it also facilitates their academic progress. In support of this argument, Westley, (1992) and Ngugi (1992 quoted in Mwamwenda 1995:169) point out that in the 1980s, a number of literary African figures and educators expressed a strong desire for the use of African languages as the medium of instruction and literary



communication. Again, Westley (1992:359) argues that mother-tongue education in the primary years, offers the best introduction to literacy that eventually is an aid to English acquisition.

Furthermore, Akinnaso (1988:98) states that mother-tongue education facilitates cultural transmission, cognitive development and communicative ability. In supporting this assertion, Cummins (1984:452) and Guiora (1984:10) contend that it is significant to note that the child's mother-tongue in school entails cognitive and affective benefits for the reason that the mother-tongue is the very livelihood of human self-awareness, the carrier of identity, the safe repository of a vast array of affective and cognitive templates making up the total web of personality. Questions on language used in classroom or playground by students to communicate among themselves were asked in the questionnaire. There were also questions to find out the extent to which students use English, the medium of instruction, outside the classroom.

#### **2.6.25 Language spoken among pupils in the classroom**

It is noticeable that the frequent use of a language by pupils as a regular medium of communication in any situation, for example, in the classroom enables them to acquire fluency and proficiency in that language. So pupils who frequently communicate among themselves in English, which is the medium of instruction, in the classroom can acquire a reasonable amount of

proficiency in that language. These pupils often can express themselves quite confidently both orally and in writing. This ability facilitates their understanding of the school subjects in English, in the classroom.

#### **2.6.26 Language spoken among pupils on the school playfields**

Also, it is a fact that if pupils frequently speak the language which is the medium of instruction on the school playfields, it can facilitate their acquisition of the language. This will, in turn, facilitate pupils' comprehension of the subjects taught at school, and further enables them to clearly express their thoughts orally, as well as, in writing. It should also be mentioned that by using the instruction language among themselves frequently during play periods, the learners' ability to communicate with one another in the language can be improved significantly. Pupils will also have the advantage of improving their school performance in the school subjects as the language used in teaching the subjects will be comprehensible to them.

#### **2.6.27 Time spent on transport by pupils to get to school**

The amount of time spent by pupils to get to school, is of paramount importance because pupils who live very far away from school in areas where there is no proper or efficient mode of transport available, will have to walk to school. In certain cases, transport may be available but pupils may not be able to afford the transport costs, and therefore have to walk to

school. The researcher observed that pupils who walk over long distances to school, more often than not, arrive late and exhausted. They therefore miss the subjects which are taught early in the morning. Some of these students do not have any breakfast before going to school and this worsens their condition.

As such students are hungry and tired, they are unable to actively concentrate on the lessons being taught. The result is that their comprehension of the lessons is impaired considerably. Where students consistently arrive late at school, their performance at school could be adversely affected. On the other hand, pupils who live in close proximity to the school, can arrive at the school in time as they can easily walk to school. As the school is within walking distance, the possibility of pupils missing early lessons may be minimal or non-existent. Being fresh and energetic and regularly punctual, they are able to actively attend to and concentrate on the lessons, and consequently they have a better grasp of the lessons they are taught.

In this study, the different modes of transport used by pupils to reach the school, were used to determine the amount of time spent on transport.

#### **2.6.28 Facilities**

Facilities are operationalized to refer to the availability of things such as a

study room, good light, chairs and tables, reference books, in the pupil's home that will make it easier and more convenient for the pupil to do his or her schoolwork in the home where he or she lives and from where he or she attends school.

All the variables mentioned under 2.6 were used as independent variables. In the statistical analysis, their influence on school performance were calculated. These results will be shown when the tables are presented and discussed elsewhere in this study.

## **2.7 THE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The focus of the study was on the influence of the socio-economic background of the family and the learning home environment on a pupil's academic performance at school hence teaching abilities and classroom activities were not considered. This could be an interesting and challenging area of further study.

As some of the parents of the students used in this study live and work in some of the big towns, especially, in Johannesburg, the researcher had to rely heavily on the pupils for the information provided about their parents. Thus, the possibility of some pupils trying to impress by giving favourable responses about their parents' background and the material conditions in

their homes cannot be entirely ruled out. Therefore, to reduce significantly the possible biases that this shortcoming might entail, the author visited a number of pupils' homes in order to see the kind of learning environment in which pupils live and work, and to interview some parents about how they motivate their children to work hard at school. Also, the purpose of interviewing some parents was to confirm or otherwise, the veracity of the responses provided by their children to the questions in the questionnaire. The researcher found that parents' responses to the questions posed, to a large degree, confirmed the responses, which is an ample indication that pupils answered the questions objectively and truthfully. Their responses can therefore be regarded as reliable.

However, not all parents were interviewed because many of them are migrant workers. Even if all the parents were working in Venda, the costs of employing student interviewers and training them, as well as transportation costs would have been certainly too high. As it has been indicated elsewhere in this study, the question as to whether a teacher's educational qualifications and teaching abilities impact on pupils' academic performance is outside the scope of this study. This area can, however, be a challenging and rewarding field for exploration. The greatest problem was a dearth of local literature and non-availability of adequate statistical information on the subject of study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES OF EDUCATION**

The study will be done within the framework of the following perspectives.

#### **2.1 PARENTS' (FAMILY'S) ROLE IN THE EDUCATION OF THE CHILD**

Many people see education in different perspectives and thus define it in numerous ways. Some view education from a utilitarian dimension, that is, in terms of the benefits it will bring either to them or to their children. Thus Van Niekerk (1982 in Le Roux 1993:106) defines education as the assistance given to a child so that he or she can become an adult. Landman (1973 quoted in Le Roux 1993:100), however, defines education as helping the child with regard to the meanings that he should attach to the realities of life. Rulashe (1989:70) defines it as the adult's purposeful, deliberate and systematic intervention in the child's development. According to Gunter, (1984 quoted in Le Roux 1993:100), education is the child's guided development from complete dependence at first to adulthood, with complete self-reliance as the ultimate aim. Brookover and Gottlieb (1964:153) maintain that there is also a common assumption that education is the means by which equality of opportunity and social mobility are guaranteed.

By and large, the kind of perception that parents have on education determines the kind of role they play in their children's education. Thus, in Venda as in many African countries, education is regarded as a determinant factor of the level of prosperity, welfare and security. Education is seen as a means of getting a certificate which is a passport to a coveted job, a status and an income.

Therefore, the people of Venda, although economically disadvantaged by the accident of history, strive to keep their children in schools, because the acquisition of any higher academic qualification serves as an economic pillar of the entire extended family system. In Ghana, for instance, the desire to invest in the education of children as an insurance for old age is so strong among the Akan people that some parents could decide to sell their valuable property such as cocoa-farms, jewellery, and ornaments, or pledge their cocoa-farms in order to raise funds to sponsor their children's education.

In some cases, the members of an extended family contribute some money to send a relative overseas for further education. Among the Lozi and Tonga tribes in Zambia, parents and family members sometimes sell their cattle in order to sponsor their children's education. Thus to many Africans, education is a precious commodity; it is, in fact, the life-supporting and economic power-house for the entire extended family. This is based on the researcher's own experience in the Ghanaian society.

In this study, an attempt will be made to find out whether parents/family members in Thohoyandou play their supportive role in the education of their children by, for example, buying them school textbooks, paying their school fees in time, and the effect of their role on their children's school performance.

## **2.2 PUPILS' PERCEPTION OF WHAT SIGNIFICANT OTHERS SUCH AS BIOLOGICAL PARENTS, UNCLE AND AUNT EXPECT FROM THEM**

It should be noted that pupils shape their self-image according to what other people expect from them. Sullivan (1977 in Johnson 1986:155) refers to such people as the significant others. Horton and Hunt (1988:97) define the significant others as the persons whose approval we desire and whose direction we accept. Woelfel and Haller (1971 in quoted by Horton and Hunt 1988:97) also define the concept, as those persons who exercise major influence over the attitudes of individuals. It should be mentioned that significant others may be influential because of the roles they play in a child's life. One could also be selected as a "significant other" because he or she is an important celebrity, a best friend, or a relative. Horton and Hunt (1988:98) assert that the significant others are important to us and, therefore, their ideas and values tend to become our ideas. They form role models whom pupils are proud to emulate.



Cotgrove (1975:235) supports the view that pupils from working-class homes have a restricted knowledge of the range of occupations open to them. They are unlikely to have relatives who are accountants, solicitors or businessmen. They are far more likely to be influenced in their occupational choice by significant others, such as father, elder brother or uncle, and for this reason may not follow in the footsteps of an advanced relative.

Brembeck (1966:77) also subscribes to the view that the self-concept a student holds is influenced, to a large extent, by the significant others in his/her classroom environment; namely his teacher and classmates. There is also abundant research literature which supports the view that self-concept influences a pupil's school achievement. For instance, Brembeck (1966:77) says that the student who feels he is appreciated, valued and wanted by the significant others around him, tends to regard himself with realist esteem. On the other hand, the student who is devalued by his or her significant others, such as his teacher and classmates, will tend to regard himself or herself as incapable of achievement. The influence of self-concept on pupils' school performance in secondary schools in Thohoyandou would be an interesting subject area for research.

In this study, an attempt will be made to ascertain the extent to which the significant others such as, the biological father, mother (parents), uncle and aunt in the Venda cultural setting affect pupils' school performance.

### 2.3 TEACHER EXPECTATIONS FROM PUPILS

According to Newmann et al. (1989:224), 'teacher expectations' refer to teachers' perceptions of the extent to which students are capable of learning the material that teachers try to teach. If teachers see themselves having to teach uneducable students, the dim prospects for success breed hopelessness and, estrangement from work - the feeling, why even try? On the other hand, when teachers' expectations are high, the confidence that students will be able to respond enables them to invest themselves in teaching with reduced risks of failure. It should also be noted that Brookover et al. (1979), Lipsitz, (1984), Purkey and Smith, (1983), Rutter et al., (1979), Weber, (1971) and Pilling and Pringle, (1978), Seaver (1973) as quoted in Newmann et al. (1989:224) have supported the importance of teachers' expectations to students' achievements.

Newmann et al. (1989:224) assert further that teachers communicate, explicitly and implicitly, differential expectations about students' capacities to learn. Students who perceive that their teachers have confidence in their ability are more likely to concentrate and to work on school assignments and, therefore, are likely to achieve higher levels than are students who sense that their teacher considers them to be less able to master what they are taught.

Furthermore, there is abundant evidence in the relevant literature that teacher expectations have an impact on student performance at school. Such expectations may stimulate the student to work hard in the school, or compel him or her to adopt unfair and improper means by copying notes in examinations or tests so as to satisfy his or her teacher expectations. Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968 in Brookover and Erickson 1975:315) who have done research on teacher expectations support the view that students tend to behave in terms of others' expectations and that teacher expectations are associated with student achievement. They argue that it is reasonable to conclude that the expectations of teachers as well as those of other adults and students affect the student's school performance.

Meighan (1981:119) also argues that the central proposition in studies of teacher expectations is that pupils tend to perform as well or as badly as their teachers expect. Lemmer and Squelch (1993:71), in supporting the effectiveness of teacher expectations, contend that the expectations teachers have of pupils exercise a complex, strong and significant impact on pupil performance.

**TABLE 3 : TEACHER EXPECTATION AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

TEACHER EXPECTATION	50%		60%		70%		80%		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fail	6	7,0	20	24,0	26	31,0	32	38,0	84	100,0
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Pass	3	4,8	16	25,8	10	16,7	33	53,2	62	100,0
Total	9	6,1	36	24,7	36	24,7	65	44,5	146	100,0

$p > 0,05$  (Number missing = 195)

This table shows no significant relationship between the variables "teacher expectation" and "school performance" ( $p > 0,05$ ). It seems however, that in the category "pass", (70% and 80% taken together), 43 out of 62 pupils did pass.

This seems in line with theories which state that teacher expectation can be a factor to motivate pupils to perform well. Also "teacher expectation" refers to the pupil's opinion of what the teacher expects of him or her. Only 146 out of 341 pupils indicated marks that their teachers expect of them. Strangely enough, a large number of pupils (195) did not have any idea of the marks that their teachers expect from them - based on "don't know" in the questionnaire.

In conclusion from Table 3, Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968 in Brookover and Erickson 1975:316) contended that once a pupil is labelled by the teacher and others, self-fulfilling prophecy operates; she or he expects certain forms of behaviour from the pupil and the pupil responds to the expectations. They concluded that once this pattern is established, it is hard to alter. However, there are many other variables which affect expectations of a student's behaviour and performance. Brookover and Erickson (1975:317) argue that although test scores and academic achievement are important factors that affect teacher expectations, a student's attractiveness, social class, names etcetera are other factors that equally influence teacher expectations. Furthermore, pupils pick up the subtle cues; this 'self-fulfilling prophecy' can cause them to believe they have certain abilities and can influence their future behaviours and academic performance. It therefore goes without saying that teachers can manipulate the classroom situation to affect student performance. Nevertheless, the extent to which classroom activities affect teacher expectations of a student's academic performance is outside the parameters of this study.

#### **2.4 PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS OF THE PUPIL**

From the researcher's own experience, Venda parents look at schools as specialised institutions in which general education tasks of society are formally undertaken. It is generally accepted that the central activity of

schools is teaching and learning. Schools also impart knowledge, skills, beliefs and attitudes. Further, schools train personnel to fill occupational roles in society, to raise the morality of society by developing in youth virtues deemed important and to maintain national development by providing manpower. Parents therefore expect schools to prepare their children for occupational roles, provide entry into professions, enable the poor or underprivileged to improve their status in society and provide people with experiences.

Because of the importance Venda parents attach to education, they put their children in schools in the hope that the schools will offer the kind of knowledge and skills which will enable their children to obtain secure jobs with good salaries and good prospects for promotion. Hence some parents in Venda either spend their meagre income or take loans from the banks in order to sponsor the education of their children. They obviously expect their children to work hard, to pass their tests and examinations, and to obtain certificates which open the gate to better and secure future.

### 2.4.1 Parents' educational expectations from pupils

**TABLE 4 : PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

PARENT EXPECTATION	50%		60%		70%		80%		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fail	3	2,8	19	17,9	36	34,0	48	45,3	106	100,0
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Pass	1	1,2	16	20,3	18	22,8	44	55,7	79	100,0
Total	4	2,2	35	18,9	54	29,2	92	49,7	185	100,0

$p > 0,05$  (Number missing = 156)

Table 4 does not show a significant relationship between the variables "school performance" and "parent expectation" ( $p > 0,05$ ). It seems however that in the category "pass", (70% and 80% taken together)  $\pm 78\%$  of pupils passed compared to 21,5% who passed when the categories of 50% and 60% are taken together. This seems in line with theories which state that parent expectation can be a factor to stimulate pupils to do well in school. Here, "parent expectation" refers to a pupil's opinion of what parents expect of them. Nevertheless, only 185 out of 341 pupils indicated, marks that parents expect of them. A large number of pupils (156) did not have any idea as to what marks their parents expect of them. The probable

reason for this trend is that a reasonably large number of parents in Venda do not normally tell their children the positions they (parents) expect them to take in examinations. Nor do parents tell their children the mark they expect them to score in an examination or test.

## **2.5 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE PUPIL'S EXPECTATION**

Generally, students who have the right attitudes and interest do well in school (Cherian, 1990:1). These students work hard spontaneously and strive to excel in class. Thus, when students have high expectations of becoming, for example, medical doctors, engineers, pharmacists, they work more diligently to achieve their objective. Thus, pupils' expectations can propel them to achieve the highest academic laurels in their educational career.

It should however, be mentioned that a student's expectations are dependent on his or her self-concept. In this regard, Le Roux (1994:34) argues that a child who lives in a milieu or environment fraught with lack of order, a limited language code, primitive communication, low intellect, insecurity, poor orientation towards school and clashes between the value orientations of the family and the school develops a negative self-concept. However, the effect of self-concept on a pupil's academic performance is outside the scope of this study. This subject could be an interesting area for exploration.



It could be assumed that in a socio-cultural set up like Venda, pupils expect schools to equip them with the relevant knowledge and skills which will enable them to get employment. Some of the pupils also believe that if they work hard and pass their examination very well, they can proceed to tertiary institutions to further their education. According to Cooley (1965) in Johnson (1986:157), pupil's self-image may affect his or her academic performance. This is exemplified by the fact that a student who sees himself or herself as perceived by other people as a brilliant student will endeavour to live up to that self-image by working hard at school. In doing so, he or she will improve his or her academic performance. On the other hand, a student whose 'self' is perceived by others as indolent, weak and incapable of succeeding in his or education, will not be motivated to work hard in school as he or she has no positive self-image to uphold.

### 2.5.1 PUPIL'S OWN EDUCATIONAL EXPECTATIONS

**TABLE 5 : PUPIL'S EXPECTATIONS AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

PUPIL EXPECTATION	50%		60%		70%		80%		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fail	4	2,9	14	10,0	23	16,4	99	70,7	140	100,0
Pass	2	2,0	7	7,1	17	17,2	73	73,7	99	100,0
Total	6	2,5	21	8,8	40	16,7	172	72,0	239	100,0

$p > 0,05$  (Number missing = 102)

Table 5 does not show any significant relationship between the variables, "pupil expectation" and "school performance" ( $p > 0,05$ ). It seems however that in the category of "pass", (70% and 80% taken together), 90,9% out of 99 pupils passed. This trend seems to confirm theories which state that high pupil expectation can motivate pupils to perform well.

The item in the questionnaire seems important to determine whether it is "own expectation" or not. It is however possible that significant others can inculcate a tendency to perform well.

However, a possible reason for a large number of pupils, 29,9% missing is that they might not have any particular expectations.

## **2.6 THE THEORY OF MOTIVATION**

Seifert (1983:11) defines motivation as the tendency to engage in certain forms of behaviour or to the arousal of that tendency leads to those behaviours. Seifert (1983:11) also maintains that learners commonly have motives to achieve, to affiliate with others and to gain power. According to him, some motives are intrinsic, that is, they come from within the learner and others are extrinsic, that is, they come from people or sources outside the learner. He defines a motive as a tendency for disposition to act, rather than an action itself. Again, Seifert (1983:299) indicates that a motive

arouses or energizes the individual, directs him or her movement towards some sort of goal and sustains the movement towards that goal over a period of time.

Several research findings however suggest that student's senses of self-worth affect their motivation in school (Covington and Beary, 1976; Purkey, 1978) as quoted by Seifert (1983:117). Seifert (1983:117) contends that students who feel good about themselves set relatively high standards for themselves yet not so high that they do not have a reasonable chance of achieving them. But students with lower self-esteem may set goals that are either unrealistically high or extremely low.

Mwamwenda (1995:259) also argues that motivation is a concept used as an explanation or rationale for the way a person or an organism behaves. The term is also used to refer to something that is innate within an individual. It is an energizer or a driving force, a desire or an urge that causes an individual to engage in a certain behaviour. In this regard, motivation is like a gravitational force that impels a child to redouble his or her effort at school. Thus motivation may be compared to the fuel which provides the energy to cause a car to move. However, a car requires a driver. Parents and teachers may sit in the driving seat from time to time, but the purpose of modern education is that the child should be enabled to take the controls as often as feasible, and eventually direct his

or her own course without much outside help. Therefore, a child without motivation is like a car without fuel to, provide the power to propel him or her on. He or she has to be motivated.

Pasens (1958) in Banks (1976:226) defines extrinsic motivation as being persuaded to do something by various forms of rewards and punishments; intrinsic motivation as the desire to do something worthwhile for its own sake; social motivation as the desire to do something because it is regarded as an approved activity by an admired person. Hugen (1974) in Meighan (1981:189) asserts that pupils undertake to learn mainly to avoid the disagreeable consequences if they do not. For example, they may obtain low marks or may not be promoted, or be censured, punished if they do not work hard enough. Meighan (1981:193) supports this view and notes that students would not generally work independently without instrumental motivation such as an external examination.

Fox (1978 as quoted in Meighan 1981:350) contends that students work very hard to avoid disagreeable consequences of low marks or censure if they were unsuccessful. By the same token, Thorndike (1928) in Mwamwenda (1995:201) maintains that how hard pupils work on a given task is determined by their level of interest. The greater the interest the harder they work, and the lower their interest, the less hard they will work.

Several research findings by (Kapambwe, 1980), Behr, Cherian, Mwamwenda, Ndaba, and Ramphal (1986), Majoribanks (1987), Holloway, Fuller, Azuma, Kashimagi, and Gorman (1990 as quoted in Cherian 1991:183-188), have established that the interests parents have in education tends to be associated with the academic motivation and the willingness of their children to be active in their learning. Also, according to Gage and Berlemer (1984), Behr et al. (1986), Grolnick and Ryan (1990 as quoted in Cherian 1991:181), a pupil who is strongly motivated is more likely to make good academic progress than one who is not, and such pupils are likely to get involved in learning tasks if their parents, as models, attach importance to their education and get them involved in school work.

The researcher has found out that in Venda cultural setting, parents motivate their children in diverse ways to work hard in school. For instance, parents show their appreciation and approval when their children carry out their instructions properly. Sometimes parents use punishment as a form of motivation. In this case, a child who fails to perform his or her given task satisfactorily is denied food, or thrashed by the father. Thus, with the withdrawal of some privileges from the child, or infliction of corporal punishment on him or her, parents seek to motivate their children to behave properly.

This study tries to discover the diverse ways in which the significant others such as parents, uncles, aunts in Venda traditional family motivate pupils to work and whether the forms of motivation have any significant effect on the academic performance of the pupils.

**TABLE 6 : FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF PUPILS IN TERMS OF DIFFERENT FORMS OF MOTIVATION**

<b>FORMS OF MOTIVATION</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
1. No motivation	24	10,1
2. Reward (material)	42	17,7
3. Given time to study	7	3,1
4. Praise	50	21,1
5. Advised to work hard	74	31,2
6. Helped with school work	15	6,3
7. Other	25	10,5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>100,0</b>

Missing number = 104

Table 6 indicates that 31,2% of the parents in Thohoyandou advise their children (pupils) to work hard in school. The table also reveals that 21,1% of the parents praise their children when they have passed their tests and examinations. According to the responses given to an open question on this

topic, 17,7% of the parents give rewards such as new clothes, wristwatches, footwear and money to their children as a form of motivation 9,3% of the parents give their children some time to study or help them with their school work. Only 24 out of 237 pupils indicated that they did not receive any form of motivation from their parents. 213 out of 237 pupils received motivation in a variety of forms from their parents. This trend is evident that Thohoyandou parents, on the whole, motivate their children in different ways to work hard at school.

**TABLE 7 : KIND OF MOTIVATION AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

	NO MOTIVATION		REWARD/ PRESENTS		GIVEN TIME TO STUDY		ADVISED TO STUDY		HELPED WITH WORK		PRAISE		OTHER		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
FAIL	21	19,1	15	13,6	5	4,5	21	19,1	10	9,1	20	20,0	16	14,6	110	100,0
PASS	3	2,4	27	21,3	2	1,6	53	41,7	5	3,9	28	22,0	9	7,1	127	100,0
TOTAL	24	10,1	42	17,7	7	3,1	74	31,2	15	6,3	50	21,1	25	10,5	237	100,0

$p > 0,05$

Number missing = 104



As can be seen from Table 7, there is no significant relationship between the variables, "different kinds of motivation" and "school performance" ( $p > 0,05$ ). It seems however, that in the category "pass", rewards (21,3%) and advice to study (41,7%) taken together),  $\pm 63\%$  of pupils did pass. Also 24,4% passed when the categories of praise (17,3%) and (7,1%) other forms of motivation are taken together. This seems to be in line with the assumption that rewards and praise can be a factor to motivate pupils to perform well in school. Only 237 out of 341 pupils indicated that parents used different methods to motivate them. As can be seen from the table, rewards, advised to study, praise etcetera are the prominent motivators used by parents of the students used in this research. The possible reason for a large number of pupils, 30,5% missing is that they might not have any kind of motivation from their parents.

## **2.7 SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY**

Bandura (1977 in Mwamwenda 1995:203), a social psychologist, states that social learning theory is based primarily on what a child learns in his or her environment as he or she interacts and observes others. Bandura further adds that this theory guides a person's behaviour so that he or she acts in accordance with social norms, values and beliefs, thus enabling the person to adjust successfully to society. Schau et al. (1983 as quoted in Mwamwenda 1995:203), argue that social learning is ongoing and

continuous. Children pick up behaviour, consciously or unconsciously almost everyday watching parents, teachers, peers, etcetera ... Almost every action of a teacher or parent in the presence of children, therefore has the potential of being a model to the child. A pupil thus identifies with another significant person's behaviour, attitudes, system of values or beliefs. Such a person may be a parent, a figure of authority or a peer. Thus pupils like to identify themselves with certain individuals in society and, as far as possible, behave exactly like the persons they see as role-models. Thus they may consciously or unconsciously model the status which their parents, teachers or peers occupy in society.

Hence, parents who are highly educated may serve as status models for their children to emulate. Therefore, children who have parents with high level of education are likely to work hard at school in order to attain or even excel the educational level of their parents. On the other hand, children who have parents who have a low level of education or are illiterates may not study hard at school since their parents do not serve educationally as status models. In this respect, Bandura (1977 as quoted in Mvamwenda 1995:204-211), contends that teachers and parents are in a position to serve as models and enhance desirable behaviour, and personality development among children. In Venda traditional family life, boys tend to follow their fathers as hunters and great warriors whilst girls often follow their mothers as housewives in the home.

The current study seeks to discover the impact of the parents's level of education on pupils' school performance.

TABLE 8.1 : RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FATHER'S EDUCATIONAL LEVEL AND PUPILS' SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

	POST-GRADUATE		UNIV. DEGREE		POST-MATRIC		STD IX-X		STD VI-VIII		PRIMARY	NO SCHOOLING		DON'T KNOW		TOTAL		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	N	%	N	%	N	%	
FAIL	7	3,4	12	5,9	20	10,3	23	11,2	16	7,8	39	19,0	61	29,2	27	13,2	205	100,0
PASS	14	11,6	10	8,3	14	11,6	11	9,1	13	10,7	20	16,5	27	22,3	12	9,9	121	100,0
TOTAL	21	6,4	22	6,7	34	10,4	34	10,4	29	9,0	59	18,1	88	27,0	39	12,0	326	100,0

$p > 0,05$

Number missing = 15

Table 8.1 shows no significant relationship between the variables, "father's educational level" and "school performance", ( $p > 0,5$ ). This picture tells us that pupils of fathers with primary education or no education at all performed better compared to pupils of fathers with university education and post-matric education. In terms of "pass" a possible explanation might be that pupils of fathers with primary education only or no education at all, see financial hardships of their parents. This may motivate them to study very hard at school in order to avoid such hardships in future, and be in a position to help their parents financially.

12% of 326 pupils did not know their father's educational levels. This trend confirms the notion in Venda that fathers normally do not tell their children about their education.

Finally, it may be argued that the fact that a pupil comes from a home where the parents are highly educated, does not necessarily imply that the pupil will perform well at school. Much depends on the involvement of the parents in the pupil's education. It is common knowledge that, many highly educated parents (fathers) are often preoccupied with official work which requires attendance at meetings for many hours or going on trek. So most of the time they are either away from home on duty or come home when they are too exhausted as a result of the stress and strain of office work and therefore cannot assist their children (pupils) with their schoolwork.

For the purposes of this study, the cut-off point of father's educational level is four years of functional education when a person is deemed to be able to read, write, communicate in the language of the medium of instruction, participate in his or her community developments and contribute to his or her community.

**TABLE 8.2 : RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MOTHER'S EDUCATIONAL LEVEL AND PUPIL'S SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

	POST GRADUATE		UNIV DEGREE		POST-MATRIC		STD IX-X		STD VI-VIII		PRIMARY		NO SCHOOLING		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
FAIL	10	4,7	14	6,5	19	8,9	23	10,7	26	12,2	55	25,7	67	31,3	214	100,0
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
PASS	12	10,3	12	10,3	14	12,1	13	11,2	17	14,7	14	12,1	34	29,3	116	100,0
TOTAL	22	6,7	26	7,9	33	10,0	36	10,9	43	13,0	69	20,9	101	30,6	330	100,0

$p > 0,05$

Number missing = 11

As the figures in Table 8.2 indicate, there is no significant relationship between the variables, "mother's educational level" and "school performance" ( $p > 0,05$ ). It seems, however, that in the category of "pass", mothers with the following educational levels: post-graduate plus university degree, post-matric plus secondary education, primary education and no schooling at all, obtained 20,6%, 38,0% and 41,4% respectively.

This trend shows that pupils of mothers with primary education or no schooling at all performed better compared to pupils of mothers with post-graduate plus university degrees and post-matric plus secondary education.

This study, therefore, does not support the theory that parents who are highly educated serve as a role model or motivating force to their children and enable them to perform well at school. Rather, this study has highlighted the point that pupils whose parents are either less educated or have no schooling at all, see the stark economic hardships and impoverishment encountered by their parents. The interview conducted by the researcher, some parents even revealed that they take loans from banks in order to sponsor their children's education. Thus, pupils of such parents, as revealed in this study, appear determined to work hard at school to achieve success in order to avoid the financial hardships and abject poverty that their parents experience. As a result, pupils of poor parents with less education or no schooling tend to perform well compared to pupils of



educated or well-to-do parents, whose needs are usually fully provided for.

## **2.8 LANGUAGE**

Johnson (1986:67) states that language is very important, for it allows us to organise symbols into ideas about ourselves and our culture. He states further that there would be no culture without language, for it is through language that we mark and interpret perceptions and communicate with one another. Johnson (1986:147) adds that as important as physical contact is, it is language that lies at the heart of culture and social life, and without interaction with others, we cannot possibly acquire it. As regards language and cognitive development, Yarrow et al. (1975 in Johnson 1986:147) note that children who are frequently spoken to and played with develop their mental abilities more rapidly than do less stimulated infants.

In emphasizing the importance of language, Giddens (1993:40) states that no one disputes that possession of language is one of the most distinctive of all human cultural attributes, shared by all cultures. Browne (1994:290) argues that success depends very heavily on language - reading, writing, speaking, and understanding and that low language proficiency may cause difficulties in communication, and may create disadvantages at school. Teachers may mistake language difficulties for lack of ability, and because the pupils with communicative problems in English, the medium of

instruction, may be penalized in the classroom. Bernstein (1970 in Browne 1994:290) also argued that there is a relationship between language use and social class, and that the language used by the middle-class is a superior instrument for success at school compared to the language used by the working class.

Macionis (1995:67-69) defines language as the key to the world of culture, it is a system of symbols that allows members of a society to communicate with one another. Language is, in fact, the major means of cultural transmission, the process by which one generation passes culture to the next. Levitas (1974:131) also contends that language is a powerful force in the formation of the culture of any society.

The language issue in South Africa is very sensitive since South Africa is a multi-lingual society and each ethnic group is trying to get its language officially recognised at the national level. To resolve the language issue, eleven languages have been officially recognised; however, English and Afrikaans still remain the most widely used official languages in South Africa.

In this study, an attempt will be made to find out the impact of language on pupils' school performance.

### **2.8.1 Linguistic ability and academic performance**

Low achievement in school may be attributable to factors in the pupils' learning home environment. One feature of that learning home environment is language. There has been a considerable amount of research into the study of the relationship between language and school performance, especially in the western countries compared to developing countries.

McCarthy (1954 and Klein (1965 quoted in Mangan et al. 1978:41) argue that in certain family environments, the methods of exercising control, and the nature of interactions that take place, etcetera are such that children do not acquire a high degree of linguistic resourcefulness.

Bernstein (1973:42) in his analysis of language commonly used by the British child, made a distinction between restricted code and elaborate code. He asserted that children of middle-class parents speak elaborate language whilst those of the working class parents speak restricted language.

Language is an effective instrument for communication and thinking and therefore forms a vital component of the learning home environment. Therefore pupils who often use the language which is the medium of instruction at school and in their homes, are likely to follow the lessons taught at school better. Consequently, they are able to do well, compared

to those who are handicapped in the use of the language in which school subjects are taught. In Venda, most of the pupils speak Tshivenda - the local language, at home and not English which is the medium of instruction at school. The use of Tshivenda as a means of communication in the home is due to the fact that most of the parents are illiterate. Even in homes where parents are literate, Tshivenda is still the main language of interaction.

In this study, the author attempts to discover the influence of the use of local languages such as Tshivenda, Zulu, Xhosa on the pupils' school performance.

**TABLE 9.1 : RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PUPIL'S HOME LANGUAGE AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

	TSHIVENDA		ENGLISH		AFRIKAANS		N. SOTHO		OTHER		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fail	111	55,5	15	7,5	2	1,0	27	13,5	45	22,5	200	100,0
Pass	66	48,9	21	15,6	2	1,5	18	13,3	28	20,7	135	100,0
Total	177	52,8	36	10,7	4	1,2	45	13,4	73	21,8	335	100,0

$p > 0,05$  (Number missing = 6)

The above table indicates that 177 out of 335 ( $\pm 53\%$ ) of the respondents have Tshivenda as home language. Only 36 (10,7%), 4 (1,2%), 45 (13,4%) out of 335 pupils use English, Afrikaans, and Northern Sotho as home languages respectively.

Within the various home language categories, it seems as if a large percentage failed, but in the "English" category, 15,6% passed, compared to 7,5% who failed.

This trend therefore seems in line with theories which state that home language can be a factor which enables pupils to perform well in school. For the purposes of this study, "home language" refers to the pupil's mother-tongue, that is, the language into which the pupil was born, and which he or she speaks frequently.

**TABLE 9.2 : RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LANGUAGE IN WHICH PUPILS COMMUNICATE MOSTLY AMONG THEMSELVES IN THE CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

	TSHIVENDA		ENGLISH		AFRIKAANS		N. SOTHO		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fail	110	54,7	89	44,3	1	0,5	1	0,5	201	100,0
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Pass	69	52,3	62	46,9	1	0,8	-	-	132	100,0
Total	179	53,8	151	45,3	2	0,6	1	0,3	333	100,0

$p > 0,05$  (Number missing = 8)

Table 9.2 does not show any significant relationship between the variables, "language in which pupils communicate mostly among themselves in the school classroom" and "school performance", ( $p > 0,5$ ). More or less 54% of the pupils communicate among themselves in Tshivenda. Only  $\pm 45\%$  do so in English which means that  $\pm 55\%$  of the pupils do not use English, the medium of instruction, when they communicate among themselves in the school classroom.

**TABLE 9.3 : RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LANGUAGE IN WHICH PUPILS COMMUNICATE MOSTLY AMONG THEMSELVES ON SCHOOL PLAY-GROUNDS AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

	TSHIVENDA		ENGLISH		N. SOTHO		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
FAIL	173	86,1	27	13,4	1	0,5	201	100,0
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
PASS	112	83,6	22	16,4	0	0,0	134	100,0
TOTAL	285	85,1	49	14,6	1	0,3	335	100,0

$p = 0,05$

Missing number = 6

As can be seen from Table 9.3, there is no significant relationship between the variables, "the language in which pupils communicate mostly among themselves on the school play-grounds" and "school performance" ( $p > 0,05$ ).

Only 14,6% of the pupils indicated that they use English as a medium of communication on the play-grounds.

**TABLE 9.4 : RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PUPILS WHO COMMUNICATE IN ENGLISH MOSTLY IN THE HOME AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

	ENGLISH SPOKEN AT HOME		ENGLISH NOT SPOKEN AT HOME		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Fail	52	26,0	148	74,5	200	100,0
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Pass	36	26,9	98	73,1	134	100,0
Total	88	26,3	246	73,7	334	100,0

$p > 0,05$  Number missing = 7

As the figures in Table 9.4 indicate, there is no significant relationship between the variables, "pupils who communicate mostly in English in the home" and "school performance" ( $p > 0,05$ ). 26,0% of the pupils do speak English at home while  $\pm 74\%$  do not. This picture indicates that pupils who communicate mostly in English in the home in Thohoyandou do not necessarily perform well because 73,1% of pupils who do not even communicate in English in the home were successful.

This situation may be due to the fact that a large number of parents in Thohoyandou are illiterate, or those who are even educated communicate with their children (pupils) in the local language. This may not aid to acquire



better fluency in English which is the medium of instruction. As a consequence, it may adversely affect pupils' ability to perform well in the subjects which are taught in English.

The conclusion one may reach with regard to language and school performance in terms of first language and language of instruction is that both of them serve as a medium through which pupils learn. The eminent linguist, Halliday (1985:96), in supporting this view states that most of what we learn, we learn through language. This is true even of our commonsense knowledge, all that we learn before and outside our schooling; but it is especially true of educational knowledge. He contends that language is so central to the whole of the educational process that its role was never talked about, since no-one could conceive of education without it.

Basically, first language and second language, according to Halliday (1985:92), are different ways of expressing (saying) the same meanings (things). Halliday argues further that both of them have structures, forms and follow rules. The two are alternatives "outputs" - alternative realizations of the meaning potential of language; anything that can be said in writing can also be said in speaking, and vice versa. The two are different realizations of language.

Even when it comes to the language of instruction, there are marked differences between spoken form of the language and the written form. The latter often has impact on school performance since the method of evaluation of performance in school work often involves the written language. For, in the case of spoken language, one does not have to spell words correctly, or punctuate what one says. Also, one can express the same thing in different ways in order to achieve clarity.

On the other hand, written language has certain features which differ from spoken language. Language of instruction entails the use of 'technical' terms that are peculiar to a particular subject. A teacher teaching Geography, Economics or Chemistry uses words and terms that are peculiar to each of these subjects. Thus, for one's work in a particular subject to be understood, one must use expressions and linguistic styles, forms, terms and structures appropriate to that subject.

In a written exercise, a pupil has to develop a theme and present it in a coherent, articulate and orderly manner, choosing appropriate words and terms. So the type of skills one needs in a written language are much more demanding than in spoken language. The author has noted in his years of teaching experience, that many students who speak fluent English still find it difficult to organise their material, develop it and present it in a lucid and coherent manner when it comes to writing. They have the tendency to think

first in the native 'spoken' language and then convey it in the language of instruction - in this case, English which is the medium of instruction. What they write often shows traits of direct translation from the native language into English and there is often many grammatical aberrations and inaccuracies, rendering their work quite unacceptable.

From the discussion above, it becomes clear that pupils who are orally proficient in the language of instruction may not perform well in tests written in English.

Hence it is the view of the author that a pupil must do well in both in the spoken and the written forms of the language of instruction (English) in order to perform well in school. This view is supported by Halliday (1985:100) who says that both spoken language and the written language are both forms of language; it is the same linguistic system underlying both. However the two forms exploit different features of the system, and gain their power in different ways. Thus the powers of the spoken language and that of the written language complement each other. Both must be present in order to enable pupils to perform well in school.

## 2.9 DEPRIVATION - MARXIST ANALYSIS

According to Demaine (1981:1), Marx did not have to say much about the functions of education. Instead, people like Bowles and Gintis, Althusser and others who subscribed to the Marxist view on education, wrote volumes of literature on the concept of education from a Marxist perspective. According to these Marxists, Marxist concept of deprivation was based on the functions of education. They argue that education contributes to reproducing and maintaining the capitalistic system; that the ruling class bends education in such a way so as to suit their own interests, and that education is regarded as an element of the state machine and fulfils a function that serves to perpetuate capitalistic production relations.

Thus Bowles and Gintis, (1976 in Allais and McKay 1995:35) argue that education cannot be understood as a phenomenon isolated from the rest of society. They further argue that education needs to be examined in the light of its relationship to the economic base and other social institutions of society. Again, Bowles and Gintis (1976 in Allais and McKay 1995:35) thus focus on the way in which the educational system is an integral element in the reproduction of the prevailing class structure of society. They furthermore contend that the class and power relations of economic life are perpetuated or reproduced in capitalist society. Thus, according to Marxist view, education reproduces inequality and helps the ruling class to maintain

its position of dominance.

Blackledge and Hunt (1985:161) also support the view that education maintains the capitalist system. However, the process of class maintenance is concealed from public view by the universally reigning ideology of the schools. In this regard, Bowles and Gintis (1976 in Allais and McKay 1995:39) assert that if capitalism is to succeed, it requires hardworking, docile, obedient, and highly motivated workforce. As a consequence, the four-tier previous education system in South Africa designed along racial, ethnic groups: the Whites, the Asians, the Coloureds and the Blacks had far-reaching significance on Black education in Venda. The philosophies and policies of the education systems were based on the political and economic philosophies of the government at that time - the apartheid policy, that is, separate development for the racial groups according to their respective cultural aspirations. In this respect, the provision of education for the Black children was relegated to the background. Black education was heavily discriminated against in terms of allocation of funds for educational equipment and other facilities. For example, there was widespread disparity in the annual costs of education per pupil between 1930 and 1945 as indicated below:

**TABLE 10 : ANNUAL COSTS OF EDUCATION PER PUPIL, 1930-1945**

YEAR	WHITES	BLACKS
	£	£
1930	22.12.0	2.2.8
1935	23.17.2	1.18.6
1940	25.14.2	2.4.4
1945	38.5.10	3.17.10

Source: Africa Perspective No 17 Spring, 1980:12.

The more recent statistics of the allocation of funds to the education of the racial groups still put Black education at a great disadvantage. This is illustrated by the expenditure of funds indicated in Table 11.

**TABLE 11 : PER CAPITA EXPENDITURE ON EDUCATION, 1953-1985**

YEAR	AFRICAN % OF WHITE EDU		COLOURED % OF WHITE EDU		INDIAN % OF WHITE EDU		WHITE
	R		R		R		R
1953-4	17	13,3	40	31,3	40	31,3	128
1969-70	17	6,0	73	25,9	81	28,7	282
1975-6	42	7,1	150	25,4	190	32,1	591
1977-8	54	8,2	185	28,2	276	42,0	657
1980-1	139	15,2	253	27,7	513	56,2	913
1982-3	146	12,1	498	41,1	711	58,7	1211
1984-5	214	42,7	501	33,2	905	59,9	1511

Source: Survey of Race Relations in South Africa (1976) in South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), Johannesburg, 1978:399.

The pattern of state expenditure has reflected the huge inequalities between black and white education. Table 11 shows the per capita expenditure on different categories of school pupils for various years in the 1970s and 1980s.



**TABLE 12 : STATE PER CAPITA EXPENDITURE ON SCHOOL PUPILS BY RACE (RAND PER ANNUM)**

YEAR	AFRICANS		COLOUREDS		INDIANS		WHITES
	PER CAPITA EXPENDITURE (P.C.E.)	% OF WHITE P.C.E.	P.C.E.	% OF WHITE P.C.E.	P.C.E.	% OF WHITE P.C.E.	P.C.E.
1971-2	25,31	5,5	94,41	20,5	124,40	27,0	461,00*
1975-5	39,53	6,5	125,53	20,7	170,94	28,3	605,00
1975-6	41,80	6,5	139,62	21,7	189,53	29,4	644,00
1976-7	48,55	7,5	157,59	24,5	219,96	34,2	654,00
1978-9	71,28	9,8	225,54	31,2	357,15	49,3	724,00
1979-80	91,29	7,8	234,00	20,0	389,66	33,3	1 169,00
1980-1	176,20	17,3	286,08	28,0	n/a	n/a	1 021,00
1981-2	165,23	13,5	418,84	34,3	798,00	65,7	1 221,00
1982-3	192,34	13,9	593,37	42,8	871,87	63,0	1 385,00
1983-4	234,45	14,2	569,11	34,4	1 088,00	65,8	1 654,00
1986-7	476,95	19,0	1 021,41	40,7	1 904,20	75,9	2 508,00

\*Estimate. Figures for African pupils in the 'common area' only, i.e. excluding the homelands.

Source: Blignaut, *Statistics on Education in South Africa, 1968-1979*; SAIRR, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1988. in Nasson and Samuel (1990:31).

Thus, right from inception, black education was designed in such a way that it would produce black scholars who could not compete with their counterparts whites for jobs on the same footing of equality. According to Pelzer (1966 quoted in Motlhabi 1984:7), this motive is evident in the speech made by Jan Smuts in London in 1917 to the effect that:

"... We have felt more and more that if we are to solve the Native question, it is useless to try to govern Black and White in the same system, ... They are different not in colour but in mind and in political capacity ..."

Furthermore, Benson (1969 in Motlhabi 1984:7) stated that on another occasion Smuts affirmed that the ideal of the Union government was to make South Africa a "White man's country". The philosophy of the South African government of the day which was reflected in the implementation of Black education system is also noticeable in the question posed by Dr Malan (1948 in Neame 1962:73) posed the question whether the

"European race' in South Africa would in future succeed to maintain its rule, its purity and its civilization, or would it 'float along until it vanishes forever, without honour in the Black sea of South Africa's Non-European population ..."

Neame (1962:73-74) stated that Dr Malan warned that the removal of segregation, would mean that South Africa would sooner or later have to take its place among the half-caste nations of the world. Neame (1962:131) also notes that Strijdom (1955), the successor of Dr Malan in

the same vein, observed that

"Either the White man dominates or the Black man takes over ... And the only way (the Europeans can maintain domination is by withholding the vote from the Africans."

Here, Strijdom states emphatically that it was not possible for Blacks in general to take over government, either through merit or otherwise. He set aside certain jobs for Whites only. He also introduced separate university education for Blacks and Whites. There were to be separate universities also for Africans, Indians and Coloureds. In response to criticism, Strijdom (1957 in Neame 1962:141) pointed out:

"The universities are there to serve the nation and not apart from and independent of the nation. The nation cannot allow such institutions to spread doctrines that are perilous to the life or future of the White race ..."

As regards the political philosophy and educational policy of the South African government, it was reflected in the speeches of subsequent Prime Ministers, Ministers of Native Education and in parliamentary debates. For example, the much-quoted statement of Dr Hendrik Verwoerd, Prime Minister, from 1958-66 in (Kallaway 1990:173) is that:

"There is no place for him ... (i.e. the black) in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour.

... Until now *he* has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the greener pastures of European society in which he was not allowed to graze."

Hitherto Dr Verwoerd had questioned the wisdom of teaching the Bantu child mathematics since he could not use it in practice. According to Motlhabi (1984:54), Dr Verwoerd said:

"What is the use of teaching a Bantu mathematics when he cannot use it in practice? That is absurd ... Education must train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life. It is therefore necessary that native education should be controlled in such a way that it should be in accordance with the policy of the state."

Also, the Interdepartmental Committee on Native Education (the Welsh Commission) (1936 in Kallaway 1990:168) stating what was the thinking of White South Africans about social relations of dominance and subordination reported that:

"The education of the White child prepares him for life in a dominant society and the education of the Black child for a subordinate society."

The year 1948 was thus a crucial year in the history of South Africa and, more especially in the history of its Black people. This was so with the Nationalist government coming into power with a political policy of apartheid

or the enforced segregation of Black and White people into different areas, a new ideology was introduced into Black schooling system.

As has been expressed elsewhere in this study, apartheid introduced inequality in education. Hence State policy towards Black schooling was possibly the single most important factor accounting for the 1976 students' uprising. From the educational provision made by the state an educational system that ensured the vast majority of Black pupils had an inferior schooling, was put into place (Nasson and Samuel 1990:17).

Thus, according to the Hansard (1953 quoted in Nasson and Samuel 1990:1) the intentions of the state as regards Bantu education were made explicit by Dr Verwoerd. He stated that:

"... the schooling structure set up by missions produced the 'wrong type' of black person ... Racial relations cannot improve if the result of Native Education is the creation of frustrated people who, as a result of the education they received, have expectations in life which circumstances in South Africa do not allow to be fulfilling immediately, when it creates people who are trained for professions not open to them. ... Above all, good racial relations cannot exist when the education is given under the control of people who create many expectations on the part of the Native himself, if such people believe in a policy of equality ... It is therefore necessary that Native Education should be controlled in such a way that it should be in accordance with the policy of the State. ..."

A crucial part of the State's educational policy was to develop a school system that would ensure that the majority of black children had some contact with Bantu education. This emphasis resulted in a massive increase in the number of black pupils in the lower primary (Sub A to Standard 2) and higher primary levels (Standard 3 to Standard 5). Thus the missionary schools were generally forced to hand over control to the State or face closure. According to Christie and Collins (1985 quoted in Nasson and Samuel (1990:18), in 1953 there were over 5000 state-aided mission schools. All educational appointments, syllabi, examinations and school buildings were to be controlled exclusively by the state. Christie and Collins (1985 quoted in Nasson and Samuel (1990:18) again stated that in 1955 there were some 970000 black pupils in primary schools, comprising 731000 pupils in lower primary and 239000 in higher primary.

It would seem that in purely quantitative terms "Bantu Education" had achieved something. Nonetheless, this growth was confined to the lower standards. The deliberate lack of state funding for secondary schools coupled with pervasive poverty, ensured that a massive drop-out rate characterised black schooling. Out of 20,000 black pupils in Sub A in 1950, only 894 reached matriculation in 1962. Of these 532 (59,8%) failed (Rand Daily Mail, 28 March, 1975 quoted in Nasson and Samuel 1990:18). According to the Survey of Race Relations by South African Institute of Race Relations in South Africa (SAIRR) (1972:257), by 1970 the position had

changed substantially. So 68,8% of black pupils were in the lower primary classes (41,0% were in Sub A or Sub B); 4,1% were in junior secondary classes (Form I to Form III) and 0,36% were in Form IV or V. Some 2938 black pupils, or 0,11% of the total black school enrolment were in the final year of secondary school, Form V, matriculation.

What these figures reveal is that the state was determined to ensure that in line with apartheid policy, the vast majority of black children would receive a type of education that did not equip them for anything other than unskilled manual labour. However, at the same time the state, through schooling, was trying to ensure that Whites were prepared for almost complete monopoly of the dominant positions in society. With regard to this, Nasson and Samuel (1990:19) stated that in 1975 some 36,4% of white pupils were in secondary school. This was proportionately about 13 times greater than the number of black pupils in secondary school 1975. For every one black student at matriculation level, there were 4% white students.

This very vast difference between white and black attrition rates in schools was due to the privileged economic position of white parents and the racially discriminatory allocation of funds by the state. The latter can amply be illustrated by the fact that, according to South African Institute of Race Relations (1978 quoted in Nassons and Samuel 1990:19), between 1975-76, R744 million was allocated to white education and R166 million to black

education. This averaged out to R166 for every white scholar and R41,80 for every black scholar.

The inequality still exists in spite of the fact that the amount allocated to black education has improved considerably since the incremental change in the method of state funding for black education. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, black education was funded by a fixed treasury contribution of R13 million plus 80% of black taxes. However, black wages were so low that 80% of black taxes represented a meagre amount. In this regard, the Department of Bantu Education (DBE 1961 quoted in Nasson and Samuel 1990:19) stated that until 1970 the state operated on the basis that the expansion of black schooling was 'dependent upon an increased contribution by the Bantu in the form of taxation. This kind of thinking had serious consequences. As has already been noted, very few black children were accommodated in secondary schools. For instance, the Department of Bantu Education (1976 in Nasson and Samuel 1990:19) stated that in 1970, of the 9108 black schools, only 415 taught at secondary level. Only 104 of these went up to matriculation. From 1970 onwards, there appears to have been a shift in state policy and a further 439 secondary schools were built between 1970 and 1976. By the end of 1976 there were 844 black secondary schools.



The accommodation problem was aggravated by the state's policy of locating black high schools in the homeland labour reserves. This was a further attempt to restrict secondary school education to a small minority, as well as being in line with the state's policy of relocating people to the homelands. In this respect, the Department of Bantu Education (1975 in Nasson and Samuel 1990:19) stated that in 1975 there were 604 secondary schools in the homelands and only 170 in the urban areas of South Africa. The limited number of black secondary schools ensured that thousands of children were forced into the labour market prematurely, in order to earn some wages to subsidise the family budget. Another important consequence of the limited allocation of funds was that the vast majority of teachers in black secondary schools were hopelessly underqualified. In 1976 only 1,7% of teachers had a university degree. Another 10,4% had the matriculation certificate, 49,3% had two years of secondary school and 21% had only primary school education (South African Institute of Race Relations in Nasson and Samuel 1990:20). Besides being underqualified, most teachers were poorly paid. In 1975 black teachers with similar qualifications to whites earned 55% of white teachers' salaries. The Rand Daily Mail, 7 January 1975 (quoted in Nasson and Samuel 1990:20) indicated that an African woman with a degree and a teacher's certificate started on R185 per month, whereas a white man with similar qualification started at R342 per month.

The little teaching that could be done was made even more difficult by appallingly overcrowded conditions. According to the South African Institute of Race Relations (1976 quoted in Nasson and Samuel 1990:20), in 1975 the average teacher-pupil ratio in black schools was 1:54,1 against 1:20,1 in white schools. Often the number in a class would approach 100. In 1975 a high school science teacher in Soweto had 84 pupils in his Form II class. His statement explains the hopelessness of black adolescents' position at that time. According to the Rand Daily Mail, 7 January, 1975 (quoted in Nasson and Samuel 1990:20) the teacher asked "How can we turn them away when we know they will roam the streets?" In fact, in 1975 it was reported that because principals were reluctant to turn away pupils, some primary school classes had up to 113 pupils (Rand Daily Mail, 21 January, 1976 quoted in Nasson and Samuel 1990:20).

The lack of state funds meant that schooling was very expensive for black pupils and their parents. Until 1976 parents were responsible for purchasing uniforms, all stationery and a number of textbooks for their school-going children. The Cape Times, (4 September, 1975 in Nasson and Samuel 1990:20) reported that in Soweto, parents were paying 38 cents a month in addition to their rents in order to ensure that schools are built. White pupils in state schools received all their textbooks and stationery at no cost. It is paradoxical that white parents who were the 'haves' paid nothing for textbooks and stationery while black parents who were the 'have-nots' had

to pay for these items. All these factors combined to ensure a high failure and drop-out rate amongst black pupils. For example, according to SAIRR (1976 quoted in Nasson and Samuel 1990:20), in 1975, some 41,6% of all black pupils who wrote the higher primary certificate examination failed. Some 27% of black pupils who wrote the mid-secondary examination failed and 36,2% of the matriculation candidates failed. About this problem, Nasson and Samuel (1990:20) commented:

"There is little doubt that the high failure rate discouraged many pupils from proceeding with their schooling."

Besides the high drop-out rate in the secondary schools, the drop-out rate of black school-goers in the lower standards was astronomical. The Star, 26 April, 1976 as quoted in Nasson and Samuel (1990:20) reported that in 1976 in black school:

"... more than half the children leave with less than four years schooling and so revert to illiteracy."

Such was the nature of the system of education which was established by the South African government in the homelands including Venda. The education system was characterised by discrimination and lack of the necessary educational equipment. Thus, right from the early years in school, the black child was deprived of the necessary educational facilities that would enable him or her to do well in school. As regards this discrimination

against the black education of the black child in South Africa, Bishop Desmond Tutu (quoted in Le Roux 1993:30) made the following statement:

"Depending on your pigmentation, you are placed high or low on the social pyramid ... It will determine what sort of education you are likely to get ..."

In Thohoyandou most secondary schools do not have libraries and science laboratories even though they sit for science subjects in the matriculation examination. Generally, classes are overcrowded, and in some cases pupils attend classes under trees. The conduct of classes in the open are subject to the vagaries of the weather. Some headmasters have no office and have to share the staff room with all members of staff. In some cases where a headmaster has an office, the same office is used as a store-room for storing sports equipment, stationery and other school property. Perhaps, this appalling state of affairs may be a characteristic of black education in South Africa itself, and the picture may not be largely different in most of the previous so-called "independent homelands". The researcher is of the opinion that lack of suitable educational equipment and congenial school climate is likely to adversely affect the level of motivation of both teachers and pupils, the culture of learning, and the general performance of pupils. As regards this situation, Pretorius (1987 quoted in Le Roux 1993:92) indicated that some pupils live in an environment that is characterised by a low economic and social status, a low level of education, unemployment and inferior occupations, limited community involvement in education, and limited

potential for upward or vertical social mobility. These children encounter poverty, deprivation and cultural "black holes" which hinder not only their optimal self-actualisation and self-concept but also their chances of performing well in school. Regarding this state of affairs, Kok (1970 quoted in Le Roux 1993:92) made the following statement:

"The children are environmentally deprived and are characterised by the display of a poor self-concept (they have limited self-confidence and this is often exacerbated by failure); limited motivation; perpetual deficiencies; poor creativity; language deficiencies."

Most of the pupils living in such educationally, culturally and economically deprived environment may not go to school at all because their parents cannot afford to pay school fees. They leave school earlier because their parents cannot support them financially. Therefore, some of them leave school early in order to do odd jobs to earn some money to supplement the family income. Others discontinue schooling at an early stage because they either lack motivation or fail their examinations.

Research study has also found that a student living in a geographical and physical environment that is unfavourable, finds it very difficult to transform his or her innate potential into actualities. For Kok (1970 in Le Roux 1993:92) contends that this type of environment can be best termed non-supportive, which implies that the student does not experience healthy relationships with the family, or usually encounters problems at school. In

support of this view, Gowan and Demos (1966 in Le Roux 1993:93) assert that a pupil living in such condition is deprived of appropriate intellectual stimulation.

It is therefore evident that South African education has, to a large extent, failed to meet the needs of black students. The structure and organisation of the education system and the political, social and economic factors that have shaped its development served to promote the interests of the dominant group and ensured their participation and integration into all spheres of society. In this way, separate education in South Africa has largely served to keep the culturally diverse population divided, to protect the position of the dominant group, and to ensure domination in all facets of society. It is clear that the school was used as a powerful instrument for supporting and legitimising the position of the dominant group and in furthering political interests.

One of the important means of maintaining power is to ensure conformity and continuity to the ideologies of the dominant group. In this regard, the school in South Africa is used to ensure conformity to the prevailing ideologies of the dominant group. In schools pupils are taught to accept unquestioningly the existing prevailing dominant values, attitudes, ideologies, social practices and institutions in society as a whole.

It is a fact that schools play an important role in the process of social reproduction. McLaren (1989 quoted in Le Roux 1993:178) refers to social reproduction as the reproduction or perpetuation of social class. Schools also perpetuate and reproduce the social relationships and attitudes needed to sustain dominant economic and class relations. Schools transmit the status and class positions.

In the South African education system, this has been achieved through the creation of separate schools, centralised control by the dominant group, limitation to educational institutions, the unequal allocation of financial and physical resources, and the perpetuation of poor quality teaching through inadequately trained personnel. Moreover, Nokomo and Makate (1990 in Le Roux 1993:178) asserted that apartheid education has been effectively used to perpetuate a racial division of labour in which whites dominate the skilled sector of the labour market, and the oppressed groups occupy semi-skilled or unskilled positions. In support of this view, Wolpe and Unterhalter (1991 in Le Roux 1993:178) maintained that the Bantu Education Act 1953 was used as an instrument to shape education in order to perform these functions. It led to policies aimed primarily at structuring and expanding black education only to the extent that it served to meet the labour requirement of whites, and also at restructuring content to inculcate Christian National Education values, thereby socialising blacks to accept their subordinate position in society.

In subscribing to this notion, Mncwabe (1990:28) pointed out that the education system of the South African government was used as a means of ensuring the diversity and cultural separation of ethnic groups. He argued that:

"... a fundamental political preoccupation of the ruling Afrikaner Nationalist Party is to ensure diversity and separation of cultures."

It follows that separation of education has ensured that students attend separate schools organised along the lines of cultural and racial characteristics resulting in students being educated in isolated cultural capsules. So, under a separate system dominated by a Christian National Education ideology, teachers were used to transmit, interpret and reproduce the cultural values, norms and heritage of the dominant group with a view to assimilating sub-dominant groups into the mainstream culture and establishing cultural homogeneity and supremacy. In that way, the cultural heritage of sub-dominant groups and their histories, experiences and contributions were marginalised; and in the process their cultures were relegated to the background. To this end, Mphahlele (1983 in Mncwabe 1990:28) observes

"One of the main causes of the present crisis is that Blacks receive their education in schools of their own cultural grouping, which in reality pay little heed to their own culture."



Further, according to the International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF) (1983:27), education is used to help perpetuate segregation and domination in South Africa by preparing black children for economically and politically subordinate positions in society. Cultural diversity was exploited and emphasised to create divisions and barriers among people. Besides, the government of South Africa spends much more on white children than it does on education for black children. In this regard, the IDAF (1983:27) stated that:

"Unequal expenditure throughout the whole history of education in South Africa has meant unequal facilities and resources."

As a result of lack of adequate funding to black education, many schools for black children are in chronic need of repair. There are shortages of classrooms for black children and wide disparities in the supply of textbooks. Teacher training has been unequal as well as teacher-pupil ratio. In 1981 the teacher-pupil ratio was 1:18 for Whites, 1:24 in Indian schools, 1:27 in Coloured schools and 1:48 in African schools (South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) Survey, 1981:334). However, sustained protests against apartheid education, together with the economic need for more skilled labour, have led to increased investment of resources in education for black pupils. Nonetheless, the scale of inequalities that existed is so great that far more resources would be needed to close the gap than have so far been invested or appear to be planned. Also, according to Survey of Race Relations 1980 in South African Institute of Race Relations 1981:334), a

three-fold increase on expenditure in education would be needed to close the gap.

There are wide differences in the numbers of children of each group attending school. All white children, because of the laws governing education, receive education up to the age of 15. A much smaller proportion of African children go to school. Many who go to school have to leave after a few years. They have to leave because of the limited number of places and because they have to help support their families. For example, of African children who started school in 1967, only 15% stayed on to Form III, two years short of the final form. A much higher proportion of white schoolchildren were in secondary school. The content of education was geared to the needs of the apartheid system and this has been the principal focus of the struggle of pupils, students, teachers and parents for change (IDAF 1980 School Boycott (1980) in Nassons and Samuel 1990:28).

The government's policy on admission of black students to white technikons (technical colleges) is the same as in the case of universities; it can occur only where ministerial permission is granted. In 1981 a law was passed, providing for the establishment of separate black technikons. Until recently there was virtually no training of Africans as artisans.

Besides educational deprivation which contributed to the poverty of the black people in Venda, lack of job opportunities, low wages and non-participation of the government at the national level, all contributed to the poverty of the people. As there was an acute problem of unemployment, a substantial number of Venda people worked in towns outside Venda as migrant workers. They had to run two "homes" in that they had to use part of their meagre wages for their own upkeep, and remit some money to their families in their villages in the rural areas. Furthermore, politically, they were disenfranchised and, hence had no representatives who could bring developments to their area. Even though the Venda people had the so-called independence during the end of the creation of the "homelands", the budget of the Venda government which came from the coffers of the South African government based in Pretoria, was strictly controlled.

Another factor that contributed to the poverty of the Venda people was the problem of acquiring land for farming. In the case where the people were able to acquire some land, they had no capital to buy the necessary farming machinery and inputs to cultivate and enrich the land. Therefore, few black peasant farmers could compete with the white commercial farmers on the same footing of equality. So black farmers in Venda had to abandon their farms and go to work for white farmers as farm labourers for low wages. Furthermore, large family sizes accounted for the poverty of the people. The average family size was conservatively four children. With this family size,

coupled with low wages, parents could not afford to feed, clothe and educate their children well. This accounted for the presence of a large number of children who did not attend schools, as well as the prevalence of malnourishment among children.

In conclusion, social deprivation, lack of education, underdeveloped black townships, long term retardation of economic growth, deepening recession, violent repression and mass unemployment, all contributed to the poverty of the Venda people. This study was aimed at discovering the impact of poverty and its related factors on the performance of pupils in schools in Thohoyandou.

## **2.10 SUMMARY OF THEORETICAL CONCEPTS**

In this study, Marxist concept of education has been used to refer to parental deprivation as manifested in the parents' levels of education, occupation and income. All these were likely to contribute to the non-supportive and non-stimulating learning home environment which were likely to impact on the pupils' performance at school. As regards the role of the parents/family, the author used the role to imply how the pupil regarded his or her biological parents as the significant other and, how to work hard to meet the parents' expectations. The perspective on the motivation was employed to find out how parents motivated their children to work hard at school by providing a

favourable learning home environment conducive for learning to take place.

The use of these concepts was to elicit information about both the parents and children's expectations and socio-economic status (SES) of the parents which comprise parental level of education, occupation and income, and learning conditions such as sleeping and study rooms, type of chores, nutrition and exposure to mass media, for example, newspapers, television, radio and magazines.

## **2.11 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, another central aim of Bantu Education, according to Christie and Collins (1984 in Kallaway 1990:174), was its hegemonic function. One of the aims of Bantu education was to facilitate the reproduction of the relations of production in a docile form. The Bantu education system was able to prepare blacks to accept differences as part of unchallenged order. According to Kallaway (1990:181), the quality of schooling provided for blacks could not equal that provided for whites. The State's funding therefore made the poorest section of the community pay for its own social services. Therefore, in analysing the system on the basis of Marxist theory of labour reproduction, one cannot state that the Bantu education was geared towards the reproduction of labour required by the needs of capitalist accumulation in general. Thus the education system and the political

ideologies of the government of the day, contributed to the disempowerment and impoverishment of the blacks. As a consequence, the blacks suffered from social, economic, psychological and political deprivation. Bantu education was the best means for reproducing labour in the form the white in a dominant position desired.