

How Do We Manage? Determinants of Effective Leadership in High-Poverty Schools

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KEYWORDS High-poverty Schools. Leadership Strategies. Leadership Qualities. Effective Leadership. Socio-economic Factors

ABSTRACT The paper focused on the challenges facing principals of high-poverty schools in an Education District in South Africa. It sought to determine how some schools in disadvantaged communities excel academically, despite the poor living conditions of their learners and other poverty-related disadvantages. It also set out to establish which elements constitute a profile of effective leadership in high-poverty schools. An empirical investigation using a qualitative research design was carried out and data were gathered through interviews with the principals and focus group discussions with teachers from the three selected schools. Based on the research findings derived from the literature and the views of the participants in the study, it was found that, by employing effective leadership strategies and having a committed staff cohort, it is indeed possible for high-poverty schools to maintain excellent academic standards and achieve consistently high results against all the odds. Strategies for achievement are proposed for principals of high-poverty schools.