FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS FOR STUDENTS FROM LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS:

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TWO SELECTED SCHOOLS;

ONE IN SASKATOON, CANADA, AND THE OTHER IN BARKIN-LADI (GWOL), NIGERIA.

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Education

For the Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

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By

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Brandon University

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Senate for acceptance, a MASTER’S THESIS entitled:

Factors that Contribute to Academic Success for Students from Low Socio-economic Backgrounds: A Comparative Study of Two Selected Schools; One in Saskatoon, Canada, and another in Barkin-Ladi (Gwol), Nigeria.

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Dedication

I dedicate my research work to my loving and sacrificing mother (of blessed memory) for being my first teacher in the way of faith, and for all her selfless love, nurturing, caring, and magnanimity to me. I also dedicate this work in honor of my late brother Gabriel Gyang Choji, who taught me at home to complete the hard work of my studies.
Abstract.

My thesis research addresses the factors that contribute to students' academic performance with special reference to children that come from low socio-economic backgrounds. It is a comparative study of two schools: one in Saskatoon, Canada, and the other in Barkin-Ladi, Nigeria. As a child who came from a low socio-economic background, and later as an adult who worked in a school with many students from low socio-economic backgrounds, I wanted to write on this topic. The sampled schools in Saskatoon and Barkin-Ladi were purposively chosen as those that have a considerable number of children from low socio-economic backgrounds. The basic question I tried to answer in my study is how students who come from low socio-economic backgrounds can best be helped to achieve academically.

In my study, I have learned that the insightful and helpful steps on helping students in the sampled school in Saskatoon are the early focus on literacy, responding to data-driven record keeping, the online survey on What Did You Learn In School Today (WDYLIST), the Child Hunger Education Program (CHEP), and the Safety, Teamwork, Attitude, Responsibility, and Respect (STARR) program. In my research findings with the sampled school in Barkin-Ladi, Nigeria, scouting for financial sponsorship, subsidizing school fees, providing educational learning materials, and organizing competitions, debates, and quizzes are essential for helping students from impoverished backgrounds excel in academics.

I discovered in my study that for participants in the sampled school in Saskatoon, Canada, teaching is viewed primarily as a vocation rather than only as a profession. Teacher perception of the profession is important in regards to being dedicated to meeting the needs of students. The study has also showed that there is a strong sense of community and unity of purpose in both sampled schools.
In the sampled school in Barkin-Ladi, Nigeria, the school being a Catholic mission helped make a big difference in the moral upbringing of the students. As well, the examination promotion policy kept the students alert and working hard so as not to be retained or repeated in the same class. The poverty level in Nigeria cannot be compared to that of Canada. The poverty in Nigeria is so visible that there can be no mistake about who is poor and who is rich even when looking at the schools that the children attend. I have gathered from my study and my life in Nigeria that the government has a good national policy on Education but poor implementation. The sourcing for sponsorship is a big need for children from poor families to be engaged in school. Implementing the Child Hunger and Education Program (CHEP) and Safety, Teamwork, Attitude, Responsibility, and Respect (STARR) programs in the schools in Nigeria will assist students coming from low socio-economic backgrounds.
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Thanks be to God who is able to do much more than I can ever imagine or think of in Christ Jesus our Lord. My gratitude goes to Our Lady of Perpetual Help whose intercession I sought and received through the Novena (nine days of continuous prayers for this particular intention of completing my thesis amidst varied obstacles and challenges that I encountered). I thank His Excellency, Archbishop Ignatius A. Kaigama, who asked me to go on mission and study in Canada. I thank Archbishop Albert LeGatt, the then Bishop of Saskatoon, who sought for a priest on mission in Saskatoon Diocese, and who gave me permission to study in Brandon and who supported me with textbooks and a computer. I am also thankful to the Archbishop of Winnipeg, who gave me the appointment and accommodation in St. Augustine’s Parish, Brandon, which is close to Brandon University.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

As a child, the researcher experienced hunger, lacked adequate clothing, and had been forced out of school because of the inability to pay school fees. The experience of what it means to come from a low socio-economic background ignited the sympathy of the researcher towards those students in similar situations who need to be provided the opportunities for a successful future. The researcher’s childhood background set his mind to write a thesis on the topic.

When the researcher gained admission to a master's degree in education, all through the courses he was interested in the relationship between certain characteristics to the improvement of academic achievement of children from low socio-economic backgrounds. The researcher’s interest in the topic, as noted, was borne out of his childhood experiences and background. He shared this interest with a professor who encouraged the pursuit of the research. He also discussed the intent with one of his friends who had the same interest, but his interest was mainly in one particular ethnic group, as it affects that particular ethnic group. The encouragement gave the researcher the confidence and determination to write on this topic: Factors that Contribute to Academic Success for Students from Low Socio-Economic Backgrounds: A Comparative Study of Two Selected Schools, one in Saskatoon, Canada, and the other in Barkin-Ladi (Gwol) Nigeria.

In their study, Engle and Black (2008) identify that poverty inhibits students’ educational attainment, and at the same time identify educational attainment as one of the prime devices for overcoming poverty (p. 243). Eagle and Black have a point, but care must be taken to consider if other factors, beyond the constraints of poverty, can be found that are
vital to the academic achievement of students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Likewise, Noll and Cassidy (2005) relate that the outlook for academic achievement is bleak for students of limited resources (p. 200). Granted, the outlook may be bleak but can something be done to improve the academic achievement for all children despite their backgrounds? It may be difficult to change the impoverished situation of students, but there can be ways to assist them in spite of their poverty. The researcher believes that all children, if given the necessary tools and guidance, can perform to maximum levels regardless of their backgrounds. The researcher supports Milne and Alison (2006) who observe that the studies that reported effects of low socio-economic status on children’s academic achievement vary according to different cases (p. 184). Statistics Canada (2003) reports that The Program for International Students' Assessment [PISA] held a mathematics test among children from countries that are in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which showed that high socio-economic status had an impact on higher mathematics performance of students. In the same test, there were fewer variations among some countries, like Canada and Japan. Even in Canada, Saskatchewan has less significant variations among the high and low socio-economic groups in their academic in their test scores (Statistics Canada, 2003).

Many other studies have associated low socio-economic status with low academic achievement of students. MacLean (2007) found that low socio-economic status (SES) is indicative of low academic success and achievement compared with students from economically advantaged backgrounds (p. 1). D’Aoust (2008) points out that the negative outcome of poverty suggests significant impact on children’s academic achievement (p. 1). D’Aoust acknowledges other research findings about characteristics that influence the academic achievement of students from low socio-economic backgrounds. The purpose of the
present research work is to study the characteristics that contribute to the academic achievement of Grades 7 and 8 children from low socio-economic backgrounds in two different schools. The first school is in the Greater Saskatoon Catholic School Division in Canada and the second is a Catholic school in Barkin-Ladi Education Area in Nigeria.

1.2 The Background of the Research and Participant Schools

Societal pressure and demand to improve schools is constantly increasing. In most schools, some students experience exceptional academic success, while others do not. It is the intention of the researcher to determine the characteristics of schools with children from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds that have helped students gain academic success.

The researcher intends to focus on the following factors: school-wide initiatives; teachers' life experiences in the teaching profession; expertise, motivation and expectations that encourage students' learning and academic success; school culture; school initiated before-school and after-school programs; research surveys (for instance, what did you do in school today? [WDYDST]); and students’ resilience.

There are points of convergence and areas of divergence in the sampled schools in this study. With reference to convergence, the sampled schools have a large number of students that come from low socio-economic backgrounds. The two sampled schools are Catholic institutions; thus, both are guided by the constitution of Catholic religious education. The two schools have government ministries or departments that have control over curriculum, training and certification of teachers, implementation of special programs, and inspection and evaluation of teachers’ performance and students’ final examinations. The sampled schools have children who are in Grade 7 (JSS1) and Grade 8 (JSS2). Both sampled schools include a religious education syllabus in their curriculum.
The two sampled schools also differ markedly in many areas. The socio-economic status of the two countries, Nigerian and Canada, are not on the same level. The sampled school in Barkin-Ladi is wholly run and financed by church funds and students’ meagre school fees, while the school in Saskatoon is fully financed by the provincial government and the Catholic faithful/other Saskatchewan taxpayers’ monies. In Barkin-Ladi, students who complete the school may opt to be further trained to become priests. It is not the same in Saskatoon where the students will continue to secondary school. The Barkin-Ladi sampled school has programs that help in that religious direction for all the students, for example, the daily Masses, praying in the church several times day, spiritual exercises like monthly recollections, terminal retreats, and vocation talks. However, in Saskatoon, the school may not have daily Masses, and may not include several arranged times for daily prayers. The school in Barkin-Ladi is a boarding school. Students live in the school for the academic session, and go home to stay with their parents only at holiday times. In the sampled school in Saskatoon, all students attend school from their family homes on daily basis.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to identify and document the characteristics and initiatives that lead to students’ academic achievement in successful schools. Noll and Cassidy (2005) observe that achievement gaps are a cause of concern, and that understanding the processes that support resiliency in the face of adversity should be a high priority for researchers, educators, and policy-makers (p. 200). The researcher agrees with Noll and Cassidy, because education should ignite an everlasting hunger for wanting to learn. The school should be able to elicit optimal awareness and motivation from within the children to channel their efforts towards academic success. The effects of low socio-economic status are complex, and mostly associated with the home, neighborhood, and school. The researcher
intends to look at the variables that relate to the child’s experiences in the home/family and the school.

1.4 Research Question

In the literature review and interviews with principals, teachers, and parents (or parent-designates) in two purposively selected schools—one in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan and the other Barkin-Ladi (Gwol) Nigeria—the researcher explored the research question, “What school-wide initiatives, as well as parents’, teachers’, and individual students’ criteria/initiatives account for academic achievement of students, especially those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds? That is, what characteristics within the school (administrators and teachers), and the family (parents or parent designates) make a difference for students?” (See appendix for a full list of questions). The research objectives based on this question are as follows:

1. To identify school-wide initiatives that assist the academic success of students, especially children from poor socioeconomic backgrounds,
2. To characterize what in the school culture makes students become better achievers,
3. To determine extra-curricular initiatives that schools offer such as the before-school and after-school programs,
4. To determine how experienced administrators, teachers, and parents address social, physical, intellectual, and emotional needs of students,
5. To determine how principals, teachers, and parents encourage and sustain students’ high expectations, positive relationships, and motivation,
6. To determine what factors make students self motivated, dedicated, and disciplined despite their poor backgrounds, and
7. To assess the positive influences that families provide each other within the family to encourage their child’s academic achievements.

1.5 Conceptual Assumptions

The general assumption was that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds tend to have low academic achievement. Flouri and Howkes (2008) identify that children at-risk for academic failures are those from low socio-economic backgrounds (p. 412). Researchers like Berridge (2007), and Flouri and Hawkes (2008), have pointed out the connection between lower socio-economic backgrounds and low educational performance. Other researchers tend to use the same argument to blame the schools for the ineffectiveness of the general educational system. Granted, the schools should account for the achievement of students, but the individual child’s resilience and the home/family characteristics have some significant impact. Berridge (2007) observes that low academic achievement of students has been blamed on previous educational difficulties; low expectations by teachers; low priority given to education by social workers and care-givers; a mistaken assumption that most impoverished children in care have a learning difficulty; lack of continuity in care; placement instability; and interrupted schooling (p. 3). Flouri and Howkes (2008) also point out some additional postulates, including mothers' depressed mood, non-authoritarian parenting, and lower parental education, as well as parental social class, socio-economic disadvantage, and family structure as some of the cogent reasons for poor educational achievement (p. 413).

1.6 Personal Rationale and Theoretical Framework

The rationale for this research relates to the researcher’s personal childhood experiences. As a child, the researcher recalls times of hunger because of abject poverty resulting in inattentiveness at school, as the researcher was busy thinking of where his next
meal that afternoon or evening was going to come from, and long treks of over one-and-a half hours to and from school, often on an empty stomach. These had a negative effect on the researcher’s academic performance in mathematics (particularly multiplication and division), reading skills, and comprehension. Providing a complete and clean school uniform was a problem so much so that sometimes the researcher wore dirty uniforms for lack of washing soap. The researcher wore his older brothers’ oversized, worn out shirts, jumpers, trousers, resized to fit him. He stayed home for almost two school terms for non-payment of school fees. The researcher’s study environment at home was poor—no table and chair, inadequate light to do homework and reading, and lack of learning materials (e.g., textbooks, exercise books, pen, pencils, school bag, and mathematical set). In the elementary school years, proper personal hygiene was lacking for lack of money to buy soap or detergents for bathing and for washing of clothes.

Many characteristics contribute to students' academic achievement in successful schools. For instance, some relate to personal characteristics. The researcher is a self-motivated person with a deep desire for learning. The researcher always asked his parents questions even before he entered school. He went to enroll in school as a child even when his parents were reluctant to do so because the school would ask them for fees; despite that, the researcher’s mother would do all in her capacity to pay fees even if it meant her staying hungry and poorly clothed.

The elder brother of the researcher had to let go of his school in Elementary 3 for lack of fees and to help his father and mother on the farm. The researcher’s senior sibling guided the researcher to do his take-home work, helping with numeracy problems and literacy exercises at home. The researcher’s teachers came to love him because of his curious nature of asking questions and giving right answers. Thanks be to God for the implementation of the
Universal Primary Education in 1976, when the former head of state of Nigeria, General Yakubu Gowon, in the height of the discovery of oil, declared free education at the elementary and high school levels in the country. That gave the researcher relief to pursue his educational career without worry of school fees.

The researcher kept striving until he graduated from elementary school in 1980, and gained admission in the second level of education in the same year. In the second level of education from 1980 to 1986, the researcher trained in the then Government Teachers’ College (G.T.C.). The free education in the secondary school level did not last that long. In 1982, the government of the day re-introduced school fees. It was a big struggle on the part of the researcher’s mother who made ceaseless sacrifices including selling all the family valuables to see to it that he completed the second level of education.

Despite all these efforts, the researcher wasted two of the three academic sessions/terms of the school year, which caused him to repeat the third year of the second level of his education. The grace of God and the efforts of the researcher’s parents (especially the researcher’s mother, of blessed memory) aided the researcher and he graduated with a Grade II Teachers’ certificate – a licence/qualification that permits one to teach children in the primary school level in Nigeria, then in the 1980s and 1990s. The researcher was initially unemployed and stayed at home for a year working on the farm, having made up his mind to become a priest.

The researcher chose to become a priest in appreciation to God for enabling him to complete his second level of education, which allowed him to give himself as a whole in service to God and humanity. In addition, the subsequent seven years of training in the Major seminary, from 1987 to 1994, fit well with his quest toward furthering his knowledge. It seemed like a dream, when the researcher was ordained into the Catholic priesthood in
December 3rd 1994. The researcher’s Bishop then posted him to work as a teacher in one of the Catholic schools (St Murumba College in Jos). The researcher served with diligence and was made the bursar of the college for over four years. While working, he enrolled for graduate studies in the University of Jos, and obtained a Postgraduate Diploma in Education in January, 2000.

In January, 1999, he was transferred and appointed the principal of St. John Vianney Seminary, Barkin-Ladi, a position the researcher held until in 2006, when the Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon applied to have a priest from Jos Diocese, Nigeria, on mission. The Bishop and the researcher agreed with the request of the Bishop of Saskatoon to work and study in Canada. The researcher went to Saskatoon in Canada in June 2006, served in the small towns of Luseland, Major, and Tramping Lake for over a year, and in Allan, and in other churches as their pastor for two years before gaining admission in Brandon University to study for a Masters in Educational Administration. After the course work, the researcher went back to the Diocese of Saskatoon for mission work before returning to Nigeria, in November of 2010.

With his impoverished background, if there had not been timely encouragement, guidance, and resilience, the researcher would not be where he is today. Based on this experience, the researcher was moved to complete this research into the factors that contribute to the academic achievement of students from low socio-economic status, and to publish the findings in order to assist children who may find themselves in such situations, as well as the schools that they may attend.

A research theoretical framework or paradigm communicates the angle from which researchers study and understand different phenomena in the physical world. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), “a paradigm constitutes a way of looking at the world; interpreting
what is seen; and deciding which of the things seen by researchers are real, valid, and important to document" (pp. 20-21). This definition seems encompassing and well rounded. Richards and Morse (2007) uphold that a research framework explains a researcher’s focus, and then the research outcomes that happen in practice, and provides an understanding about a process that is taking place (p. 39). My success while coming from an impoverished background undergirds the theoretical framework that guides the work to assist other students and families with similar challenges.

1.7 Delineation of the Research Problem

This thesis explores the factors that lead to academic success of children from low socio-economic backgrounds in one selected school Saskatoon, Canada, and a second school in Barkin-Ladi (Gwol), Nigeria. The chosen schools are both in catchment areas identified by school administrators and/or known by the researcher as schools with students from low socio-economic backgrounds, and confirmed with reference to national data sets (e.g., Statistics Canada). This thesis focused: 1) on school-wide initiatives, as related by administrators, which encourage positive behaviors that lead to achievement by children from low socio-economic backgrounds (e.g., includes school culture; extra-curricular programs, such as breakfast and lunch programs; programs such as “What Did You Learn in School Today?” [W.D.Y.L.I.S.T.], and other before-and after-school programs); 2) on teachers’ experiences, expertise, and motivation, as well as their perceptions of student-held expectations that encourage students’ learning and achievement, and students’ resilience; and 3) on parents’ demographics, perceptions, and initiatives.

1.8 Importance of the Study

Creswell (2007) points out that research adds to our knowledge, improves practice, and informs policy debates. This study, entitled Factors that Contribute to Academic Success
for Students from Low Socio-economic Backgrounds: A Comparative Study of Two Selected Schools; one in Saskatoon, Canada, and the other Barkin-Ladi (Gwol), Nigeria, will increase the knowledge of some parents who are the first educators of their children from pre-natal to pre-school age. The research findings will also add to the existing knowledge of administrators, teachers, and parents who mould and shape the cognitive development and character of students from all backgrounds. Aware of pressing educational issues being debated today that relate to improving the educational standards of all students, the need for discovering factors that contribute to academic performance of children coming from low socio-economic backgrounds is a clarion call to education policy makers, principals, teachers, parents, students, and the community to pay attention to address the challenges. In the United States, there is legislation tagged “No Child Left Behind.” This research will be of importance to schools and school administrators (e.g., principals and vice-principals) by adding to their knowledge about practices that work in teaching students, especially students from low socio-economic backgrounds, toward academic achievement and success in life.

The researcher discovered no similar study has been carried out on factors that contribute to the academic achievement of students from low socio-economic backgrounds in Saskatoon, Canada. Although, there has been a similar study carried out in Anambra, Nigeria entitled A Case Study: Factors contributing to the Academic Achievement of Low-Socio-Economic Status in Anambra South County, Anambra State Nigeria, by Patrick C. Okafor (2007), there has been none carried out in Plateau State Nigeria. In addition, the findings of Okafor’s study were not made public through the internet. This study will provide information about two selected schools, and Grades 7 and 8 students from impoverished backgrounds in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, and Barkin-Ladi(Gwol), Plateau State,
Nigeria, that has not been previously researched, although the poverty levels may differ according to the economic standards of each country.

The research findings will create conversations about the important issues of welfare for the poor. When policy makers debate to make wise and helpful decisions for all society, those policy makers may be federal government employees, provincial/state workers, down to local school authorities. Their dialogue will benefit board members and administrators who, in their turn, will discuss and take stances on educational issues important to constituencies. The study will be of value to faculty members in the colleges and universities, graduate students, and writers who seek to proffer solutions or address educational problems or issues of poverty and educational excellence.

1.9 Definitions of terms

Academic Success:

Academic success, for the purpose of this study, refers to the acceptable educational standard of a student’s academic performance for acceleration or promotion to the next grade level or for academic competitions, and educational performance at final exams meriting admission into any higher institution of learning.

After-School Program:

An after-school program is a structured, supervised, free or fee-based program provided to students during the hours following the regular school day.

Before-School Program:

A before-school program means a planned, supervised, free or fee-based program provided to youth in the hours before the regular school day.

Socio-economic Status:
This refers to a combined measure of available sets of data, consisting of parents’ education, occupational status, and family’s or household’s income.

Resilience:

Resilience is the ability of a student to overcome the hardships and odds or bounce back under adverse circumstances (Floyd, 1996).

1.10 Delimitations

Every investigation is delimited to a certain degree. The present study will sample only the perceptions of the principals, selected teachers, and school workers who work in close collaboration with parents to represent parents of students in one selected school in Saskatoon, Canada; and the principal, vice principal, selected teachers, and selected parents in one selected school in Barkin-Ladi (GWOL), Nigeria. The research will report only factors that were perceived by the interviewees to contribute to academic success of students despite their low socio-economic backgrounds.

The two selected schools were Catholic schools. While the one in Saskatoon, Canada, was a public funded school, the other school in Barkin-Ladi was a hundred percent funded by the Church and parents. Both schools were well established and stable institutions, enjoyed a reasonable number of qualified and certified staff, and had similar demographics of student populations coming from low socio-economic backgrounds. The comparison of poverty in Canada is surely not exactly the same as in Nigeria but poverty lines are designated by the standards of the two different countries within their economic levels. Finally, the study was delimited to the perceptions of administrators (principals and vice-principal), teachers, parents and parents’ representatives (Home-School liaison Worker, School-Community Coordinator, and Program Coordinator).
1.11 **Organization of the Study**

The researcher has presented the problem, the purpose, and the research questions for the study in the Chapter One. The researcher has also provided the conceptual assumptions, rationale and theoretical framework, and delineation of the research problem. In this same chapter, the researcher presented the importance of the study, definition of some terms, and delimitations.

In Chapter Two, the researcher has reviewed related literature with respect to the characteristics associated with children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and successful schools with reference to their academic achievement. Subtopics in the literature review in section one include: family influences, poverty and children’s intellectual development, and students’ aspiration and intellectual development. In section two, the subtopics include: positive school-wide initiatives, effective and collective efficacy of staff, school-based programs, challenges for learning, and school culture.

The researcher has presented the research methodology in Chapter Three. This includes the description of research methodology, design, selection of subjects, data collection, data processing and analysis, methodological assumptions, limitations, and a summary. The data are presented in Chapter Four. The findings in relation to the research questions, summary of the findings, conclusion, and recommendations for practice and suggestions for additional research are presented in Chapter Three.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the literature related to characteristics that facilitate the academic achievement of students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The chapter begins with a general introduction to the two component parts of this study: (a) characteristics and initiatives of socio-economically disadvantaged children and families toward high academic achievement, and (b) characteristics of successful schools toward high academic achievement of their impoverished students. The literature provides direction for the investigation of research questions and the collection of data about factors contributing to the academic achievement of students. Children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds come from homes where the income is below the average income of a nation. Children from developed countries (e.g., Canada) will be better off than their peers in underdeveloped and developing nations (e.g., Nigeria); however, all countries need to have an educational system that cares for their young ones who came from disadvantaged homes.

Cunningham and Cordeiro (2003) define socio-economic status to mean a classification of people by measureable factors like economic status, family background, and job prestige (p. 80). Smith (2006) observes that while some may blame the families whose children face academic challenges, that understanding the life circumstances of the families reduces the tendency for educators and others to blame the parents (p. 49). Research is replete with studies that show that socio-economic characteristics of students affect children as they study. Should students and parents alone shoulder the responsibility for the academic failure of children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds? Hatt (2007) controversially
attributes the academic failure of many students more to their own innate ability than to the school's ability to provide quality education (p. 148). Such a position illustrates that poor children are doubly disadvantaged because their background makes it even more difficult for people from advantaged or rich backgrounds to understand their situation and respond to it (Louis, 2003, p. 371).

A socio-economically disadvantaged status means the child is from a low income home. Along with the financial hardships, however, there are several consequences of poverty: poor health; increased risk of negative development outcomes for young children and adolescents, for instance smoking, drinking, drugs, and early sexual activity; school dropout; low academic achievement; teenage pregnancies and child bearing; poor mental and physical health; delinquent behaviour; and unemployment in adolescents and adulthood (Wikipedia, Free Encyclopedia, 2012). In urban areas, for instance, low income parents are constrained to live in poor neighbourhoods that fail to supervise children's behaviour with adequate supports, that have no social cohesion, and that are socially disorganised, which results in poor cognitive and academic development of the children (Wikipedia, Free Encyclopedia).

Should we have child poverty in Canada? Walkom (2006), a columnist from the Toronto Star (Canada's largest daily newspaper), observes that the rich in Canada are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. Walkom pointed out that welfare worsens one’s prospects as recipients of welfare get less than they did 20 years ago. He accuses the public of ignoring the issue. Recently, Statistics Canada (2006) reports the most current UNICEF statistics on child poverty, which ranked Canada in the seventh worst position in child poverty among twenty-three industrialised nations, at 15.5%. That means that one in every six children lives below the poverty level in Canada.
What is child poverty? Campaign200.ca describes children in ‘relative’ poverty as the "twilight world in which children's physical needs may be minimally catered for, but because of poverty, some [of these] children are painfully excluded from the activities and advantages that are considered normal by their peers" (p. 3). Child poverty according to the Canada Report Card 2000 rises, noting that 43% of children are poor. In relation to the reports of the above statistics, that would mean more than two or three out of six children are poor. Since 1989 children in working poor families has increased to 55%, and children in families receiving social assistance increased to 18% (p. 2). These are alarming statistics.

Among the First Nations reserves receiving assistance in Canada, some authors think the situation is different with reference to school engagement, which is often very low in their grade (Roos, Brownell, Guevremont, Fransoo, Levin, MacWilliams, & Roos L.L., 2006, pp. 696-697). The Maclean's Magazine (2008) published an article entitled, "Forget an A, here's $20", which gives an impression of some principals paying students money to attend school (p. 47). The researcher supports the author who criticises this idea because it destroys the true value of education by putting a price tag on education by paying students to do what they should be doing anyway.

Studies have identified the strong relationship between socio-economic class and student achievement (Chapman, 2007; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006; Satz, 2007; Reynolds, Harris, Clarke, Harris, & James, 2006, p. 425). According to Milne and Plourde (2006), students from low socio-economic backgrounds enter school unprepared to learn, adding that they lag behind children from wealthy families in language skills and abilities (p. 183). Schools in disadvantaged areas fall short of the expected national standards of education (Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll, & Russ, (2004) p. 150). The unmitigated poor academic standards become inevitable because many factors affect disadvantaged children’s
development, for example, poor housing, unhealthy environment, improper feeding by poor parents, and/or by unemployed/poorly paid single parents. Among other consequences, children from poorer background are at higher risk of educational failure (Makoe, 2006, p. 378, Jensen, 2009, p. 18).

Although this master’s study is being conducted in two schools, it is important to note that some of the most significant experiences that formed the researcher’s own perceptions about what works and does not work for children from impoverished backgrounds to achieve academically comes from the researcher’s personal life experiences, as well as from encounters with students from low socio-economic backgrounds as a teacher, and later as an administrator in two Catholic schools in Jos Nigeria from 1994 through 2006. The researcher’s first initiative, as a principal, centred on how to improve the academic achievement of students in a boarding school with over three hundred students coming from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. My assumption was that children from low socio-economic backgrounds would excel academically if given the opportunity, care, facilities, and extra amount of time in the school.

2.2 Characteristics of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Children

Many characteristics are associated with children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In his study, Louis (2003) explores family, individual, and school factors that contribute to the academic achievement of students from disadvantaged families. The related literature reviewed here will elaborate characteristics of socio-economically disadvantaged children under the sub-sections of family influences, poverty and children’s intellectual development, and students' personal aspirations to become achieverS.
2.2.1 Family Influences

In this study, the researcher WILL consider the following sub-headings under home influences: (a) parents' educational background, (b) parental financial and employment stability, (c) parental behaviours and family interactions, and (d) parents' expectations or anticipations. If the aforementioned positive parental characteristics are lacking in a child's family or home, the child is likely to underperform academically. The researcher will examine the details of these characteristics.

Begum (2007) points out that home environment and home learning do make a difference in the academic performance of children in school (p. 29). Begum also points out that parents’ involvement in their children's education, as well as their partnership with their children's school work towards improving the academic standards of children (p. 29). Patall, Cooper, and Robinson (2008) identify four ways through which parents could be involved with their children's education: (a) communication with the school; (b) volunteering at the school; (c) participating in school decision making; and (d) supporting learning at home (p. 1039). In order to be involved in the education of their children, the parents will likely possess certain characteristics. These characteristics include higher parental education, financial and employment stability, behavioral and family interactions, and parents’ high expectation levels for children's learning achievement.

2.2.1.1 Parental educational background. Jesus Christ questioned in Luke 6:39, "And he spoke a parable to them, Could the blind lead the blind? Shall they not all fall into the ditch?" Parents' level of education is a vital influence towards their involvement in the education of the children. Beverly (2009) recalls that in times past parents were considered as nurturers and educators of children by being role models (p. 19). Beverly affirms that parents should still be involved in their children's education as educators in their homes, partners with the
school, and advocates for their children in society (p. 23). A parent is likely to be of less help if they are not educated; however, they still might provide the space, time, and possibly the environment for study. Parents who have gone through the process of education themselves are more likely to be able to help their children. Research supports that parents' education is important for children's achievement (Dubow, Boxer, & Huesmann, 2009, p. 226). Milne and Plourde (2006) note that parents, usually the mothers, who spent quality time with their children teaching them numeracy and literacy (e.g., alphabetical letters and counting numbers), help their children to be ready for attending schools (p. 186). Milne and Plourde add that less well-educated parents are unlikely to purchase reading and work books for their children, and may allow long hours of watching television (p. 186). The children might also not like to interrupt adults with their homework or study materials when adults are conversing (p. 186). Engin-Demir (2008) identifies that among many variables of socio-economic status, parental education is the most influential characteristic that affects children's academic achievement (p. 18). Teachers should be aware of the low ability level of some parents to help their children accomplish their homework (Lee, 2008). According to Patall, Cooper, and Robinson (2008), parental involvement in their child’s homework is even more vital at the early stage of the child's life because of the shortened attention span compared to the adolescent period (p. 1094). In other words, it is important than the young child have many at-home opportunities for repetition and reinforcement of early literacy and numeracy skills being taught within the school environment.

Children of poorly educated and low socio-economic status parents are doubly disadvantaged. The less well-educated parents may want to assist their children, but they lack the technical knowledge and resources. Elias, Arnold, and Hussey (2003) suggest that parents be mentored by their children's school teachers to know how to promote their children's
academic success and how to foster a positive learning relationship with their children (p. 138). Begum (2007) reports findings of Sheinberg, Dormbusch, and Brown’s study that showed that European American and Asian American students received strong support from their parents, which had a strong influence on their academic performance.

In the same vein, Ojeda and Flores (2008) relate that parental educational level, among other characteristics, was associated with graduate educational aspiration among Mexican Americans (pp. 85-86). Carter (2008) points out that the lack of parental education is a top factor that is detrimental to students' academic success (p. 49). Ojeda and Flores (2008) observe that Latino mothers who have educational aspirations for themselves tend to have children with high educational interest in university education (p. 87). Children from well-educated parents will be influenced by their parents' educational aspirations on several levels. Davis and Thomas (1989) hold that parents with high educational interest may have a family library in their home, read and listen to their children read, supervise their children's spellings of words, and assist with mathematics practice at home and with other homework (p.2). Well-informed parents who are poised to help their children excel academically will, as a family, work in partnership with the school and community by using their parenting skills to help their children learn at home, communicating, volunteering, decision-making, and pooling resources with community (Ojeda & Flores, 2008, p. 89).

Begum (2007) criticises some authors for overlooking parental variables, including level of education, as affecting their level of participation at both the community and school levels. The communication medium of teaching and learning in the school can be a barrier to parents’ involvement. For example, Lee (2008) found out that many of the parents from a school community felt intimidated by the school because of their limited proficiency in English language. How will parents who have little education or who are not proficient in a
second or foreign language read to their children? Barry (2008) points out that reading helps memory and ensures children's timely development of oral language, and the development of literary skills, which at the long run leads to their success in school (p.158). Beverly (2009) discovers that parents who are not well educated might retreat from volunteering in school and helping with homework (p. 34). Educated parents may be less reluctant to be involved and participate in parent-teacher councils. Their increased levels of education may have inspired the confidence to be involved with the school on several levels. Educators and school principals need to work out how to help poorly educated parents learn how best to assist their children with learning at home. Epstein (2007) reports findings that socio-economically disadvantaged parents who are less educated may be assisted in becoming involved with at-home activities, for instance playing games, teaching numbers and letters, but at school, they still may still feel inferior due their lack of education (p. 34).

### 2.2.1.2 Parental financial and employment stability.

According to Rosa, Deng, Nair, and Burrell (2006), family income includes gross annual net accruing from take home pay, pensions, and interest (p. 972). Parental occupation and related financial income are vital indicators of the children's preparedness, readiness, engagement, and possibility of completion of school. Smith and Ashiabi (2007) discovered that parents living in poverty face lasting obstacles that keep them and their children from realising their most basic human rights and personal potentialities (p. 837). Smith and Ashiabi give an instance of a situation where poverty deters parents from possessing the resources to create a comfortable home environment for their children, the necessary learning facilities, and appropriate entertainment for intellectual stimulation (p. 838). Smith and Ashiabi also report statistical findings of UNICEF in 2006 that showed financial difficulty to be the largest predictor of academic failure (p. 845). Smith, Polloway, Patton, Heath, McIntyre, and Francis (2006) also
point out that poverty is a prime factor that places children at risk of academic failure in school (p. 281). Some negative effects of low socio-economic status may include unstable employment, unemployment, and/or poorly-paid work, all of which have a negative influence on children's achievement outcome (Dubow, Boxer, & Huesmann, 2009, p. 227). Epstein (2007) points out particular instances of how the poor parents' income can and does affect children's academic achievement (p. 20). Poverty, or low income related to lack of employment, thus weigh heavily on children's academic achievement (Beverly, 2009). To secure a good occupation that yields a comfortable salary conforms with a high level of education in most countries.

Some studies have reported a correlation between economic difficulties not only with academic failure, but also with learning disabilities and health problems. Smith, Polloway, Patton, Heath, McIntyre, and Francis (2006) associate the effects of parental low income with poor parental care, poor parenting, child hunger, accessibility to limited health care, and poor housing conditions (p. 281). Parents with poor finances may not be able to buy educational materials for their children to assist them with learning challenges (Huebner, 2000, p. 292). Nguyen (2008) blames low economic income for many of the hardships of parenting, family conflicts, stress, and separation of husband and wife, and concludes that socio-economic status has a great effect on the home environment and, to an extent, dictates the quality of children's life (p. 47). Nievar and Luster (2006) observe that when families struggle with inadequate finances, parents provide a less stimulating educational environment for children (p. 322). Nievar and Luster affirm a relationship between income and cognitive stimulation (p. 322). In situations where parents’ income is low and both parents have to work long hours to acquire sufficient income for even the basic necessities, the lack of time with children at home lessens parents’ involvement in their children's education (Worley, 2007, p. 30).
Beverly (2009) found that low-income parents stand the risk of losing their jobs if they take time off to attend meetings or conferences, or if they volunteer at the children's school (p. 34). Smith (2004) asserts that low income children whose parents are less involved often experience fewer of the academic benefits than children coming from well-to-do homes, and concludes that children from low socio-economic homes are at risk for poor academic achievement (p. 44).

In the face of social and economic hardship, parents find it more difficult to meet the needs of their children. Huebner (2000) observed that the long term repercussion of financial stress on families give children little or no preparation for kindergarten, young children become less responsive, children under-perform when compared with other classmates, and at adolescent age they may drop out of school (p. 292). Robila and Krishnakumar (2006) found that financial or economic hardship has a direct or indirect impact on children's depression and feelings of loneliness (p. 436). Ojeda and Flores (2008) relate that past studies suggest that Mexican migrant parents may even encourage children to drop out of school to help meet family's economic demands (p. 87).

The size of the family makes issues around availability of finances and employment status more complex. For example, it increases the hardship of managing the little resources of low-income families. The number of children in the family or family size, as well as family make-up, for instance single parents or teenage single mothers, may be the cause of low socio-economic status. Larger families and single parent families will have fewer material resources, compared with small families, and families where both parents are living together, and where parents are of medium to high socio-economic status (Marks, 2006, p. 2). Marks (2006) identifies that the impact of family size on academic achievement appears to be
higher on reading than for Mathematics (p. 12). Marks relates that the lack of material resources accounts for the low academic achievement of students from single-parent families.

Families headed by one parent, especially by women, are the most common profile of the low income family. D'Aoust (2008) notes that the abjectly poor get poorer (p. 227). Bradley and Corwyn (2002) report findings of research that children from low income families have less access to a wide variety of different recreational and educational materials from infancy through adolescence (p. 381). Bradley and Corwyn observe that disadvantaged children are unlikely to go on trips, visit a library or museum, attend a theatrical performance, and even less likely to be given lessons directed at enhancing their skills (p. 381). This being the case, how can they perform at the same level as their counterparts who have all those advantages that facilitate their education and create the yearning for learning?

In some families headed by single parents, with a combination of poverty and many children, the result may be the children's poor performance academically compared to children who may still be from a single-parent home but have both parents still involved and/or one or both parents with high income and a fewer number of children. According to Hanna (2006), statistically 10% of the children born worldwide are born to teenage mothers (p. 456). Hanna expressed concern for the teenage mothers, because some of them are not financially capable of establishing a home, some may be unable to finish high school, and many may be experiencing some stressful situations with raising their child (p. 456). Hanna points out that there is likelihood that individuals who grow up poor may remain poor and that the risk of staying in poverty increases with teenage mothers (p. 457). Research has shown that low income parents face difficulty in becoming involved in school activities for lack of means of transportation, child care, and less money to devote to children's educational activities (Epstein, 2007; Lareau, 1987). It will be the responsibility of the school to initiate a
warm welcome for parents and encourage them to become involved in their children's education.

2.2.1.3 Parental behaviors and family interactions. Parental approaches towards child rearing and the family life are significant influences in a child's personality development (Kusterer, 2009, p. 4). Kusterer (2009) found that parents' attitudes and practices have a deep impact on the developmental behavior of their children (p. 4). Worley (2007) points out that young parents who are both low income and less well-educated become more punitive towards their children (p. 31). Nievar and Luster (2006) observe that low-income families are more likely to use physical punishment, which predicts behavioral problems in children (p. 327). Bradley and Corwyn (2002) assert that low parental stress tolerance, low self-esteem, impatience, anger and depression, any of which may lead to partner or child abuse, are the results of socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds (p. 383). As an eyewitness, in places where the majority of the poor people live, life does not seem to be held to much value. For instance, in 2001 the religious riot in Jos, Nigeria, experienced the most devastating destruction of life and property in the habitats of the poor. There is no doubt that parents' behavior will affect their children's academic performance, because children learn by imitation. Children need a stable environment to study and learn in meaningful ways.

Some parents have habits that are devastating to health. Bradley and Corwyn (2002) point out that parents of low socio-economic status students use more tobacco and alcohol, but diet and exercise less, and argue that this kind of behavior may be because of stress reactions (p. 385). According to Bradley and Corwyn, the bad effect of such behavior may lead to poorer physical and mental health, which in the long run, affect low socio-economic parents' ability to (a) provide comfortable accommodation, (b) nourish a responsive
environment, and (c) give stimulating care to or monitor their children, and as such, they may be unable to be exemplary role models for their children (p. 385). Research has made it clear that children from low socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to be exposed to drugs (including tobacco and alcohol) prenatally (Bradley & Corwyn, 2007, p. 386). According to Smith and Ashiabi (2007), youth from poor backgrounds show higher rates of maladaptive behaviour (e.g., belligerence, acting out, fighting), and psychiatric disturbance (e.g., social withdrawal, mood problems, and a higher prevalence of delinquency) (p. 845). Robila and Krishnakumar (2006) argue that when depression and marital problems occur in disadvantaged families because of economic pressures, the result is internalizing and externalizing behavioural problems in children (p. 437).

According to Robila and Krishnakumar (2006), certain family processes (e.g., negative marital relations) affect the ways parents interact with their children, and increase punitive disciplinary measures (e.g., yelling, spanking, slapping, threatening the child) (p. 437). Robila and Krishnakumar add that this kind of parental interaction leads to the child's psychological and behavioral problems (p. 437). Nievar and Luster (2006) point out that less positive parent to child interactions and parental practices contributes to a child's behavior problems (p. 321). Yazedjian, Toews, and Navarro (2009) stress the need for programs that emphasise the significance of communication strategies for students and parents in order to enhance the quality of family relationships. Smith and Ashiabi (2007) observe that inadequate financial capital is associated with a lot of maladaptive functioning and behavior problems in children and youth. Tuvblad, Grann, and Lichtenstein (2006) observe that hereditary antisocial behaviors in adolescents from low socio-economic parents are weaker than environmental factors (p. 735).
2.2.1.4 Parents’ level of expectations. Amatea, Smith-Adcock, and Villares (2006) define parents’ level of high expectations as having strong sense of purpose, positive outlook, and high level of personal efficacy, which also involves the setting of goals, commitment to the set goals, and persistence at the different task levels (p. 179). Davis-Kean and Sexton (2009) identify parents' educational expectations as predictive of children's academic achievement (p. 289). Gladwell (2008) holds that children's success is something that is encouraged by parents or other significant persons (p. 19). Gladwell reasons that such positive influences make the big difference for children who show hidden advantages and extraordinary talents that allow them to learn and achieve in school (p. 19). Davis-Kean and Sexton (2009) argue that children whose parents expect them to succeed are influenced by their parents' positive perception of school achievement. In other words, parents' educational expectations for children’s academic success are predictive of their children's educational success (p. 289). Dubow, Boxer, and Huesmann (2009) point out that parental expectancy has an influence on children’s cognitive abilities from pre-natal period to late adolescence (p. 242).

Flouri and Hawkes (2008) identify parents' high expectation for children's academic achievement as influential to their academic success, and conversely that parents’ low expectations of children's academic outcomes may be effective in developing children's lack of educational success indicators (pp. 412-413). As noted, Ojeda and Flores (2008) relate that immigrant Mexican parents sometimes encourage children to drop out of school to support the family's economic income (p. 87). Hauser-Cram (2009) affirms that parents are expectancy socialisers who transmit expectations to their children through a wide range of personal and family beliefs and practices (p. 353).
2.2.2 Poverty and Children's Intellectual Development

A child's emotional and intellectual development is very important, and particularly crucial for the first five years of the child's life. Mistry, Biesanz, Taylor, Burchinal, and Cox (2004) identify that the brain contains as many neurons (tiny cells that transmit nerve impulse which are just waiting to make billions of connections that will foster a child's social emotional, and intellectual development) as there are stars on the galaxy; they ready to ignite with encouragement, love, and attention from parents (p. 727). Mistry et al. note that parents, and children's caregivers, are the first influence on child's developing brain (p. 727). Poverty has serious threats to children's developmental processes. This is because the child may have inadequate nutrition, and is usually exposed to environmental (e.g., poor housing) and social (e.g., unsafe neighbourhood) hazards, as well as poor quality of day care; and inadequate parenting. The next section reviews related literature focusing on children's needs for adequate nutritional food and physical fitness, as well as the need for parents' efforts to stimulate their children's intellectual development.

2.2.2.1 Nutritional needs of children. Rosales, Reznick, and Zeisel (2009) identify that nutrition may have a direct effect on gene expression in the brain of a child (p. 191). Morales-Flores (2008) discovered that food nutrients for brain function improve intelligence, memory, reading and writing abilities, moods and behaviours, and proposes the use of nutritional supplements to guarantee a balanced diet for children from poor backgrounds (p. 328). Witherspoon (2009) points out that children from low socio-economic backgrounds suffer much because of the global economic crisis and climate change (p. 428). Whitherspoon observes that in Canada, recent immigrants and the Aboriginal population face decreased income, and increased persistent poverty level, and reduced access to housing, all of which result in a higher risk for adequate feeding and health especially for children (p. 428).
Frederiksen (2009) notes the alarming large rate of malnutrition in India, Bangladesh, and Nepal, with 43 to 46 percent of children who are malnourished (p. 77). Mooney and Hunt (2009) argue, controversially, that food accessibility and availability are not the issues, but that food should be affordable to all, especially people from low socio-economic backgrounds (p. 474). Mooney and Hunt point out their concern for food adequacy, which refers to the provision of a balanced diet, with food free from infectious disease germs and toxic substances (p. 475). Shutter (2009) points out the argument that the right to food as a basic human right should be at the centre of all debate on food systems (p. 39).

Rosales, Reznick, and Zeisel (2009) hold that nutrition plays a vital role as providing both biological and nurturing characteristics that help the child's brain growth and development (p. 191). Rosales, Reznick, and Zeisel affirm that malnutrition negatively affects all aspects of the child's physical and psychological existence, and impacts children's brain and mental development (p. 199). Schaff (2009) admonishes schools to promote improved nutritional intake by ensuring healthy options, and reducing or deterring students from the use of processed junk food and soft drinks (p. 173). Embry and Biglan (2008) point out that Omega-3 fatty acid found in some sea creatures has proved to reduce aggressive and violent behaviors, heal depression and bipolar disorder in children, and that Omega-3 supplements could alleviate some problems associated with poverty since poorer people often have diets lower in Omega-3 (p. 88). Clark, Castillo, Calatroni, Walter, Cayazzo, and Pino (2006) relate their findings that children breast-fed for two months and over had better child cognitive and language development, compared to children breast-fed for less than two month (p. 69). In the United States, Canada, and some other countries, free and reduced-cost lunch program are often found in schools with children from low socio-economic backgrounds (Worley, 2007, p. 34).
2.2.2.2. Physical fitness of the children. Gaus and Simpson (2009) reason that poor fitness is caused by physical inactivity and poor nutrition, and point to the significance of physical activities in combating childhood obesity and other health problems, while at the same time improving students' academic performance (p. 88). Carmon (2009) affirms that a sedentary lifestyle and poor nutrition at elementary school age increase incidents of chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, heart related diseases, and obesity (p. 25). Carmon also points out that wealthier communities might afford opportunities in youth sport leagues, self-defence classes, home exercise equipment, health club membership, and summer camps, unlike disadvantaged communities (p. 26). Witherspoon (2009) observes that even children who survive health threats before reaching their school age may have problems with their educational output (p. 428). Witherspoon advocates designing environmental health promotion efforts to reduce social, environmental, and health hazards among children (p. 429). In an article in the *Journal of Physical Education*, Smith and Lounsbery (2009) report findings that after walking distances children improved on the performance of some tasks, especially on difficult ones, and performed better (almost a full grade level higher) on the reading portion of achievement tests (p. 62).

Fox, Barr-Anderson, Neumark-Sztainer, and Wall (2010) point out that physical activities are beneficial to students' health and academic outcomes (p. 36). Smith and Lounsbery (2009) affirm research findings that there is a positive relationship between physical activities and academic achievement of students; for instance, learning increases when 14 to 26 percent of the curricular time is allocated to physical activity, including daily physical education (p. 40). Rivkin (2006) recommends the adequate exercise for three different age groups: (1) Toddlers should have a total of 30 minutes structured and several hours of unstructured exercise daily; (2) Preschoolers should try to engage in an hour of
organised physical activity and several hours of unstructured exercise each day; (3) Young children should not be sedentary for over an hour at any time, except while asleep.

Mastrangelo (2009) reflects that play opens all areas of development and expands children's educational potentialities, as well as serving as a bridge between teacher and student (p. 43).

Wittberg, Northrup, and Cottrel (2009) identified that children within the health fitness zone performed well and got significantly higher grades in the academic test of mathematics and science than those children who were not within the health zone (p. 32). Shelton (2009) observes that in many school districts in America, the aim of sports or athletics is to win trophies and make big headlines in the local and national news more than focusing on every student’s physical health and their related positive academic performance (p. 1). Shelton relates findings of a study in Texas schools show that expending large sums for sports and athletics teams may result in lower levels of academic achievement overall (p. 7).

2.2.2.3 Parental efforts that stimulate the child's intellectual development. Davis-Kean and Sexton (2009) discovered that parents reading to their children, as well as parents' beliefs and behaviour, are crucial aspects of family processes, and that these positive parental practices stimulate the development of the child's intellect (p. 285). Hauser-Cam (2009) points out that parents become anticipated socialisers who transmit expectations through a wide range of beliefs and practices (p. 353). Monastersky (2009) points out that children raised in more nurturing environments generally had a bigger hippocampus, the portion of the brain that is associated with forming and retrieving memories (p. 8). Holden (2003) relates the findings of researchers who for decades have found that poor environment more than genetic factors retards intellectual development (p. 1469). Judge (2009) points to early
literacy, and to social and emotional development, along with cognitive development, as vital in the stimulation of children’s intellectual development (p. 919).


Flouri and Hawkes (2008) relate that children of high status parents are likely to attain a higher educational outcome compared to children from disadvantaged backgrounds (p. 413). Dubow, Boxer, and Huesmann (2009) observe that parents' aspirations and the actual achievement of children's academic outcomes have important implications well beyond the late adolescent years (p. 242). Dubow, Boxer, and Huesmann note that the developmental impact of childhood environments shapes the enduring cognitive styles and subsequent educational and behavioural outcomes for children (p. 242). Rosales, Reznick, and Zeisel (2009) observe that every child is born with the inner capacity to learn (p. 191).
2.2.3. Aspiration and Intellectual Development

In this subsection of reviewing the child's aspiration and intellectual development, related literature around four different areas will be addressed: (1) children and school engagement, (2) child's intrinsic and extrinsic levels of academic motivation, (3) students' resilience and academic achievement, and (4) child's character development and peer group support.

2.2.3.1. Child and school engagement. The importance of engagement as a measure of student achievement is becoming more recognized (Johnson, 2008). When developing curriculum, planning assessment, and developing instructional methods, the need for student engagement is crucial. Manitoba Education, Citizenship, and Youth (MECY, 2007) offer a working definition of student engagement: “Engagement with learning is a multifaceted concept that reflects student actions related to engagement, their feelings about school, and their understanding about their own learning” (p. 14). Van Damme and Munter (2009) define school engagement as the attitude towards learning tasks, interest in learning tasks, and relationship with teachers in school (p. 373). Norris, Pignal, and Lipps (2003) offer another definition: school engagement is “children’s behavioural involvement in, and emotional attachment to the social and academic spheres of school.” (p. 27).

Children need support to engage in their educational activities. McGrath, Brennan, Dolan, and Barnett (2009) point out that social support of family and peers is the largest and most important factor for school engagement (p. 301). In their study, McGrath et al. found that friends' acceptance, ability to depend on parents and/or guardians for help, recognition of talent by adults, liking school, sports involvement, and neighbourhood quality of life were positively associated with adolescent school engagement in Irish Island (p. 312). Van Damme and Munter (2009) discovered that there is a overall decline of secondary school students'
engagement in North America and that boys become less engaged in school if they become less involved in homework (p. 396). Gaylord-Harden (2008) points out that students from low socio-economic backgrounds are at a greater risk of learning problems, poor academic outcomes, and school disengagement (p. 763). Gaylord-Harden identifies that positive parenting is a remedy for improving academic outcomes for children from low socio-economic backgrounds by continually encouraging engagement with the school’s learning activities (p. 776).

Rubin and Schoenefeld (2009) observes that children are placed in situations of non-participation about things unrelated to them, for instance, Why they learn? Where they learn? What and with whom they learn? (p. 7). Raby (2008) advocates for participatory involvement of students in democratic decision-making in schools (p. 93). Rubin and Schoenefeld point out that involving children in decision-making is the critical aspect to fulfilling the basic human need for autonomy (p. 10).

2.2.3.2 Child’s extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. In this section reviewed literature covers issues around extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Soric and Palekcic (2009) identify research findings that link cognitive, motivational, and emotional concepts of learning (p. 546). Soric and Palekcic propose that the processes of goal setting and strategic planning are self-motivated beliefs: self efficacy, outcome expectations, intrinsic interest, and valuing or goal orientation (p. 546). Katz, Assor, and Kanat-Maymon (2008) define motivation as providing sources or reasons for intentional action (p. 109). Katz, Assor, and Kanat-Maymon also enumerate various reasons for extrinsic motivation, such as avoidance of punishment, seeking reward, escaping guilt feelings, and shame or unworthiness; and reasons for intrinsic motivation where one engages in an activity for one's own sake (p. 110).
Ford, McDougall, and Evans (2009) point out that motivation encourages goal-oriented activities despite the negative or positive interferences (p. 775). Embry and Biglan (2008) observe that a parent might use a mystery motivator to improve a child's cooperation (p. 76). That is, the authors think that special play with parents in which children or adolescents lead in free play activities facilitates interactions in which parents do not command, criticise, or unduly restrict activities of their child and allow the child to engage in fantasy play with the parent, builds the child's sense of self direction. (p. 76). Soric and Palekcic (2009) point out that interest is an integral part of dynamic and cyclical nature of the learning process, which can be conceptualized as both a consequence and an antecedent of intellectual aspects of learning (p. 560). Rouse (2001) relates research findings about academic resilience on African-American and Hispanic students, and noted that resilient African-American students were motivated by cognitive activities, extra-curricular activities, and material gains than the more non-resilient African-American students (p.462). Rouse also identifies that resilient Hispanic adolescents were more motivated by cognitive activities than their non-resilient Hispanic counterparts.

2.2.3.3 Students' resilience and academic achievement. Rouse (2001) defines resilience as the ability to succeed, mature, and increase proficiency in the face of difficult situations, and notes that the tasks needed to achieve resilience differ in infants, adolescents, and adults (p. 461). Vanderbilt-Andriance and Shaw (2008) define resilience as a positive outcome or reaction in the context of adversity (p. 30). Marcellus (2010) points out that resilience means the maintenance of positive adjustments under challenging life conditions. Marcellus also notes that resilience is affected by personal experiences, genetics, surrounding environmental factors, and support systems (p.10). The concept of resilience, introduced in the 1970s, has since then been a frequent subject for research, with interest piqued by the
success stories of people who have lived inspiring life’s against all odds, encouraging us that
where there is resilience there is a way (Vanderbilt-Andriance & Shaw, 2008, 30).

Rouse (2001) highlights some biological and psychological factors around social
responsibility and resilience, such as friendliness, excellent social skills, and internal locus of
control (p.461). Rouse (2001) points out that resilient students have attributes and
environmental factors related to achievement. Cognitive ability, cognitive environment,
cognitive control, social ability, social environment, social control, social importance,
personal trust/ability, and personal trust are of statistically significance for children of poor
economic backgrounds. (p. 466). Schilling (2008) relates a case study of Tasha's (a
pseudonym) academic and social context of resilience, where personal characteristics,
mentors, and family support were showed to have a significant effect in her life (p. 306).

Secker (2004) focuses on protective factors that promote resilience of students of low
socio-economic status and noted that in urban areas, the factors of expectations and beliefs
have positive influence on students' academics (p. 67). Secker enumerates personal attributes
(i.e., attitudes and beliefs), quality of external support, and quality of home environment on a
much broader level as protective factors that enhance resilience (p. 68). Secker reports
significant difference in academic achievement because of protective effects of personal
beliefs and greater home support (p. 73).

2.2.3.4 Child's character development and peer group support. Good character
matters; it is central to individual and societal well-being and is at the core of positive youth
development (Park, 2009, p. 43). Park (2009) lists gratitude, zest, hope, curiosity, and love as
qualities of strength of character that a youth should consistently possess in relation to life
satisfaction (p. 44). When children have an interpersonal strength of character it makes the
task of learning healthy social skills become easier to achieve (Brouillette, 2010, p. 17).
Brouillette (2010) points out that children who learn aggressive behavior have the consequences of acting violently and that too much exposure of children to media that involves problematic programs has a detrimental effect on children. Brouillette supports his argument with statistics that many children witness acts of televised violence and brutality, which he believes trigger aggressive impulses in children (p. 17). Brouillette notes that children who are competent in understanding and respecting the feelings of others are more likely to excel in their academics; therefore, he admonished educators to develop social-emotional skills in children. Harlow (2010) notes that children who are not thus guided can be exposed to risk behaviors such as substance abuse (i.e., alcohol and drug use and abuse).

Gilamo-Ramos, Bouris, Jaccard, Lescesie, Ballan (2009) hold that parents should communicate to their children explicit rules and expectations throughout adolescence, and be role models in the development of their children's good behavior (pp. 63-64). Howard (2010) proposes that recreational activities should teach habits among teenagers about how to gain information and insight on positive behaviors. Brouillette (2010) affirms that participation in performing arts activities promotes skills and dispositions that lead to social-emotional development. Brouillette observes that dramatic play and dancing in unison both provide avenue for developing collaboration and cooperation skills; singing, dancing and dramatic plays develop sharing, taking turns, and putting group's interest above one's personal urges. He reiterates that when children carry out cooperative tasks, they learn initiative, leadership, and respect for others' opinions and the reality that they cannot always have their own way, or put individual interest above the common good.

2.3 Summary

The researcher has reviewed related literature on aspects related to child development and poverty, particularly focusing on family influences, the effects of poverty on child
development, and the effects of intellectual aspiration in mitigating the effects of poverty on children. This literature provides the foundational support for the research. The field study focuses particularly on the initiatives and programs, within families and schools, that work to alleviate the detrimental effects of poverty on children’s academic achievement. While the third chapter will outline the research methodology, the fourth chapter will explore relevant family and school initiatives and programs.

Hamm (2009) has found that the evaluation processes of existing programs will help as we develop strategies for increasing students’ academic achievement (p. 36). Hamm enumerated eleven of the most integral components of successful schools: (i) prompt assistance for students having difficulties, (ii) teacher collaboration, (iii) the use of data in decision-making, (iv) actions of leaders that set the tone for others, (v) organizational structure to support student's academic achievement, (vi) ongoing professional development to sustained results, (vii) alignment among curriculum, instruction and testing, (viii) regular assessments that measure progress, (ix) high expectations of students, (x) positive communication with parents throughout the process of improvement and, (xi) adjustments in the schedule to create more academic time (pp. 68-69). While there are many contributing factors that connect successful schools and academic achievement, the fourth chapter explores family initiatives, as well as positive school-wide initiatives, effective and collective efficacy of staff, school-based programs that alleviate challenges for learning, and school culture. With the foundation provided by the literature review in this second chapter, along with the insights of parents/parent designates and school staffs as elaborated in the fourth chapter, the final, fifth chapter provides a summary of the research and outlines recommendations for supportive programs, as well as for additional research.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher presents the outline of the study and explains the research methodology used in the investigations. The research approach, study design, sample and population, data collection and recording, and data processing and analysis are elaborated; as well, the approach to the research ethics and the study’s limitations are presented. Finally, a summarizing section concludes the chapter.

This research explores the factors that facilitate the academic success of Grades 7 and 8 students from low socio-economic backgrounds. In this framework, the researcher selected and interviewed administrators, teachers, and parents and guardians/parents’ representatives from two selected schools. This research is a qualitative case study that explores the characteristics that facilitate students’ academic success in two selected schools: one school in Saskatoon, Canada, and a second school in Barkin-Ladi (Gwol), Nigeria. Case study research, according to Hebert (2003), often studies phenomena that focus on specific ‘cases’ and examines the phenomena in-depth and in a natural context (p. 118).

3.2 Research Description

The researcher’s underlying intention in this study was to explore the factors that lead to academic success of children from low socio-economic backgrounds in two schools: one selected school in Saskatoon, Canada, and a second school in Barkin-Ladi (Gwol), Nigeria. The chosen school in Saskatoon was identified with the assistance of the Greater Saskatoon Catholic School Division as coming from a catchment area with many students from
economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The second chosen school was identified by the school administrator and by the researcher who had once been a principal of the selected school for seven and a half years in Barkin-Ladi, Nigeria. This thesis focused on 1) school-wide initiatives, as related by administrators, that encourage positive behaviors that lead to achievement by children from low socio-economic backgrounds (e.g., includes school culture; extra-curricular programs, such as breakfast and lunch programs; programs such as “What Did You Learn in School Today?” [W.D.Y.L.I.S.T.], and other before and after school programs); 2) teachers’ experiences, expertise, and motivation, as well as perceptions of student-held expectations that encourage students' learning and achievement, and student resilience; and 3) parents’ demographics, perceptions, and initiatives.

3.3 Research Design

This descriptive case study was used to explore characteristics that facilitate the academic achievement of students from low socio-economic backgrounds of two selected schools: one in Saskatoon, Canada, and a second in Barkin-Ladi, Nigeria. This study of two case schools provides more considerable and persuasive evidence than studies that are limited to examining single case schools. The research involving more than one case site allows for the collection of more data from different environmental backgrounds and experiential histories (Hiebert, 2006, p. 118). Merriam (1988) discovers that the aim of a case study is not to find the correct or true interpretations of the facts, but rather to eliminate erroneous conclusions so that one is left with the best possible, the most convincing interpretation (p. 30). In this study, the researcher used qualitative data collection techniques within a framework of a descriptive case study design.
3.4 Sample and Population

Data were collected in interviews with three selected groups: school administrators, teachers, and parents and guardians/parents’ representatives. In the first school, the researcher interviewed two administrators (Principal and Vice-Principal), three teachers, and ten parents from the selected school in Barkin-Ladi (Gwol), Nigeria. In the second sample of the selected school in Saskatoon, Canada, the researcher interviewed the principal, two teachers, and three school workers (Community-School Coordinator, Home-School Liaison Worker, and Program Facilitator) who represented the parents of the students in their school. In this school, the researcher was not granted direct access to parents. The interviewees included both genders. The teachers and parents/parents’ representatives were first contacted by the researcher through the principals of the selected schools. The investigator later contacted and arranged to have interviews with the teachers and parents that showed interest in participating in the study. The interview questions were open ended, and carried out in a free and friendly manner at a venue conducive to dialogue and acceptable by the interviewee.

A total of three administrators, five teachers, and ten parents/guardians and three parents’ representatives participated in the interviews. These participants all worked or were parents and guardians/parents representatives of students in Grades 7 and 8. The administrators and teachers represent a range of experience between one to 27 years in schools.

3.5 Data Collection and Data Recording

The main method of data collection was by formal interview. The interview research questions (see appendix A) were open-ended with the principals, vice-principals, teachers, and selected parents and parents/guardian representatives. Interviews used in this study were designed to capture a sense of reality, a sense of real-life experiences in the lived world of the
school and the home. Gall, Borg & Gall (1979) note that such interviews are more likely to yield complete information (p. 446).

The recruitment of the research subjects was by purposive sampling from the selected research schools. In particular, the parents were recruited by sending letters of invitation to participate to all parents of Grades 7 and 8 students in the selected school in Nigeria. These letters were developed by the researcher, but were sent out at the school level by the selected school in Nigeria, so that the researcher would know the names of only those parents who agreed to participate. The researcher administered oral questions to all interviewees, with tape-recording and subsequent transcription approved by the interviewees. The interviews were carried out in a relaxed and friendly manner. All participants in the study were given pseudonyms.

The researcher sought the free and fully informed consent of the participants: the current school principals of the selected schools, vice-principals, and teachers of the selected Grades 7 and 8 classrooms, as well as parents from the students in those classrooms in Nigeria, and additional school staff in Saskatoon. A cordial relationship existed between the researcher and the research subjects. The researcher allowed some time, before the interview began, to meet each participant and to give participants the chance to get to know him as the interviewer. He gave participants a brief overview of what his expectations were for the interviews and revealed some rights and opportunities of participation. Participants were free to participate or not, and could withdraw anytime before the final submission of the thesis to the research supervisor. The researcher gave participants a chance to introduce themselves and to give a little background information about themselves. He also gave participants thinking time to answer questions that were asked.
The duration of the interviews was approximately one hour. These oral conversations were one-on-one interviews with the selected individuals. The teachers to be interviewed were those teaching Grades 7 and 8 in the selected schools in Saskatoon and Barkin-Ladi (Gwol), Nigeria. The parents that were selected to freely participate were parents of students in Grades 7 and 8 (from Obi’s school, Barkin-Ladi [Gwol]) from low socio-economic backgrounds, as much as possible. However, there was no participation of parents of students in MSS school, Saskatoon, as the principal did not allow it. The researcher was permitted to interview school workers who worked closely with parents to represent the parents. The interview took place in some suitable place of the interviewee's choice within or outside the school environment. The interviews were held outside the school working hours, unless a different time was requested by the participant (e.g., Some parents of students prefered an in-school time).

3.6 Data Processing and Analysis

Data from the open-ended interview questions were recorded by the investigator with a cassette tape recorder, and transcribed into text form, with the aid of the notes taken at the time of the interviews. The process of organising and analysing the data of this qualitative comparative case study was derived from Creswell’s (2007) design, presenting the structure for detailed coding and categorizing properties and themes into categories (p. 243). The researcher held the interviews with the various participants at the different locations while taking notes and audiotaping the interviews. The researcher used a tape recorder, placing it at close range between the investigator and the interviewee. Prior to each interview, the researcher pre-tested the tape recorder by self recording to make sure that it was working.

The researcher transcribed the collected and audiotaped interviews into text data, with the aid of the notes taken at the time of the interviews. The transcribed material and field
notes were organised with the computer’s microsoft Word program into class of participants and location of the schools. The transcripts totalled over a hundred and ten pages, and resulted in the analysis of a comprehensive set of interview information. The researcher spent time reviewing all of the transcripts and field notes to make sense of the gathered information. The researcher coded the text data and divided it into segments, labelled the segments with codes, and examined them to remove codes that overlapped and were redundant. The codes were then transformed into themes determined by the objectives of the research questions.

The researcher used an inductive and interactive reading and re-reading of the transcripts and produced themes for analysis within the data gathered. The researcher examined the themes according to three participant groups of administrators, teachers, and parents and guardians. Explored in the interviews and recorded were school demographics, school administrators’ viewpoints, and school programs from administrators’ perspectives; the themes of teachers’ demographics, teaching practices, school practices; and family practices from the opinions of the teachers; as well as the themes of parents’ demographics, parents’ out-look, parents’ and child’s school relationship, and experiences of parenting children from parents’ perspectives. The researcher categorized statements into units, grouped common category headings, and analyzed and summarized the data. The researcher uncovered and noted biases coming from his personal perspectives as a Catholic priest from a low socio-economic background.

3.7 Research Ethics

As far as could be determined, the participants in this study were not subjected to any risks. All of the subjects in this study were fully informed with respect to the purpose and nature of the research. All of the participants were asked to consent to participate in writing.
The participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time prior to the final submission of the thesis to the researcher’s supervisor. In addition, the names of the schools and participants were not used. Moreover, information concerning the participants’ identification in this study was written in general terms only. Throughout this study, every consideration was given to the rights and feelings of the participants. Finally, in this research the study as a whole, including the ethics procedures, were approved by the Brandon University Research Ethics Committee (BUREC, see Appendix B).

3.8 Limitations

The nature of the study was limited by the data-gathering instruments. Three specifically designed questionnaires were designed: one for administrators (i.e., principals and vice-principal), the second for teachers, and a third for parents and guardians/parents’ representatives (Home-School Liaison Worker, School-Community Coordinator, and Program Coordinator). The integrity and reliability of the study depended, in part, on the knowledge, sincerity, and honesty of the respondents. It also depended on the researcher’s ability to record, reasonably analyze, and interpret responses. The researcher also acknowledged that the responses of the Home-School Liaison Worker, Community-School Coordinator, and Program Coordinator were assumed to be representative of parents’ viewpoints. Since they may not have had children in the school themselves, their views might not necessarily align with those of the parents from the selected school in Saskatoon.

At the time of the interviews in Nigeria, there was an ethnic clash between the Hausa and Fulani, and local ethnic tribes of Plateau State, which covers the area of the selected school (Obi’s school, Barkin-Ladi). Due to the inherent risks of travelling, the researcher was unable to have access to some of the intended respondents (i.e., some parents) who live in the remote locations of the catchment areas of the school. Thus, parents and respondents that
were interviewed from Nigeria were not all from low-income families according to the standards in Nigeria. Those who were not from a low socio-economic status may not express the real, lived situation of parents from low socio-economic backgrounds.

The researcher also realized that the instruments used to gather the data were not designed by research experts and field-tested. The researcher designed the questions to elicit the data he thought would be important and insightful. Finally, because this was a qualitative study, the results cannot be generalized to all high schools in Canada and Nigeria, or even to all Catholic schools (publicly and/or privately funded).

3.9 Summary

In chapter three, the subjects, instruments and methods to be employed in this study were discussed. Data were gathered from administrators, teachers, and parents and guardians/parents’ representatives. The primary source of information was interviews, as well as notes taken at the time of the interviews. The Brandon University Research Ethics Committee approved the study, and finally, the researcher presented the limitations of the study. In the next chapter, the results of the interviews will be reported.
CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This comparative case study, which involved two schools, one in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, and the other in Barkin-Ladi (Gwol), Plateau State, Nigeria, was conducted to investigate factors that facilitate students' academic achievement. The researcher selected two schools, Mo's school in Saskatoon (MSS), and Obi's school in Barkin-Ladi (Gwol) (OSB). These two schools have a large number of students who are from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The researcher had worked for over seven years as a principal of the school (OSB) where the research was being carried out in Nigeria. There he had the experience of educating students from low to high socio-economic backgrounds. The researcher also worked in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon. While working as a priest on mission in Canada, he gained admission to study for a master’s degree in educational administration at Brandon University, in Brandon, Manitoba.

The purpose of the study was to ascertain from the perspectives of school administrators, teachers, and parents what factors facilitate the academic achievement of students, and what practical initiatives they have that aid students to achieve academic success, especially students raised in homes that were described to have been at the poverty level. The study focused on administrators, teachers, and parents of students in Grades 7 and 8.

In this chapter, the researcher presents the responses of the participants from both selected schools. In the study, the researcher used pseudonyms for the names of the selected schools, and for interviewees. The process of organising and analysing the data of this
A qualitative comparative study was derived from Creswell's (2007) design, using the steps of transcribing, organising data using detailed coding, and categorizing responses into themes (p. 243). The researcher interviewed twenty participants in all, and audio taped individual respondents’ responses based on the-one-on-one interview sessions. The researcher transcribed the audiotape interviews and read the transcriptions several times. He transcribed the conversations he had with participants into written manuscript form and read it several times to identify similarities and differences among the participants' responses. The transcribed data within each participant’s response generated the categories and properties for the final analysis.

Conceptual phrases that reflect the overarching themes evolved from the categories. The investigator deducted sub-themes from the transcripts that defined and described each theme generated by participants’ (i.e., administrators, teachers, and parents and guardians/parents’ representatives) responses. To support the data from each category, using the transcribed responses of participants, the researcher gave each group a name. For example, the category School Administrators was abbreviated SA. The next step in organising the data was arranging the properties under the appropriate categories. Each property acquired the acronym of the associated category as noted in the following descriptions.

4.2 Interviews with Administrators

The researcher first interviewed the administrators in the two selected schools. In this section, the researcher presents the views of the interviewees on matters that concern school demographics, school administration, and school programs in relation to helping students from low socio-economic backgrounds achieve academic success. The researcher provides details of the interviews according to the themes as mentioned above.
4.2.1. School Demographics: Population and percentage of students from low socio-economic backgrounds; Percentage of qualified teachers and their years of experiences

In this section, the researcher examined three areas: population of students and percentage of students from low socio-economic backgrounds, percentage of qualified teachers, and the average years of teachers’ experiences. This category dealt with demographic data that came out of the interviews, which the researcher had requested from the schools’ principals and vice-principal. In the following discussions, the researcher abbreviates Mo's School Saskatoon as MSS, and Obi's School Barkin-Ladi is abbreviated as OSB. To summarize, MSS had a population of 194 students and left undisclosed the percentage of students from low socio-economic backgrounds. That is, the principal of Mo's school Saskatoon did not give the percentage of students from low socio-economic backgrounds. However, OBS with a 300 student population declared that there about 44 percent to 60 percent of the 300 students came from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Schools located in low socio-economic status areas are likely to have more students from disadvantaged homes. In MSS, where there are 194 students, the respondent on administrative matters claimed that they do not have data of the number of low socio-economic status students. When asked about the percentage of students from low socio-economic backgrounds, she simply responded, "I do not know. We do not color data that way." In OSB, where there are 300 students, the respondent on administrative affairs did not side step the issue of having students from a low socio-economic status:

Ours is an institution preparing for leadership in the church and as far as we are concerned everybody called by God whether poor or rich, whether from a low socio-economic background, all are welcomed. We have about 44% of the students from low socio-economic backgrounds.
The second respondent on administrative matters at OSB also related that their school is a place for training of future Catholics, especially those that will go further towards Catholic priestly calling; therefore, he reaffirmed that God calls all to serve him, the rich and the poor alike. However, talking about the percentage of students that is from low socio-economic backgrounds, he added to the first respondent’s discussion:

This depends on what parameters one uses to define students as coming from low socio-economic backgrounds. In Nigeria's middle class, there is only a small percentage of Nigerians in that category. The majority of Nigerians are below what you may technically call the middle class, which means they struggle even to be able to pay school fees for their children, to look after them and so on and so forth. Generally, I categorise over sixty percent (60%) of the population of the students as below the middle class.

By way of conclusion of the subsection on school population and percentage of students from low socio-economic backgrounds, the respondent in MSS noted that they have 194 students in their school population. The respondent acknowledged that they have students from all backgrounds. However, she failed to relate the percentage of students from low socio-economic backgrounds. The respondents from OSB were more willing to embrace the questions on demographics.

On qualifications of teachers, at MSS the respondent said that all her teachers and support staff were qualified and certified under the national and provincial standards. The respondents in OSB noted a percentage of their qualified staff: "We have about 79% of the teachers certified with the national certificate. Therefore, 21% are not that satisfied. Yes. The average year of teaching experience is nine years."

On teachers’ experiences, a respondent from OSB noted that they have beginning teachers and teachers with many years of teaching experience:

We have a whole range here, so you can see we have lots of teachers that are just starting their first and second year of teaching experience, some half way in their career and we have two teachers that have spent over twenty-five years in their
teaching career. We try to build a group of teachers who bring their youthfulness from the university, their energy, and try to bring together teachers that bring their wealth of experience. They range from one to twenty-seven years of experience.

In conclusion, OSB has a bigger number of students than MSS. The administrator of Mo’s School Saskatoon admitted that there are students from well-to-do and those from poor family backgrounds. Nonetheless, she failed to give a number or percentage of the students from poor family backgrounds. The demographic data from the two schools show that MSS has a higher number of qualified staff than OSB. The years of teachers' experiences seem to be almost the same; judging from the respondents that were interviewed, MSS have an average of 10 years while OSB has an average of nine years of teachers' experience.

4.2.2. School Administration, Policies, and Practices

In the area of school administration, the researcher asked respondents questions about administrative strategies, strengths and challenges of principals/vice-principal, positive school-wide initiatives, and educational policies. The following are their responses to relevant questions.

4.2.2.1 Administrative strategies. When responding to questions about administrative strategies and initiatives that influence the students from low socio-economic backgrounds, a respondent from Mo’s school in Saskatoon (MSS) provided a list of programs related to food, language and numeracy, and early learning and literacy support:

We have the Child Hunger Education Program (CHEP), which involves breakfast, lunch, snacks, and after school snacks. We do not want children to be hungry as they learn. Particularly when it comes to improving instruction, we are very language focused, and we have to think of the numeracy piece. Therefore, in Grade 1 we have standards of achievements that I call "benchmarks." Therefore, each classroom has what we call guided reading. They have a benchmark for achievement from Grade 1 to Grade 6. We know, the teachers know, the parents know, and the whole community knows that we want students, at the end of Grade one to be reading at a certain cognitive level bench [the stated mark]. We get levelled books for each child that the instructions set up. In addition, it does not matter whether a child is from low socio-economic status or from rich families, what the children get. They get it here and at
any other school. We have a chart-setting intervention. Specifically, administratively I have running records. I know exactly what level each student is reading at and I monitor that. The teachers hand in the data in September, January, and June. Therefore, we know right away if kids are not reading at grade level. Then if there are some students that are not reading at grade level, we have the early learning and literacy support, where they get teaching in their classroom as a group. Then they get a special program, another round of teaching with their learning teacher. If that is still not successful, then we also have a third level of support, which they get from the special learning assistance teachers. All grades practice the process of guided reading.

The respondent also talked about the professional learning community (PLC) in her school:

We talk about which kids are at what reading and literary levels. We try to support the children. There are three professional learning communities: One involves the teachers from Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 2; they have a well-shared understanding of what is literacy and language, as it involves six strands (reading, writing, viewing, listening, speaking and representing). Then in Grades 3 to Grade 5, we have one professional learning community, which is systematic (a way of grouping and organising teachers). Then, Grade six to eight teachers have the same thing.

She appreciated some of their school-wide approaches:

We also have an interdisciplinary approach where we have language learners all the time. Even if you look at the science class, or social studies class, you want to make sure that we have expository, narrative, and prose, and cultural competency, respect for voice, so that the kids see themselves in what they are reading and they see globally beyond themselves. The administration is a lot of work. I collect their reading levels three times a year. Twice a year I sit down with each professional learning community. Moreover, I ask them gently to report to me. I practice what is called the "staggered PLC". For example, on a common dismissal day, I will take the whole morning with each group for an hour. In addition, I will find out where we are at, where our kids are. Is there a need for support? What support will I give you? Do you need more money, books, more time for other struggling learners? I write as they talk. Then I give them a budget line and try to help them out.

On the other hand, a respondent from OSB responded to the question on administrative strategies:

We are trying to differentiate the students from disadvantaged backgrounds and as soon as we identify them, we assist them. One of the things we do is we do not normally force them to pay school fees when they are due as we do with those we know are from well-to-do families. We consider students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and see reasons with them for late or lack of payment of fees. Sometimes we try to come in [assist] if we discover that they cannot pay. There are times that we give disadvantaged students their uniform free of charge and some other things, like pens.
Another respondent from OSB elaborated the progress of the school:

This is where I will explain why I say about 90% of them are doing well. Like I said earlier, this is a minor seminary, and being a minor seminary the prime motive of this place is to raise future priests for the church. Therefore, the church itself pays special interest in the formation of the students. Therefore, the school subsidizes fee a bit so that even parents who ordinarily do not have adequate funds for their well-being could afford to bring their children here. The school subsidizes fees a bit, that is, comparatively to other private schools that we have around here. One could see that we have almost adequate staff now in terms of ratio for the number of students. There are times that we even organise extra lessons for those who are slow learners. For example, in special subjects like mathematics and English, there is a special arrangement for those who are not performing well in order to help them to catch up academically.

When asked to name the programs in their school, the first participant from OSB, responded:

We have extra classes. In a normal set up, a teacher teaches those students who are not coping well. Particularly in subjects like mathematics and English, he identifies them and then he picks them up. Special or extra lessons are organised for such students, that is, outside the normal regular school hours. Yes, the school does that in the collaboration with the parents. The parents give something small [cash] to compensate for the extra time but do not properly pay that you can really say they [the teachers] get big earnings.

4.2.2.2 Strengths of schools and leadership strengths of principals and vice-principal. In this area, the researcher sought respondents’ opinions on the strengths of the two investigated schools (MSS and OSB) and the leadership strengths of the principals and vice-principals of the schools. On the strength of the school, MSS works in partnership and togetherness. The respondent related it this way:

The biggest strength of our school is the broader sense of our community; we really want the students to be successful. We really do. For instance, I had three phone calls from some parents this morning with a concern but nothing harsh. It is just a positive atmosphere. There is a real sense of togetherness and partnership here. It is not just me; parents also treat the vice-principal and teachers that way. There is a kind of an elevated, collective common good. We want our students to be successful. I have never had a sense of blaming or shaming or criticism.

For me, I will say that my strengths are that I believe there is an element of discipleship and there is an element of vocation. I live a great life. I am very happy. I have not taken a day off since I started in this role, not once. I have never had a sick day. I am not sure I had a day without a smile on my face. I am energetic and enthusiastic. I am also, I
hope, vocational. I am not afraid. What is the most common phrase in the Bible? It is, “Be not afraid.”

The first respondent in OSB noted that the size of the school helps teachers to have personal knowledge of students, which makes the administration manageable. The respondent claimed that their ability to manage, given their school’s size, was their biggest strength. He pointed out, "Because of our size, we know each other very well. We are able to control the students and we manage the school very well." Relating about other strengths, he acknowledged the loyalty and support of teachers, the small community, good working relationships, and parents’ assistance:

As a principal, with the support of our well-trained teachers and administrators, we are able to manage the school well. It is because we interact with each other. As I said, we are a small community. We share experiences and that has helped me a lot as a principal here in the school. We have a very good working relationship with our staff. As an administrator, with my staff, the community, and the parents' help, we are able to carry out the functions that we planned.

Another respondent of OSB pointed to the strength of the school in terms of its nature as private or separate:

I think it is a strength [for me as a leader]. Secondly, we treat [equally] students admitted in the school. As a school, I will say that the biggest strength is that it is a private school, so it is unaffected by the normal strikes that we often see happening in government schools/public schools. Things take their normal course from the beginning; we treat all students as equals, irrespective of their backgrounds. That is why, and as you are aware, being a former principal here in the past, we do not allow the keeping of personal provisions [which means keeping extra food] apart from the same variety of foods students eat in the refectory. We treat both the child from the very rich family and from the low-income family backgrounds equal; no one is to have a kind of undue advantage on others. They see themselves as equals and so no one feels inferior to the other, which I think is a strength [for the school as a whole]. Another point of strength is that our salaries and allowances are duly paid to staff at the right time and so one has no excuse for example to say that we suffer in that, so this again is a plus.

The respondent also pointed to staff cooperation in the school as part of its strengths, because that eased and reduced his administrative work.
In summary, at MSS the respondent asserted that the school’s broad sense of community, togetherness and partnership, and high sense of common good were the strengths of the school. The respondent also pointed to her personal leadership strengths—sense of discipleship, as well as characteristics of energy, enthusiasm, and fearlessness. OSB respondents noted their big student population as a plus on finances (the larger the school’s population the higher the income; schools that have few students and a good number of non-fee-payers will not have the finances to run them), the sense of community and togetherness, and policies of equal treatment of students as the school’s strengths. On personal levels, respondents pointed to their communication and relationship skills.

4.2.2.3 Challenges of schools, and leadership challenges of principals and vice-principal. The researcher questioned respondents on the challenges both as institutions and as individual leaders. Talking about administrative challenges, the MSS respondent said that when she came in as principal, keeping data was one of the school’s challenges in MSS:

For our school, I will say I did not inherit any data. When I came into the role, as much I do not just want to distil things down to data and numbers, they still help to chart our growth. The bringing together of data was new, but also the understanding of and interpreting of data was new here. We are trying to keep data for further use, as a school community; we aim at a national cognitive score and the information that informs us for learning, compared to a provincial standard, for example our writing rubric. The idea of togetherness is important. I am not an expert. I might have some expertise, but that I share my expertise with the other teachers, support staff, and professional learning communities. There is no division. We are all working with children. That was a big challenge.

Responding to the question about her personal approach, she found it a challenge in that she expected high standards from everyone. She felt that she needed more patience in the process:

For me personally, [with reference to] my growth, I would say that I have a very high standard. Moreover, the standards that I hold myself to, I kind of hope everybody else will too. I could be more patient. I expect teachers and staff to have their “A day” everyday. We all have a personal story to tell, and I am not particularly indulgent
when it comes to that. I do not want to sit in the office and listen to stories of a great uncle passing away. I do not want to hear that. I have a bit of "leave it at home" approach. If there is a problem at home, leave it at home, you are here to work. I could be more compassionate. I could go slowly.

About personal challenges, the respondent felt challenged in the area of finances for students’ food and security. “As a principal I’ve so many challenges because I have to make sure that the students are well fed and well taken care of in terms of their security.”

A respondent from OSB viewed finances as the biggest challenge in the school. He noted that the government does not give the school grants like other government grant-aided private or mission schools. This becomes more problematic, as with the reasonable number of students from low socio-economic backgrounds in the school, finances are always a huge problem. On a personal level, respondents noted that they felt challenged to manage their insufficient finances to address all their needs.

In conclusion, the MSS respondent acknowledged some of the challenges of MSS—the school had no data recorded prior to her administration, and they felt that there is a challenged to meet their aim of reaching the provincial and national standards. On a personal level, she demanded high expectations from everyone, and expressed the need to develop more compassion for staffs’ personal stories. However, in OSB, respondents noted their struggles with inadequate finances for students’ feeding, security and safety of students and staff, and maintenance of the old structures of the school.

4.2.2.4 Positive school-wide initiatives. The investigator sought the opinions of respondents on matters related to school-wide initiatives at both MSS and OBS. MSS has many positive, school-wide programs. Among the many programs, a respondent from MSS related that keeping good records, a systematic approach to resources, a focus on professional learning communities, an extended learning community programme for students, and STARR
(represents five key values: safety, teamwork, attitude, respect, and responsibility) programs are the positive school wide initiatives in the school that lead to academic success of students:

I talked to you about running records, the systematic approach to resources, and the systematic approach to professional learning communities. Other school-wide initiatives would be grade grouping, and extended learning communities. Another school wide initiative that I think is important is the STARR program where I talked about a common set of values, a celebration of values and the learning as part of what we do. You can call it citizenship education. I guide them about social skills, personal values, and any of those things that kind of, just fall together. I also believe daily prayer is very important.

The first respondent of OSB said that the positive school-wide initiatives that are of most help to students to achieve academically are realized through the creation of a comfortable environment, the giving of uniforms to children from low socio-economic backgrounds and by taking care of them generally, their orientation program, and the extra lessons for slow learners:

Some of the positive school wide initiatives that helped us with those from low socio-economic background: We make sure that the students, especially those from low socio-economic background are well taken care of by making them feel comfortable in the school, which includes a study environment that is conducive. When they come to school for the first time, we have a one-week orientation for them to help them acclimatise with the new environment. After that, we have extra lessons for the students who are slow learners, apart from what the teacher does on an individual level. We have an organised system where teachers, especially English, mathematics, and other subjects’ teachers, give some extra time of teaching, on a daily basis, to students from Junior Secondary School 1 (JSS1) to Senior Secondary School 3 (SSS3). Whenever a teacher discovers that a student is very slow in catching up academically, the teacher gives the student extra time [directed at teaching and learning]. At the end of it, we have to pay the teacher some token.

In responding to the same question, a second respondent in OBS applauded certain activities and programs:

I have mentioned the school-initiated extracurricular activities apart from the normal academic work. Special classes are arranged for slow learners and those that came from disadvantaged backgrounds. Then the school also tries to establish good rapport with the Parents Teachers’ Association (P.T.A), who usually comes to assist the school financially. The Catholic Women’s League called Zumuntan Mata Katolika or Catholic Women Organisation usually comes to help the school with foodstuffs at
least once a year. Every year they come to assist and this is because they know that the school’s primary aim is to raise future priests so they bring their assistance. The school tries also to find ways of making all students feel part of the formation of students into priesthood and so the school makes initiatives in that area. The school also has even tried dry season/irrigation farming.

By way of recapping this sub-section on positive school-wide initiatives, the MSS respondent points to record keeping, systematic approach to resources, professional learning community, and the STARR program as aspects that characterise their positive school-wide initiatives. OSB respondents, on the other hand, acknowledge the after-school program of extra lessons in English Language and Mathematics, orientation for beginning students, and irrigation farming programs as their positive school-wide initiatives.

To conclude this section on school administration, and policies and practices, the principal of MSS related about collecting reading level information thrice annually and meetings with the teachers twice a year to discuss their problems and needs. In OSB, the students pay fees, and the administration may send students home for fees. However, the school authority is lenient with students from low socio-economic backgrounds in that they even gave free uniforms to students who have the need. In addition, the school organises extra lessons for students as a strategy that assisted students in their academics.

The respondent from MSS claimed that the sense of community, unity of purpose and partnership, and a collective common good are the school's strengths. The first and the second respondents of OSB related about the controllable size of the school, about how they give preferential treatment when it comes to collection of school fees since it is a private school. They also related that they assisted students who are in need with school uniforms free of charge. The school also organises after-school lessons in English Language and Mathematics. Both MSS and OSB count on a sense of community, togetherness, and partnership. On their personal strengths, the principal of MSS points to her belief in the work
she does as a sense of vocation, discipleship, and about her being energetic and enthusiastic. In OSB, the principal pointed to the cooperation he gets from the staff, community parents, and students as part of the strengths he enjoys.

The respondent of MSS pointed out that she faced the challenge of not inheriting any data, and the task of starting to collect and respond to data. On the other hand, the respondents of OSB conceded that they are challenged by financial and security issues. On the topic of positive school wide programs, the principal of MSS points to the STARR program. The respondents of OSB lauded the financial support of generous parents and Catholic Women Organisation.

4.2.3 School Programs

In this section, the researcher sought the opinions of the administrators on the culture of the schools as well as types of programs, parents’ and students' access to programs, and those programs that make the most positive influence in the life of students. Below are the administrators' views from both schools (MSS and OSB).

4.2.3.1 School culture. School cultures contribute to an understanding of the worth of the school and education. In relation to the school culture, the respondent of MSS talked about her school’s focus:

Common mission and vision, and knowing the difference between the mission and vision, common standard and a common understanding that our children can achieve, our children are no different from other children. We go on a positive presupposition. We eliminate the barrier for children.

The first respondent of OSB held that theirs is a culture that trains children to become achievers. The school had a culture of prayer and spiritual activities. The second respondent emphasized the culture that encourages students to use the English language instead of
vernacular, brotherliness to one another, the same dress code, and banning of the keeping of private provisions:

As I said earlier, the school has its own culture. You see, once we are in school here we discourage using vernacular but to speak English language always in school. Therefore, language is part of culture so we have been able to establish the culture, which I think has added to our strength. Secondly, there is a culture of brotherliness to one another. There are children from rich families and there are children from poor families. Once they are here all of them become equal because they wear the same type of uniform, they wear the same type of sandals, and they are not allowed to keep private provisions. It does not matter whether students are from rich families or from poor families; they become like equals, so the culture is one almost of equality. I would not say equality as such, but then one will say that students are almost on the same level, which is of help to the self-esteem of students, especially children from disadvantaged homes, who ordinarily feel intimidated by those who come from wealthy families. When students feel equal, they compete favourably. I think that culture helps a lot.

To sum up this sub-section on school culture, the MSS respondent pointed to common mission and vision, positive presupposition, and elimination of students’ barriers to success as factors that make their school culture. OSB maintained that academic promotion policies, prayer and spiritual exercises, and equal treatment of all students add up to make their positive school culture.

4.2.3.2 Types of school programs and access to them. To gain a deeper understanding of the issues the researcher asked questions about the types of programmes in the school and their accessibility. A respondent from MSS emphasized the benefits of the after-school program. The program was accessible only for children of parents who worked but earned low income. In addition, if they start work at 8.00 a.m., they could bring the children in the morning before 8.00 a.m. There was also a breakfast program, which was before school, as well as extracurricular activities and the actualisation team:

We have the after-school program, which runs from 3 o'clock to 6 o'clock. The after-school program is to support parents who are kind of, for lack of a better word, "the working poor." They have jobs. The program provides a kind of free space for some of the children that are six or seven years old. Rather than going home, we keep them
at school until their parents are done their jobs. If they start work at 8 o'clock, they bring their children before 8 o'clock. The breakfast-for-learning program is something that we could improve on. Here is an extra-curricular activities list (some are not listed here): Girls' volleyball, boys' volley ball, house leagues, intramurals, girls' basketball, boys' basketball, cheer leading, cross country, KHL 2 persons, school choir, track meet officials, basketball home game supervisor, volleyball home game, chess/game club. Sometimes homework just does not work at home. It is either the children do not come to school for fear of not doing their work or the work does not get to us. Parents probably do not have the confidence to work with their children. Therefore, we ask the children to stay and a staff member commits to working with the students. We also have areas of expertise; for instance, teachers develop their interest in areas of student leadership, additional maths, and so on. The AC team, which means the 'actualisation of curriculum' team, is a focus in that we are always studying curriculum and understanding what it says and what it means in our classroom. We have a ‘student of the Month’ where we celebrate virtue; I showed you the bulletin.

In OSB, a respondent related:

We have many after-school activities. I think games/sports are outstanding. The other ones are club meetings, organisations’ meetings, societal meetings, and spiritual exercise. We have Holy Mass every day, we have prayers at various times—morning, afternoon, evening, and night in the chapel, apart from the spiritual exercise and sports that are mandatory for all students. The children can register as voluntary members of other available societies that they need or want, like drama club, literary and debating society, YCS and Man ‘O’ War club, and partake in their activities.

In his response, the OSB vice-principal held almost the same view as the principal of OSB about the importance of extra-curricular activities, prayers, morning adoration, spiritual upbringing, retreats, recollections, and feedbacks from the priest doing recollections:

I think these aforementioned activities can be categorised as extra-curricular activity. However, the one that makes the most positive difference, I think is prayer; and going to church, where they partake in spiritual upbringing that makes a huge difference in the students’ lives.

The respondent of OSB declared that games/sports, clubs, societal meetings, and spiritual exercises made the difference in students.

To conclude the sub-section on extra-curricular programs, the MSS respondent related that they have one before-school program at 8 a.m., the after-school program runs from 3
p.m. to 6 p.m., and the CHEP program serves breakfast and lunch for students in need. OSB respondents point to the daily Masses and prayer exercises at 6 a.m. to 7 a.m. as their before-school programs, the extra-lessons for students in English and Mathematic, and sports/games as extra-curricular activities.

4.1.3.3 School programs that make the most positive difference for students from low-income families. The researcher also asked questions to identify programs that make the most positive differences for children from low socio-economic backgrounds. In Mo’s school Saskatoon (MSS), the respondent claimed that the programs that made the most positive difference in the lives of students from low socio-economic backgrounds provide a common set of values and explicitly teach those values every day, which she referred to the Safety, Teamwork, Attitude, Respect, and Responsibility (S.T.A.R.R.) program:

There is a difference between one-on-one learning and understanding how a group works. Because it is not about them as individuals, or because you come from a certain type of environment, low-income family, or this type of house, or you come from this culture, you are lower. Here everybody is reaching up to a common good. Therefore, I will say it is the STARR program.

By way of recapping this sub-section on the programs that made the most positive difference, the respondent in MSS upholds that the STARR program made the most positive influence in the lives of students. At OSB the spiritual upbringing, games and sports, and organisations and associations made the most positive influence in the lives of the students.

To sum up the whole section on school programs, the principal of MSS related about the school culture that had a common mission and vision, and that communicates a positive disposition. The principal and vice-principal of OSB related that the culture of spirituality and prayer had the better effect for academic achievement. When asked about the types of programs and access, the respondent of MSS enumerated many programs of the school. Prominent are the breakfast program, before-school program, after-school program, and
extra-curricular activities (physical activities and games). She concluded that the STAAR program made the most positive impression on students' lives. In OSB, both respondents pointed to spiritual exercises that made the most positive impact on students.

4.3 Interviews with Teachers

In this category, the researcher interviewed two teachers from Mo's School Saskatoon (MSS) and three teachers from Obi's School Barkin-Ladi (OSB). The teachers responded to questions on demographics, individual professional practices, the practices of their schools, and their views about positive family influences.

4.3.1 Teacher Demographics and Opinions

In this section, the researcher inquired of the teachers about reasons for becoming teachers and years of teaching experience, views on whether they consider teaching as a vocation versus a profession, and the teachers’ self-motivation.

4.3.1.1 Reasons for becoming a teacher and years of teaching experiences. In both MSS and OSB, teachers voiced their views about why they chose the teaching profession. A respondent of MSS, who had 17 years teaching experience, accounted that his teaching helped him progress through periods of learning and relearning:

I am the kind of person who enjoys learning new things, even if it is a new computer program, a new style of teaching, any of those things. I just like to try new things. If there is one thing that I always enjoyed about teaching, it is going through those moments with the students and trying something new, trying something different. I have always felt the teaching profession is great that way.

Another respondent of MSS related that he was inspired to teach and he believed that his mission helped students:

Teaching does not pay me well; in terms of the money, and the status is not there. It is in some sense a mission, wanting children to do well in life. In addition, I am a parent with four kids. Someone is teaching and helping my kids, putting them through school. I am helping other kids.
A respondent of OSB who had one year of teaching experience, believed in the teaching profession as worthwhile. She saw teaching as an opportunity for her to learn. As well, in the same OSB, a second respondent, who had ten years experience of teaching science, portrayed himself as a role model:

An experienced teacher is someone who does his work properly. He adheres to the ethics of the teaching profession, in the sense that his lesson plans, breaking down of the curriculum [into manageable lessons], all these add to the quality of an experienced teacher. Apart from that, an experienced teacher does not only look at the teaching aspect; he looks at the students, tries to correct them. An experienced teacher in the educational system knows his/her subject matter. If teachers do not know their subject matter, it means that they are not experienced teachers.

A third respondent was a female who had two years of teaching experience related that she expected experienced teachers to be refined in personal characteristics. She claimed that teachers should control and direct students, accommodate all students, be patient, and have the virtue of self-control.

To conclude the sub-section on reasons for choosing the teaching profession, the respondents in MSS gave various reasons for teaching, including helping children grow in knowledge, and learning new things themselves. At OSB, respondents related that teaching helped them gain new knowledge. They enjoyed being a role model, and developing character and virtues within themselves and the students.

4.3.1.2 Teaching as vocation versus profession. One respondent, who was a Grade 7 teacher in MSS, held that teaching was a vocation that he enjoyed: "I’ve never had that pull where I’ve thought 'Oh goodness Gracious’; I have to go to school tomorrow." A respondent of OSB, who had 26 years of teaching experience in four different schools, also upheld that he had always enjoyed teaching:

I always enjoy my vocation. If it is a tussle between enjoying my vocation and just doing my job, I always enjoy what I am doing. I am there for the kids first; I am there for the employer and the government second. Therefore, I do my best to fulfill the
requirements of an employee. However, mostly I am there for the kids and I enjoy my vocation.

Another respondent, who was an English teacher in OSB, seemed to consider teaching to be more of a profession than as a vocation: "As for the academic aspect, one enjoys it because you learn every day. Therefore, the fulfillment comes from the increase of knowledge. However, as far as remuneration is concerned, it does not pay [in terms of money] one as a vocation." Another of the respondents also viewed teaching as more of a profession. A third respondent in OSB viewed teaching to be one of the helping vocations.

To conclude this sub-section on teaching viewed as a vocation or a profession, all the respondents in MSS held that teaching is a vocation. Two of the three respondents in OSB held that teaching to them is more like a profession than a vocation. The respondents seemed to understand the difference between teaching as a vocation or calling, and as a profession that required extensive training and knowledge. They seemed to see the poor salary in the teaching job as an indication that those who chose teaching felt called to that career. The respondents described experienced teachers as persons who grow in knowledge, know their subject matter well, and have balance between following curriculum and guiding students.

4.3.1.3 Teachers' self-motivation. Unless teachers are motivated themselves, it will be difficult to motivate students. The researcher inquired about what keeps teachers motivated. A respondent of MSS related how he was self-motivated: "There are some days where I am much more excited than others, but generally, I do not see learning as just to do it [as a rote activity]. I do it because I really enjoy it." A respondent from OSB pointed out that motivation was not all about more money:

The motivation that I get as a teacher is that money is not everything. You need to be producing good products in young people, in the sense that at the end you will be able to train people in the various sectors of the economy.
As for motivation, in OSB the first respondent also claimed to have enjoyed good relationships within the school environment: "Good relationships with your principal, students, parents, and even the society or the community motivate the teacher." A second respondent in OSB remarked about motivation: "In terms of the academic profession, you are being trained and have those qualities that you possess to be in that profession. That is my motivation." The third respondent from OSB held that being a teacher motivates him because he gets time to be with family while preparing his lesson plans after school hours.

In this sub-section, the researcher has noted that respondents in both schools pointed to the different reasons for their being self-motivated. These range from the shared joy and excitement gained from the job, the joy of seeing that the students succeed, the experiences and training gained by being teachers, and the flexibility to plan lessons at home.

In conclusion, this section on teachers’ demographics and opinions explored respondents’ various reasons for becoming teachers, teaching as vocation versus profession, and teachers’ self-motivation. In the sub-section on reasons for choosing the teaching profession, the respondents in MSS enumerated two reasons—helping children grow in knowledge and learning new things. The OSB respondents related three reasons—gaining new learning as a teacher, enjoying becoming a role model, and developing character and virtues, as reasons for becoming teachers. Both respondents from MSS held that teaching is a vocation, while two of the three respondents in OSB maintained that teaching to them is more like a profession than a vocation. Finally, respondents related their opinions on what keeps them self-motivated; these range from the shared joy and excitement gained from the job, the joy of seeing that the students succeed, the experiences and training gained by teachers, and the flexibility to plan lessons at their residential places in company of their families.
4.3.2 Teaching Practices

The researcher sought the opinions of teachers on how they address students' needs, the motivation of students, and what are insightful and helpful steps to assist children brought up in impoverished home backgrounds. The teachers gave their views from the two schools, MSS and OSB.

4.3.2.1 Addressing students' needs. The researcher inquired about how the teachers meet students’ needs. The participants graciously gave their responses. The first respondent from MSS ascertained that knowledge of students was vital to meeting their needs:

You can get to know them a little better and I have found it is a little easier to deal with some of those emotional, social, and moral issues. After that, it is a tough one. I think you have to respond differently to every student; you have to see what you can do to help that particular one. As a teacher, I help assist my students who have needs, in a situation where the help is within the means of providing assistance with your meager salary mindful of one’s own needs and that of his family.

A second respondent of MSS viewed the Child Hunger Education Program (CHEP) as fulfilling the students' physical needs. He also noted that the school counselor helped with students' social needs, and that the school’s moral instruction supported the students' moral needs:

Physical needs in this school—we have a CHEP program where we give free food to kids. At this school, but perhaps there may not be free feeding for all kids in all other schools around the province, it [the physical needs of students from disadvantaged families] has not been an issue. The social—you are sort of their counselor trying to guide them to a future. You try to help them socially to get along with each other, work together. As a school, it makes me think of dances, spirit days. We encourage kids to do things for the greater good. Morally—we are a Catholic school, so we have religion half an hour a day. We are constantly talking about the morality of Christianity for the greater good. Emotional needs—the kids bombard us with their emotional needs on a constant basis. Definitely, we become some kind of mentorship there.

A respondent of OSB held that some students needed to know what it takes to be a doctor, lawyer, and so on:
Some will say I want to be a doctor, or a banker, and others a lawyer. Now those students that said they want to be a doctor, you sit the students down and tell them that to be a doctor is not an easy task. I let them know the requirements needed to be a doctor. They have to be science students, study maths, and learn how to do many things for themselves too. Those that say they want to be a lawyer, I tell them to be a lawyer is not an easy task. I also let them know the courses or subjects that students have to choose to be lawyers. When they choose these courses or subjects, you have to be serious with them. So academic counselling then; you advise them to be serious with their studies.

Another respondent of OSB supervised students toward learning about their appearances, dress, and nutrition:

As an experienced teacher, I do not just look at the students when in class. You do not only deliver your lesson and leave; it is more than that. You should always check the outward appearance of the students, that is, the way they dress, their mode of nutrition, all these. If a student is sick, it means that there is something wrong. As an experienced teacher, you should look for ways that you will try to help that student. This is what helps you to look out for their physical needs.

The second respondent also encouraged introverts in the class to participate in his lessons. A third respondent, who was a science teacher at OSB, related that the school provided food for the students.

To recap this sub-section on the aspects of addressing students’ needs, the teachers from the two schools varied in their responses. Their answers involved knowing about students’ problems and needs and providing for them accordingly. A good example was the school program of feeding known as Child Hunger Education Program (CHEP). In MSS, respondents noted that school counsellors were addressing students’ social needs; that as Catholic schools, religion helped to meet the students’ moral needs; and that teachers addressed the emotional needs of students through mentorship and practical advice.

4.3.2.2 Motivation of students. The researcher inquired about how teachers motivated their students. The first respondent from MSS related that he encouraged students' high expectations, positive relationships, and motivation by using positive feedback, stretching
students, setting classroom rules, and getting students active in physical activities. He elaborated:

We have had to set up a couple of programs in our school to encourage students and to allow students to make sure that they complete their work, and that they have some help if they need to complete their assignments that they haven’t finished. I think those are some of the things that help develop the culture at school, and that it is okay to do well, to know that you do not just have to do the bare minimum and get by. As for positive relationships, the area where I find I do the most is with the outdoor parts. I have always been a person that likes physical activities. The whole motivation is wrapped up in there [around the areas of positive school culture, feedback, and participating in games with the students]; that is, if you give them appropriate feedback, you have a relationship with them, and with that, I see that you can motivate them a little better.

When asked about how he encouraged and sustained students' high expectations, positive relationships, and motivation, the second respondent of MSS compared the work done in the present school with other schools to see if students met the acceptable standard:

The high expectations—I always tell students they need to work to meet other students' standards that I have taught. Therefore, I say, this work is as good as any student I have seen, or this work would simply not meet the cut in another neighborhood. You have to build motivation; you have to tell other students they have to do it again. They may have to read you their work just to make it acceptable. Positive relations—you have to encourage students to speak well of each other. I teach lessons in what we do in the morning, as we say ‘hi’ to each other. If we notice one has a new haircut or new clothes we use nice words to one another. I often talk to the boys especially about teasing, not to tease. I use the expression like, "Do you know in Canada, people say something like ‘I’m just kidding!’?” Boys always say something like that to girls. I say if you never ‘kid’, but always remain honest and be nice to one another, you will never regret it. Later on in university, no one is going to say he was not a nice boy. That is what I do.

The second respondent of MSS used consequences and follow-ups to motivate students. As well, having an organized timetable helps the students.

One respondent from OSB talked about positive relationships. She encouraged students to love one another, with no negative sentiments because of their family backgrounds. She employed the means of praise to motivate students:
When you give them an assignment, you mark the assignment, and you pick the best among them. When you pick the best among them, you ask him to come in front of the classroom, and let the whole class look at him as the hero. We motivate students by asking the class to clap hands for him, or by giving him a prize, maybe a pen, pencil, or even a textbook, that will motivate him to read.

A second respondent of OSB encouraged students to have high expectations, positive relationships, and motivation:

It is the responsibility of the teacher always to encourage students to read their books in order to excel and to perform well in their academics. It is necessary that students make sure they read their books. A student who does not read his books, who does not do the assignment, who fails to prepare to write a class test, you do not expect such a student to perform well. Therefore, in this situation you encourage them to come to school promptly for their lessons, to do their class work and assignments, and so on and so forth. I think that is what I can say about high expectation. Now, about positive relationship—here, we are talking about the students themselves. What is the rapport that exists between them?

A third respondent encouraged students to seek assistance from their classmates who knew Mathematics better than themselves, in addition to the teachers’ lessons:

By the time that his friend has solved it, that motivates him/her [the student] to try harder. That means in some way the student is the teacher, or let me say the co-student. Coaching helps a lot in mathematics. The teacher gives them tests and marks them, which is a motivation as well. He also buys textbooks for the bright students who are from low socio-economic backgrounds. There are so many ways you can motivate the students. You give them tests. When you give them the test, mark or assess them, and give them the feedback that motivates students to put forth more effort. If a teacher feels lazy [not fulfilling his duties of teaching, evaluation, and feedback], then students will not do well. For instance, in mathematics, the expectation is that in every lesson a teacher had with students, the teacher should give students an assignment or class work. Therefore, if you give them class work, and you mark it, you are aware of those that fail and those that pass. It motivates them too.

The third respondent from OSB also added:

The factors that make the students from poor backgrounds to do well are the teachers, who will always use some [motivational] examples with people, even referring to themselves. They will use themselves as examples, so that students will have focus.

By way of concluding this sub-section on the aspects of motivation of students, respondents differed in their views and pointed to various ideas. The interviewees’ opinions
focused on the following educational themes: feedback, stretching students to work hard, setting the classroom rules, making sure students meet acceptable standards, setting consequences and follow-ups, extending brotherly love, peer teaching and learning, and pointing to others’ good examples and teachers’ self-examples. In their understanding, the right approach to those themes and issues made a difference for all students, especially those from impoverished backgrounds.

4.3.2.3 Insightful and helpful steps for students raised in poverty. Some students may thrive regardless of their backgrounds, while others may need considerable assistance from the school. The researcher inquired about insights regarding the kind of assistance that mentors students raised in poverty. The respondent from MSS noted that the way for students to become academic achievers was a focus on literacy right from the beginning:

Our Grade 2 teacher does a good job. He is working on reading levels and making sure parents know about those reading levels. Another thing we are focusing on is that we had a Literacy night. After school hours, we had a supper with the parents, and they had a chance to go through some literacy activities. Personally, I feel that if you can really focus on literacy, it helps much more with the other areas. If you can focus on literacy as part of your program, it makes things much easier for students from lower economic backgrounds.

He felt happy that their school had moved towards data-driven decision-making in relation to students’ performance. They had an online survey by Grades 6, 7, and 8 students called "What did you do in school today?" as well as the focus on professional learning community:

What we have moved toward is to be a little more data-driven. We try to get results from data coming from the assessment for learning as mandated from our government. From that, it has given us data to make better decisions. Another positive thing we do here at our school is an online survey that students take in Grades 6, 7, and 8. The name of the program is "What did you do in school today?" That survey deals with the engagement of students, and it gives us some good data. We can actually look at and see if our students feel that they are being engaged, and in what ways. We join in professional learning committees. I am involved in Grades 6, 7, and 8, and from there we can start talking in ways to change our teaching, and do anything that will help the students learn a little better.
The second respondent of MSS advised parents to keep encouraging, supporting, and engaging their children to aim high in academic work; as well, he pointed to the positive effects of their school’s STARR (Safety, Teamwork, Attitude, Responsibility, and Respect) program, which acted as an incentive for the students to work hard and behave well:

We have a STARR program here. We offer many incentives to students. We have a public award, based on reading levels, tests, and Math work for this award. We have celebrations of academic success in the school.

The first respondent of OSB related that some philanthropists and church organisations sponsored students from low socio-economic backgrounds that had various needs:

Some priests help students by sponsoring them, but I do not think there is anything like a scholarship. We find out about those students, all these orphans. They find help from some people, from their guardians, or from a priest. A teacher can also help an intelligent student.

She listed two activities, quiz competitions and debates, and noted students’ academic excellent results at their final exams:

The school accounts for academic success of students through quiz competitions and through debates. Students will debate on a topic with students from other schools. This brings praise to the school. Ah, we have intelligent students in the school. They often come first in these debates among other schools. We challenge them in the school, with questions that will influence their knowledge. Through [our own] quiz competition, they can go for state quiz competition and emerge first; moreover, the name of the school will fly up. In addition, when they score 100% in their examination, you find out that most children would want to come to the school, because they [the students here] are making it in their West African Examination Council (WAEC).

The second respondent of OSB noted that he searched for sponsors to assist his impoverished students:

In such a case, you go for those scholarships and to charity organisations that can assist students. This can assist and they should not relent. If I personally know that I do not have somebody that can pay my school fees, being aware that my economic background is low, then I will seek for work to pay my fees (if they are grown-ups,
they work during holiday periods and save the money for the fees, or they seek financial assistance from well-to-do relatives).

A third respondent of OSB reported, “I help the students with advice and assist students where affordable with writing materials.”

To recap the sub-section on the insightful and helpful steps on helping students raised in poverty, MSS respondents pointed to early focus on literacy, data-driven record keeping, and the online survey on What Did You Do in School Today? (WDYDIST), and the Safety, Teamwork, Attitude, Relationship, and Respect (STARR) program. OSB respondents maintain that scouting for financial sponsorship, subsidizing school fees, providing educational learning materials, and organising competitions, debates, and quizzes are essential. Respondents in both schools similarly stressed the importance of encouraging, supporting, and engaging students.

To sum up this section on the aspects of positive teaching practices, the researcher has presented respondents’ views about addressing students’ needs, motivation of students, and profound and helpful steps for children rose in poverty. The respondents in MSS observed two main ways of addressing students' needs: mentorship and school programs that cover the students' needs. On the other hand, in OSB the respondents acknowledged that they act as mentors but sometimes that they also give students educational materials and even sometime pay their fees. In the sub-section about self-motivation, dedication, and discipline of students, respondents identified feedback from teachers and peer learning as prominent among things that make students motivated. MSS identified their focus on literacy, and the STAAR program, as insightful steps in helping students raised in poverty. The respondents in OSB held that life would be better for those children raised in poverty if sponsors could be found to pay their school fees.
On the sub-section on the profound and helpful steps for helping students raised in poverty, all respondents in both schools had similar views on the importance of encouraging, supporting, and engaging students. However, in MSS respondents stressed the early focus on literacy, data-driven record keeping, and the online survey on What Did You Do in School Today? (WDYDIST), and the STARR program. In OSB, respondents related that children from low socio-economic backgrounds benefit from scouting for financial sponsorship, subsidizing of their school fees, providing them with educational learning materials, as well as organizing academic competitions, debates, and quizzes among the students.

4.3.3 School Practices

In this section, the researcher presents respondents’ views on test scores and their uses, as well as other factors that encourage students to become self-motivated, dedicated, and disciplined, and that relate to increased academic performance.

4.3.3.1 Test scores and their uses. The researcher asked about test scores and their uses in the two schools. Teachers from both schools enumerated the uses of test scores. The first respondent of MSS related how teachers in his school assessed students' academic performance:

We sat down as a group, and asked ourselves the question: Why have our students done poorly on a test? Therefore, what we decided to do with our Grade 7 and Grade 8 is, before the writing assessment came up, we took a month beforehand of training with the entire Grade 7s, and 8s. We mixed them up. We had two teachers in each classroom and we focused on the strategies they needed to know. To be successful in writing this assessment, we taught them the different types of writing that they were most likely going to see. We walked them through the process a couple of times. One teacher would be teaching expository writing and the other narrative writing. We tried to be experts in those areas [different aspects of writing assessment]. After teaching a class, we would switch, and I would get a different group [of students] to teach the same thing. Each student had a chance to go through expository writing and through narrative writing. We tried to give them examples from other Grade 7 and Grade 8 students, what their writing should look like.
The second respondent from the same school related that when performing a government test, students from a lower socio-economic group do not always pass the examination satisfactorily. He related that when a student from a low socio-economic background was asked to write a government test, that student often does not work well at passing it. He declared to the students that he was going to crosscheck their work and approve of it before he let them go home. Whenever he used that method, then all students put in more effort to do better:

What do I do when they are doing a test for the government? I look at it, and I tell them I will be correcting their scripts. In a higher socio-economic group, the students will do well. That [test]; the student thinks that it does not make any difference to him/her [the student]. I say I will be correcting them. ‘If you hand me any work that looks like you did not try, I will hand it right back, and you will do it again right now. However, I am not going to let you go simply without doing it.’ Then, students do a better job.

The first respondent from OSB reported that she guided and advised the students from poor backgrounds to work hard in order to pass tests with good scores. The second respondent from OSB held that advice to students, as well as teachers and the principal seeking for sponsors for students’ fees, are some simple but profound steps that are helpful for children from low socio-economic status to become academic achievers:

I advise them to read always, in time, and then in the night they can rest. I could remember, in my former school, a student who got admission to read engineering in Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria, and the parents were not financially buoyant enough to pay the fees for him. Therefore, my principal just took a step by contacting these politicians and a member of the House of Representative, representing Mangu South Constituency. I think he is the one paying school fees for that boy now, in the form of his scholarship.

The third respondent of OSB related about Mathematics Competitions, which the entire nation’s secondary schools’ participation. The students of his school have been winning awards and scoring a hundred percent at their final external examinations:
In Mathematics competition, which involves all the secondary schools in the country, last year a student here was able to come first. It is a joy to the school, and shows that the teachers are doing well. At the same time, at their examination level, for example the West African Examination Council (WAEC) or the National Examinations Commission (NECO), if the school is performing poorly, it becomes so discouraging. However, in their final percentage, if the students perform 100 percent, the credit goes to the school, and they often do score 100 percent.

The fourth respondent, who was a science teacher of OSB, suggests that teachers should help with advice. They can also provide writing materials if the students do not have them. These simple but insightful steps assist students from backgrounds of poverty. He thought that the school accounts for students’ success when they employ qualified teachers, good teaching aids, a laboratory, and a library.

In conclusion, on test-scores and their uses, respondents in MSS maintained that tests scores and their uses are based on students’ assessment, on curriculum needs, and on student outcomes. In OSB, respondents pointed out that good teaching aids, proper guiding, admonishing students to work hard, and students heeding the advice of studying hard all bring out the best in students.

4.3.3.2 Factors that encourage students to become self-motivated, dedicated, and disciplined. The researcher inquired from respondents about factors that keep students self-motivated, dedicated, and disciplined. The first male respondent of MSS held that building family supports and relationships were very important aspects of the family’s upbringing of the children. His practice of pointing to examples of successful students also helped his students to be self-motivated, dedicated, and disciplined in school despite their backgrounds. As a school, the third respondent of Mo's school Saskatoon (MSS) reported that one of the factors that encouraged students to become self-motivated, dedicated, and disciplined was seeing their teachers as icons of success:
When teachers act as mentors, and when they present themselves as human who overcome their weaknesses, which makes students motivated. Those are factors [mentorship and stories of human weakness of teachers] that encourage students to become self-motivated, dedicated, and disciplined.

He did not see the stories of other people to be that helpful to his students. He pointed out some of their out-of-school programs, like army and navy cadets, as things that correlated to students' positive academic achievements. He emphasized that being a member of a sports team or club also helped students do better academically.

The first respondent from OSB claimed that the school authority had rules and regulations that kept students on their toes:

We [teachers] encourage students to work hard. I advise them; I control [guide] their behaviour in addition to what the school does. The school makes policies and penalties on arriving to school late, and the keeping of extra food provisions. This enables the students from low socio-economic backgrounds to feel equal with others, just to avoid unnecessary discrimination.

The second respondent’s concern was that the students should have access to a science laboratory, a kitchen, and a computer laboratory. He also argued that not only were students from low socio-economic backgrounds sometimes academically poor, but that some students from well-to-do families performed poorly in their schoolwork too. He claimed that when the school authority sent students [who have not paid their fees because of their economic backgrounds] home, that took their parents two or more weeks to struggle for the payment of their fees. As a result, the students are affected academically:

Many times those students whose parents are rich, their children are performing poorly despite the fact that they have all they need to learn; they still do not perform well during their test. The other part is that for those who are from the lower socio-economic background, you find out poverty does affect them. During test week, you discover that the school sends students home from school for non-payment of school fees. The intervention here is that as a teacher, I should also talk to a charity organisation to be helping those students, or the principal should do something by contacting well-meaning individuals to assist.
The fourth respondent emphasized that he encouraged students to be self-motivated, dedicated, and disciplined, as he showed them good examples of people who came from low socio-economic backgrounds, such as their teachers whose hard work placed them where they are today as successful persons.

To sum up this sub-section on the factors that encourage students’ self-motivation, dedication, and discipline, respondents in MSS pointed out that good family training, and the help of the professional learning community, are of vital importance in this regard. Respondents in OSB found that good school policies, meeting students’ needs, providing adequate structures and learning materials, and pointing to examples of successful persons that have overcome the huddles of poverty backgrounds are vital in this area.

4.3.3.3 Factors related to increased academic performance. The participants were also invited to contribute their thoughts on various factors that related to students’ positive academic performance. The first respondent of Mo’s school (MSS) emphasized that regular school attendance, school safety, and positive student-teacher relationships, especially for struggling students, are important. On the other hand, he noted that he tried to be strict with the students and supervised them to ensure they do their work well.

In OSB, the first respondent encouraged students to hard work. The second respondent enumerated some characteristics that correlate with increased academic achievement:

The other factors that are involved with increasing students' academic achievement include: first, student participation in academic competitions, like debates and quizzes. It helps them to update their knowledge. Secondly, students participating in tests, asking questions. All these can enable them to achieve academic success. Any student who does not ask questions may be having a personal problem that is disturbing him that the teacher may not know. What do you do with such a student? You should always go closer to him. You try to ensure that he says something. You should always involve him. However, the more you continue to leave him like that
[without participation in class], that student continues to stay like that without responding.

The second respondent added that he personally gave the students make-up tests when they returned from collecting their school fees at home. He also pointed to the boarding facility of the school as an advantage:

This is a boarding school so whether you are from a well-to-do family or not, we still maintain the same standard, that is, in terms of food. They [students] eat the same food, and they sleep on the same kind of beds. The school administration does not allow their parents to bring any [extra] things apart from what the school provides for the students, which are the same for all, no difference.

The third respondent ascertained that good teaching, and the use of learning aids, are aspects that helped to improve students’ academics:

The students improve by the method of teaching. When the teacher has a good method of teaching, then it will enable the child to improve his learning. In addition, if there are good teaching materials, the child will also improve.

By way of conclusion, respondents from Mo’s school, Saskatoon (MSS), gave the following as factors associated with increased academic performance: school attendance, school safety, teacher-to-student relationships, and being strict with students as aspects that made students work harder. On the other hand, interviewees in Obi’s school Barkin-Ladi (OSB) held that strict supervision of students, involving all students in the learning process and academic competitions, and the fact that they never gave up on students as factors that were associated with increased academic performance.

To conclude this section on school practices, respondents contributed their views on the aspects of tests scores and their uses; factors that encourage students become self-motivated, dedicated, and disciplined; and factors related to increased academic performance. Respondents in MSS maintained that test scores and their uses are based on students’ assessment regarding curriculum outcomes, and on supervision. In OSB, respondents pointed
out that good teaching aids, proper guiding, admonishing students to work hard, and students heeding the advice of studying hard bring out the best in students. Relating to factors that encourage students’ self-motivation, dedication, and discipline, respondents in MSS pointed out that good family training, and the help of a professional learning community, are of vital importance in this regards. On the other hand, interviewees in OSB found that good school policies, meeting students’ needs, providing adequate structures and learning materials, and pointing to examples of successful persons that have overcome the hardships of impoverished backgrounds are vital in these areas. Finally, respondents from Mo’s school, Saskatoon (MSS), found the following factors associated with increased academic performance: school attendance, school safety, teacher-to-student relationships, and being strict with students to make sure they do their work. On the other hand, interviewees in Obi’s school Barkin-Ladi (OBS) proposed strict supervision of students, involving all students in learning, and academic competitions, and never giving up on students.

4.3.4 Family Practices

The teachers noted that they worked closely with students and often communicated with parents about the children’s studies. In addition, some of the teachers were also parents. This section will deal with views of teachers on positive family influences, and factors that foster resilience in students. The contribution of teachers’ opinions of parents’ positive family influences is vital to this study.

4.3.4.1 Positive family influences. There were different opinions on how every family supports their children in regards to academics. In the selected school in Saskatoon, the first respondent of MSS stressed that family is important. He pointed out that parents' encouragement helps children to excel in academics:
The family is very, very important; it is where these students start their learning to begin with. Parents want their children to be successful. If family encourages the school as a place of learning, which makes a big, big difference. The expectations that the family give the students is so important. If the family expects the student to be successful, it is much easier for the student to do well. In addition, encouraging the student, making sure that the student comes to school, and making sure they have all the necessary supplies is important. If the family takes care of all those physical needs, it makes a big difference for the students.

The second respondent of MSS related that good family relationships, proper communication, and guidance of children in the family were vital to a positive family influence on students' academic achievement:

A positive relationship must include communication. A family that does not communicate well does not have [good] influence on their children. When parents have control over their kids, the kids have a higher success rate in school. Once they know that their parents cannot control them, and then they slip academically. There has to be an idea of control. In order to have control over your child, it is a job, which you do before they are set for school; let us say five years of age. It includes those times when children say, "I don't want to get up in the morning." In addition, you say, "You must get up". They say, "I don't want to eat that food!" You say, "No, we eat all our food!" All those tiny little things add up too.

He added an extra comment on what he called "learned helplessness":

Learned helplessness: If there is no punishment for not doing things, they do not do them. They love to come to school. Nevertheless, a lot of them are not going to do anything, unless you say, "You have to do this." They have no internal mechanism that says, "I have to do this. I must meet the deadline and the expectations." I do not know whether they learn it from their parents. A great example is high school registration. In Saskatoon, you can go to any high school you want; we just need to know which one. We need parents to fill in the forms and hand them in on time; this is where I want my kid to go. Maybe five parents out of twenty-seven will complete the forms. When you phone to ask, they tell you they do not know yet. If you ask them when they are going to tell you, they tell you again that they do not know. In addition, they will take it right up to September next year. They still have not applied for a school for their kids, because they have learned that if they do not do it, someone will do it for them. If parents showed their children respect for deadlines in their lives, they will do it. I am going to pay my bills, make my phone calls, and talk to people. I need to talk to someone. I am going to help myself, instead of [lasing into] self-helplessness.
In OSB, the first respondent felt that when parents used encouraging words like "You are intelligent", and buy educational materials for the children, these count as positive family influences that promote academic achievement for students:

Parents can encourage their children not necessarily by getting all the books, but even a few like Mathematics and English textbooks. That will help them. Then the parent should encourage their children to read when in school. At home, sometimes an elder brother can call the younger one to bring out his notebooks to show him what he did in school today. When the younger one shows the elder brother what they did in school, then the elder brother can correct him when he is wrong.

In her additional comment, she talked of getting scholarships for students from economically disadvantaged families.

The second respondent of OSB emphasized the difficult ordeals that disadvantaged parents in Nigeria go through to educate their wards:

First, if a student comes to school, normally as a good father of the family, all the necessary things needed for his learning are to be provided [at arrival]. Therefore, there must be textbooks, etcetera. Secondly, parents are to pay school fees earlier to remedy the ugly situation where the school authority disrupts students from classes and sends them home for [non-payment of] school fees. This is not to mention paying for extra lesson teachers, when children are on holiday [poor parents are unable to pay an extra-lesson teacher to teach their children at home].

He made a clarion call for the government and philanthropists to assist children from low socio-economic families to access quality education:

What I mean by the government chipping in is, like this school, which is now solely a mission school; I understand that there is not a grant or aid from government to support it. However, they [government] can now improve the standard of this school, since the creation of this school is not mainly for the missions only. Some students may go into other vocations. Therefore, the government should send their assistance by providing the school with some facilities in the laboratories, and the libraries. I think that can assist. If the government will assist through scholarships, students from low socio-economic backgrounds will be the beneficiaries. Now, we are in the democratic era of politics.

The third respondent of OSB noted that when students’ poor backgrounds keep their thoughts on their pitying situations, that has a negative effect on them while at school,
although they may study hard. In addition, he acknowledged that some teachers’ advice fosters resilience in students that were from low socio-economic backgrounds:

What fosters their zeal is, you know, there are some students who do not think about their poor backgrounds. Despite the fact that they are from poor backgrounds, once they are in school, they face their studies. In addition, the teacher will also be advising students that they should forget about the home problems. Once some students follow the advice, they forget about their backgrounds and face their studies, and then they will do better.

A third respondent of OSB complimented this research work as he thinks it is important and will go a long way to help impoverished students and those in charge of their education. He commended the school for their efforts toward keeping a high academic standard, and the students for their spirit of oneness.

To sum up this sub-section about positive family influence that enabled students’ academic success, all interviewees acknowledged the need for positive family influence in order for students to achieve academically. In Obi’s school Barkin-Ladi (OSB), the interviewees showed more concern for the need for philanthropists and governments to sponsor students from low socio-economic backgrounds. The respondents equally pointed out the importance of good relationships, proper communication, and right guidance of children in the family, as helpful in academic achievement of all students.

4.3.4.2 Factors that foster resilience in students. Resilience is an important personal strength for all students, but particularly for students facing economic hardships. What factors foster resilience in students? The first respondent of Mo's school Saskatoon (MSS) noted that fostering resilience in students was associated with family, as well as with the school’s efforts:

Family makes a big difference. Being self-motivated; that was also considered important, that is if students have a good self-concept. What were their strengths? What were their weaknesses? What did they need to work on? Were they dedicated and disciplined students? All those things helped them to be more resilient. The
school, like the family, made a big difference. If it made connections, the school was more likely to have good students.

The first respondent of Mo's school Saskatoon (MSS) emphasized that teachers foster resilience and hope in students, especially those from low socio-economic backgrounds:

I think it is because they think the school is where they can control [for] some aspects of their parents’ behaviours. I feel the students may say; “I cannot make my parents stop drinking [alcohol]. I cannot control their problems. I cannot move to a better home. Most things at school I can control.” That is what they do when they control [the situation]; they do well. I think it is what teachers are telling them, that their future can be good. We live in a country where we have a good safety net. You can try, you can fail, and you are not going to starve to death. You can go to university; we do have a cash system that encourages students’ loans. You can become anything; the only thing stopping you is yourself. It is also never too late.

In OSB, the second respondent related:

Parents do not want their children to suffer. Sometimes impoverished students say, "I am suffering now, so I am going to work harder so that I will make it in the future." [That will encourage the child] to be serious with their studies. They will find time to study well. Where the student is lacking, he calls on the attention of the teacher, "Please sir, help to put me through [this or that problem]." Their hard work results in their good performance.

The third respondent from OSB pointed to practical examples of educated persons in the family or society as a source of resilience for students. He explained that it gave them hope and resilience to know that some people had passed through such challenges, and overcame similar difficulties as they were now experiencing. The fourth participant from Obi's school, Barkin-Ladi (OSB) also held that when teachers pointed to examples of successful persons in the society, students gained some resilience and had hope to succeed:

The teacher makes references to those that have made it in life. He gives an example of people from poor backgrounds that made it in life, who now have become successful. The teacher will bring it as an example so that students will see it as a reality and they will have hope. Tell them they should not give up; there is hope.

In conclusion, respondents in Mo’s school Saskatoon (MSS) attributed the roots of students’ resilience and hope to the initial moulding the child received from the family and
subsequently to the teachers’ guidance. Respondents in Obi’s school, Barkin-Ladi (OSB), pointed to home training, and providing examples of successful and educated persons that break through hardships of poverty, to have been factors that helped build a student’s resilience.

To summarize, this section on family practices considered the areas of positive family influences and factors that foster students’ resilience. In responding to aspects of positive family influences that enables students’ academic success, all interviewees from MSS and OSB acknowledged the need for positive family influence in order for students to achieve academically. In OSB, the interviewees continued to show more concern for the need for philanthropists and governments to sponsor students from low socio-economic backgrounds. The respondents equally pointed out the importance of good relationships, positive communication, and the right guidance of children in the family, as helpful influences that aid students’ academic success. In conclusion, respondents in MSS attributed the roots of students’ resilience and hope to the moulding the child receives from the family and to the teachers’ guidance. Respondents in OSB pointed to home training, and examples of successful and educated persons that break through hardships of poverty, to be factors that help build students’ resilience.

4.4 Interviews with Parents, and Guardians/Parents’ Representatives

In Mo's School Saskatoon (MSS), the school administration denied the researcher direct access to interview the parents of their students. Instead, the administrator of the school directed the researcher to seek the opinions of the Home-School Liaison Worker, the Program Facilitator, and the school's Community Coordinator, all who work closely with parents, to speak on behalf or representing the parents of the school. However, in OSB, four parents who had children in Grades 7 and/or 8, willingly participated in the interview process.
In this category of parents, and guardian/parents' representatives, the researcher presents respondents' views and opinions on some relevant topics and issues: parents' demographics, parents/guardian out-look, parents and their children's schools, and experiences of parenting children.

4.4.1 Parents' Demographics

In this section, respondents from both schools answered questions related to sub-topics on reasons for becoming parents, constitution of family in a home, typical days' work, type of job/profession, time spent on travelling and at work, activities after work, and family holidays/vacations. Below were some of the respondents' views on the related themes in this sub-section.

4.4.1.1 Reasons for being a parent. The first respondent, who was the Home-School Liaison Worker at MSS, initially responded to the reasons for becoming a parent by noting that she gives love, raises children, and mentors the children in the school. She talked about having a family. She said that sometimes it happened because of premarital pregnancy, which led to some people to becoming parents. As for the usual family make-up of the children in the city of Saskatoon, she held that there were many low-income families who were especially headed by single mothers, immigrant families that had English as their second language, and Aboriginal families:

We have a real variety at our school. We have some ESL families. We have Aboriginal families. I do not think we have any high-income families. We have some middle-income families. Of course, we have many people who live in poverty, and some who are not living in poverty, some on assistance, a big variety.

The second respondent, who was also a Program Facilitator with MSS, related that she had programs with parents and toddlers. Her views on why people become parents range from
seeking love; to loving and marry the person; and that at other times, having a child happens as an accident:

Parents and grandparents are important parts of the family. The children going to day-care might be a child with a hyphenated last name, or Mom has the same last name with the child. That is the thing. I do not think whom you are living with makes a big deal. In our time, when parents get divorced, it was like, wow! It is common now. The children see it as the way it is.

The third respondent worked as the School-Community Coordinator at MSS, and observed that becoming a parent happened sometimes by accident for some persons, while others desired to start a family.

The first respondent and a parent of one of the students in OSB pointed to her prayerful and religious background as a reason for becoming a parent. The second respondent, who had a son in Grade 7 in OSB, declared that tradition and his Christian faith made him become a parent of five children. The third respondent was a guardian of one of the students in OSB and had children of his own. He had offered to be a guardian to help the student who came from a low socio-economic background. In his own words:

I decided to become a guardian because I want to help the child out of difficulties within his own background. He is coming from a poor background and being a guardian, I know that the child is supposed to get his basic needs [met] so that he will grow up and become a good citizen.

To sum up this sub-section, among other reasons that respondents in MSS mentioned was that some parents are parents because of what they call “accident” [unplanned and/or pre-marital pregnancy]. Some persons seek love in relationships, and when finding love and are in love, they get married to one another. On the other hand, in OSB parents’ reasons for becoming parents are principally related to a religious point of view, culture, and for procreation.
4.4.1.2 Constitution of family members in a home. The number of family members is a determining factor in understanding the socio-economic status of families. The constitution of the family provides an insight about the home care and how well a parent or both parents can assume part of the home training of their children.

As for the number of children in the family, the first respondent, who is the Home-School Liaison Worker at MSS, noted that in their school community, the practice of grandchildren living with their grandparents was common. The second respondent at MSS noted that most families of his students had two to three children and were non-traditional, single parents, mixed family relationships, but sometimes the traditional two parent families as well. He pointed out that most families had caregivers for their children.

The first respondent from OSB, who was a parent of one of the students, has four children. The second respondent had a son in Grade 7 in OSB, lived with his wife, and both worked as public servants. The third respondent lived with her husband and five children. The fourth declared that the child lived with his parents. The fifth respondent in OSB reported that their family constituted the two parents and five children.

By way of concluding the sub-section on constitution of family members, MSS has more non-traditional [single, mixed parenthood] constitution of families. The respondents related that in OSB, there are many traditional families, with the exception of a couple of widows among the interviewees.

4.4.1.3 Typical day. The researcher also inquired about what a typical day is like within the homes. This unveils the activities in the home front, which may promote or facilitate maximizing time use as an opportunity for learning at home. Every place, and especially the home, can become a learning environment for children. The first respondent of
MSS related that the parents got home from work, cooked food, and ate with family. She
gave other details of what the families did in their spare time:

Okay, well I think they get home from school, if the weather is nice, they will play
outside for a little bit, and then maybe make themselves something to eat, or the
parent will make something to eat, and then I think they play video games or watch
T.V. We have some involved in football, and hockey, but for the majority of the kids,
I think that is what their day is like.

The second respondent from MSS observed that parents work, and for most of their
evenings, they went to their children’s school for one program or another because their two or
three children were involved in some activities. She pointed that they had a few day-care
centres in the community. She described the typical evenings of most of her students as the
students going home, eating their evening meals, and going to bed. For the weekends, she
noted that the children likely played outside on nice days. They go for biking, to church for
programs, or visiting grandparents. The third respondent at MSS noted that a typical day for
parents began with taking children to school, going to work, and for those who had no
employment, some partook in volunteer work in the school. She continued:

My Grade 6 students spend lots of time watching television, on computer and video
games. Our students give little time to good physical exercise, reading, and spending
time with family. Television, and computer and video games, are big things for kids.
Some kids are involved in many programs around the community, which I think is
fantastic. Others spend a lot of time supervising other younger ones. If they were
young, I would imagine someone would help.

The first OSB respondent related how she and her family spent their weekdays, "My
typical days' work: I go to the office and the children go to school. After my office hours, I go
home. I will prepare food and look after my own children." She also talked about what she
did for the weekends at home:

We normally have a meeting from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Fridays. The children
normally wash their clothes when they come back from school. On Saturdays, if I
have a wedding to attend, I prepare for it and attend the wedding. If not, I stay at
home with my children. On Sundays, I go to the church. After church, if I have any
meeting to attend in the church I go to. If not, I go back home to attend to my children.

The second respondent, and a parent of one of the students in OSB, described her weekdays and weekends:

In the evening, everybody has his own functions. If they finish their functions, then we watch television. We criticise what we see and learn what we are supposed to learn. We discourage immoral films. Whenever we are not at home, we put off the satellite dish so that our children will not watch channels that encourage un-Christian behaviors, channels that teach them about immoral sexual acts. We do not like to expose our children to such videos or films. On weekends sometimes, one is engaged in so many activities. If I go for one church activity in the early hours of the day, then that means I will be at home in the evening [she does not like staying all day and evening outside her home]. The children at home work, clean, and prepare everything [food] in the house before Sunday, so that when we come back, we seat together and we discuss many things, to see that we put our heads together, and see to the progress of the family. It is an opportunity for us during the weekend to discuss. It is during the weekend that we have enough time to sit down and discuss with one another because during the weekdays, the children and I are always in school.

The third respondent from OSB noted that a typical evening with his family was a period of playing, eating, and resting. On weekends, he took time out to check his children’s books and homework from school to assist them, and that encouraged them. He gave them homework, and marked the work. He checked the homework from school to see that they did it right. The fourth respondent, a guardian of one of the students in OSB, related that when he was back from work, he inquired about what his children learned in school and made sure they cleaned the house. He noted that the children kept their own clothes clean.

In conclusion, related to this section on families' typical day, respondents reached points of convergence in both schools (MSS and OBS) in the family focus on getting children to school in the morning, going to work, sharing meals with family, playing games/sports, watching television, and volunteering in school. In MSS, respondents said little about parents guiding children to do their homework at home. But parents in OSB noted that they not only supervised their children to do homework, but at times some go the extra mile to teach and
give assignments for the children to do, which they also marked at home. An additional point of divergence among OSB families is viewing church programs and attendance as essential aspects of their lives. In MSS, they have a daily evening Christian program for the children, and a program for parents that wish to attend.

4.4.1.4 Types of profession/job. The researcher asked questions about the types of professions of parents. This tells more about the economic factors and the time parents may have to give to their children at home. The respondents gave various answers.

The first MSS respondent observed that half of the parents worked and half lived on social assistance. For those that worked, the school had a day-care program, which was subsidised for the low-income parents. She also related that for most of the parents who worked outside the home, their typical jobs ranged from dental hygienist, to office workers, to electricians, and to employees at stores. The second respondent noted that at MSS, most students’ parents were involved in technical jobs where they worked for about eight hours a day.

The first respondent and a parent from OSB lives apart from her husband because he now works in a far distant neighbouring province. As a result, he stays out there for most of the working days of the month. The second respondent was a civil servant who had lost her husband. They had five children. One of her children is a student of Grade 7 in OSB.

By comparing MSS and OSB parents’ professions, the parents of both schools work, but many parents in MSS have technical jobs, meaning jobs as blue-collar workers. OSB respondents observed that many parents are civil servants. The respondents observed that there are a few highly educated parents in both OSB and MSS.

4.4.1.5 Span of time for travel and at work. The amount of time spent commuting to and from work affects the time parents are able to devote to their children. In MSS, the first
respondent, who was the Home-School Liaison Worker, observed that most parents work for about eight hours each day. She related that the parents travel to and from work 60 percent of the time by bus and 40 percent by car. She estimated that parents take about 4 to 5 minutes to take children to day-care or school and get to work. The second respondent from MSS observed that most parents spent eight hours working outside their homes. He speculated that it took them between 15 to 30 minutes to travel to and from work.

The first OSB respondent, who had a son in OSB, takes about thirty minutes on a bus to the place of work and works for four hours a day. She had no caregiver but worked hard to meet the needs of her family. The second respondent takes twenty-five minutes to the place of work by bus and spent six to eight hours at work and has no caregiver. The third respondent spent more than eight hours at work. He trekked to work for about ten minutes daily. The fourth respondent was a parent of five children, with one who is a Grade 7 student in OSB; she works four hours a day.

By way of contrast, in MSS most of the students’ parents spent eight hours at work. In OSB, parents’ working hours varied and differed for many parents ranging from four to eight working hours. In MSS, parents take 15 to 30 minutes to and from work, whereas at OSB many take more than thirty minutes to travel to work places.

4.4.1.6 Family holidays/vacation. The researcher asked respondents about their holiday time, where they go and what they do as a family. The first respondent, who was the Home-School Liaison Worker at MSS, noted that many of the students and their families did not have holidays:

A lot of them do not. A lot of them [the students and their families], by the month of June, they are not that happy because they are not going to be in school. They are not going to have people that are kind to them, and talk gently to them, or feed them, or care about them. Well, I think the parents care for them, but, it is just hot, and it is hot in the apartment, and when you have nowhere to go, you are just hanging around.
The second respondent, who worked as the Program Facilitator at MSS, observed that some families spent their vacations by camping in summers. The third speculated that most parents with students in MSS were trades workers. "You see many blue colour workers – trades men and women. It is more of a working class that could be said to be between low and middle-class income families." He observed that his students had vacations, emphasizing that most go to the lakes, with a few going to the mountains near Calgary and others going to the Edmonton Mall.

The first OSB respondent pointed out that she had no family vacations. The second OSB respondents shared about their family vacation:

Yes, as I told you, my husband is in the boundary of Cameroon. Last time, the whole family was there in Sarti. We visited the National Park in Gashaka, which is the largest park in West Africa. We also visited Gembu, where the weather is a bit cooler than Jos. We enjoyed seeing the scenery, the beauty of the nature there. The road itself tells a lot, because of the sharp bends. It is supposed to be a journey of one hour, but we spent three hours because of the nature of the road, because of the bends you will travel, taking turnings as if one is coming back to where we started again. We enjoyed ourselves. We sit down, discuss, and ask ourselves what things we do, what are the pros and prospects we expect of them. As parents too, we allow our children to say their minds. There may be ways we do things that they do not like. It is the time, we tell each other the truth – "These are your good sides, and these are bad sides." In fact, by doing that, we are living as a very good family. We listen to one another, and respect the gist of one another.

A third OSB respondent reported that they had no family holidays. The fourth respondent, a guardian, also related that he had no family holidays.

In MSS, two respondents acknowledged that many families had some sort of vacations where they went to the lakes and mountains. One of the three respondents noted the opposite, that many low-income families did not have time and enough resources for vacations with their children. Many respondents from OSB also affirmed that they have no family vacations.
To conclude this section, all respondents in MSS mentioned that some become parents because of what they called “accident” [which usually means unplanned pre-marital pregnancy before agreeing to get married], and/or were love seekers in relationships. When they discovered that they loved each other, they go on to marry each other. On the other hand, the OSB parents’ reasons for becoming parents are principally from a religious point of view, and for procreation. On the constitution of family members, MSS has more non-traditional (e.g., single, mixed parenthood) constitution of families. The respondents in OSB related that their students had more families with more traditional set-ups, with the exception of two widows among the interviewees.

With reference to families' typical day, respondents in both schools (MSS and OBS) maintained that parents got children to school in the morning, went to work, shared meals with family, played games/sports, watched television, and volunteered in school. Worthy of note, respondents in OSB observed that many parents supervised their children’s study or homework, and that many parents go the extra mile to teach and give assignments, which they also marked, and that they corrected students in their school work or with reference to appropriate behaviour when they needed it at home.

Interviewees in MSS observed that most parents were trades workers, while in OSB respondents related that most of them work as civil servants. In MSS, most of the respondents noted that parents work for eight hours daily, but in OSB interviewees had an average of six working hours. While respondents in MSS related that parents take 30 minutes maximum traveling time to work, many interviewees in OSB related that they take a minimum of one hour to and from work. In MSS, some of the respondents acknowledged that many families had some sort of vacation. However, many respondents from OSB affirmed that they had no family vacations.
4.4.2 Parents' Outlook

In this section, the researcher presents the views of respondents about their educational expectations and dreams for their children, the motivation of children, and what inspired parents to educate their children.

4.4.2.1 Parents' educational expectations and dreams for their children. Parents’ educational expectations and dreams for their children can be the driving factor in their efforts to educate their children. Children tend to listen to parents who care for them and are concerned about their future. In MSS, a respondent who is also a school worker responded to the question about parents’ participation by noting that fewer than half the parents participated in school activities: "Twenty percent of the parents do eighty percent of the work.” She also related that most parents had dreams for their children’s success and achievement. In OSB, on the other hand, all respondents seemed to be involved in the learning process of their children and attended Parents'-Teachers' Association meetings for the development of their children's school.

A second MSS respondent, who works as a home-school liaison worker, stressed that parents and grandparents want children to further their education:

I think parents and grandparents want them to further their education, more than they have. I think it is a top priority for their kids to say, ‘You know what? I am going to finish grade 12 and then I am going to go on and do something else.’ That is my big push to students: ‘Your education gives you the power, the power of all choices!’

A third respondent, who works as the Program Facilitator in MSS, noted that parents had the best interest for their children in mind: “What is important is that parents really see the importance of education.”

The first OSB respondent related that she had high expectations for her children and encouraged them to succeed as professionals with degrees. For her, the motivation to educate
her children lay in the fact that education is the bedrock for everything: "I believe that without education, we cannot do anything in life." The second respondent, another parent of OSB, dreams that all her children would finish a university or college degree. She wanted them to become professionals; for instance, medical doctor, priest, teacher, and the like. A third respondent, who had a child in Grade 7, wanted his children to achieve in life: "I wish all of them success. I tell them if all of them will work in the Lord's vineyard, I will like it. If it is God's will and if that is their choice, so be it."

A fourth respondent, who was another parent who also has a son in OSB, dreamed that her children would have a great future, through good education: "I was not opportune to go to school, that is why I want my children to be educated."

In conclusion, in this sub-section on parents’ educational expectations for their children, all parents and their representatives from both MSS and OSB expressed having high expectations for students, which they think should be greater than their own education and achievements, and having good dreams for their future. The only difference is in the way parents make the dreams work. In MSS, respondents note that parents leave learning with the school, while in OSB, parents used both the school and the home environments to participate in the teaching and learning of their children.

**4.4.2.2 Motivation and inspiration to educate their children.** Motivation and inspiration are paramount when one strives to succeed. Children need parents to keep them motivated and inspired.

The first respondent at MSS, who worked as a Home-School Liaison employee, held that the negative experiences of parents' hard times, especially parents who were not well-educated, motivated them [the parents] to plan well for their children. A second respondent stressed the importance of motivation. The second respondent, who was also the Program
Facilitator in MSS, held: “Parents might probably know that you have to finish Grade 12. You have to finish and go on nowadays.” The third respondent, who works as the Community Coordinator, related on behalf of the parents with children in MSS:

Parents' dreams are for their children's educational success, to get the education that possibly they themselves did not get in the past. In addition, that means being successful in the elementary school here, which gives students the opportunity to be successful in the high school, and affords students the chance of even a more advanced education. Many parents would desire that their children have an opportunity for the completion of a high school education. Maybe they would have the chance to go to a trade school afterwards. Maybe they want their kids to have the opportunity to further their studies in university or college.

The first respondent from OSB related that she disciplines her children; as a result, the community admired them because the children are well-behaved. She held that the only problem was that of finances; otherwise, all in her community would wish their children to become students of such a good school. Nevertheless, some parents send their children to apprenticeship for trades (such as carpentry, plumbing, painting, and the like):

In our community, there is an inferiority complex, which is also a factor [caused by poverty]. There are people who would want their children to be at school, but because of the financial implications, they cannot send them to school. So they also decided, since they cannot send them to school, they are also learning handwork—apprenticeship under some master in different trades.

The second respondent, who was also a parent of a student in OSB, taught her children and struggled to pay their fees in school, which motivated her children and made them strive to achieve academic success. A third respondent, who was a male and also a parent of an OSB student, talked about how his parents taught him the value of education, and how that motivated him to educate his children:

If my parents, who did not know how to read and write, knew the value of education and sent me to schools, then I think I am supposed to take their position by developing these young ones too. In addition, when I went to school, I discovered that knowledge is wisdom, and that it is the best thing you can give your children. Whether my parents are alive or not, my children need education; that is what motivates me to educate them. It will give them a good means of livelihood.
He also added that he would not want his children to suffer the way he claimed to have suffered in poverty. A fourth, a guardian of one student in OSB, related about the motivation to educate his children:

For us, in this modern life, if you are not educated, it is as if you are not a citizen of that country, and many things happen without seeking your consent. On the other hand, if you are educated, you will know your left and right, you will know your constitutional rights, and then you will live as a citizen who contributes to the development of the nation.

In conclusion, on the aspects of motivation and inspiration for educating children, the opinions of respondents in MSS was that parents encouraged the education of their children to meet the grade 12 mandatory education required by the 1995 Saskatchewan Education Act. Parents also expected their children to grow to become better than them, and to achieve success through higher education. In OSB, respondents who are also parents related that education was the gateway to becoming successful in life, eliminated poverty, made good citizens, helped people contribute to society, contributed to individual growth, and met the millennium’s expectations.

To summarise the section on parents’ outlook, all parents and parents’ designators from both OSB and MSS expressed that they have high expectations and good dreams for their children’s future, a future which they thought should involve greater accomplishments than what they as parents had attained. Parents, especially in OSB, also participated in the teaching and learning of their children. Regarding the aspects of motivation and inspiration for educating children, respondents in MSS acknowledged that parents wished to train their children to complete their grade 12, as required by the 1995 Saskatchewan Education Act; parents also expect their children to grow richer than them, and to achieve more success through higher education than they as parents did with less access to education. In OSB,
respondents who are also parents relate that education is the gateway to success in life, eliminates poverty, makes good citizens, helps contribute to community, contributes to individual growth, and meets the millennium’s expectations.

4.4.3 Parents and Child’s School

In this next section on the parents and their child’s school, the researcher inquired about respondents’ views on their reasons for the choice of school, how their children’s school accounts for students’ academic achievement, levels of parental involvement with child’s school, and neighborhoods’ safety and obstacles challenging the education of their children.

4.4.3.1 Reasons for choice of current school. The participants were asked to comment on the reasons this current school was chosen for their children’s education. The first respondent, who works as a Home-School Liaison employee, responded on behalf of parents of MSS, related that acquiring knowledge and Christian values guided the decision-making of most parents to send their children to their school, which is a publicly funded Catholic school. The second respondent, who also was the Program Facilitator in MSS, observed that the school’s religious values and beliefs, and spirituality, as well as its intellectual, physical, and mental values, influence the parents’ decisions and choices:

To build a person, there are four areas: intellectual, spiritual, physical, and mental. You cannot leave out the spiritual. If you leave out the spiritual, the children and the family are missing out so much. At times, the parent educators do not want to talk about spirituality, but I talk about it. You need to have some deep-seated beliefs, and you need to teach them to your children.

She concluded that discipline and some other aspects are reasons why parents sent their children to MSS. The third respondent, who worked as the Community Coordinator and who was an interview respondent on behalf of the parents with students in MSS, held that the
Catholic Christian values influenced parents' decisions to send their children to their school. He also gave an example of a student who was from a far distance:

> We have a Grade 8 student who is absolutely at the end of the city but he continues to come here [to our school]. He gets himself to school every day by taking two buses. His travel time may be close to an hour. I have spoken to him, and he says he will stay here. He says this is where his friends and community are. He has an attachment to this community.

The second OSB respondent related that the choice of the present school for their child relates to the child’s dreams of embracing the vocation of the priesthood in the future. "He [my son] said that he would go to OSB, and that we should pray for him. If the Lord destined that, he will be a priest. Then, that would be awesome.” As for the second respondent and her husband, the current school (OSB) where their child was studying, was their first choice because of the good quality of education in the school. The high standards of education and discipline in the present school were the reasons that informed the third respondent from OSB to send her son there:

> It is because of the high standard of education in that school. My first son sat for the school's common entrance exams but failed. The discipline [in the selected school] is good too. It is my desire to send my children to good schools, because what is happening in some of our schools these days is not encouraging.

The fourth respondent noted that his elementary education was a big influence for him because it was a Catholic school:

> I observed the good training I received in my primary school. The value of it [elementary school training] motivated me to have it at the back of my mind that all my children should pass through in the Catholic schools. Because it is not only the education; we need education that has discipline.

To sum up this sub-section on reasons for parents’ choice of school, respondents in MSS offered that parents chose the school for its good education, Christian values, Catholic religious practices, and spiritual beliefs. Respondents in OSB related that their choice of current school was for varied reasons. Parents listed many points, including hoping that their
sons would become priests, and believing in the high academic standards and excellence in
the school. Both MSS and OSB respondents pointed to the good discipline in the schools as a
factor that influenced parents to choose the school.

4.4.3.2 Parents’ views on how school accounts to parents for academic success of
students. The investigator inquired about how school accounts to parents regarding the
academic success of their children. This communication goes a long way toward informing
parents about how well their children are doing or, conversely, the challenges they might be
experiencing. Sharing with parents the performances of students is like providing a light for
parents toward guiding the progress of the students.

The first respondent of MSS related that the school communicated to parents:

We have our teachers who are phoning the parents if things are not happening, or they
are talking to me, and I am getting the message out there [to the parents] that this has
been happening at school. The expectations of what we want to see for grade levels,
and the expectations and performances of the kids; we tell their parents.

The second respondent of MSS noted that their school accounts for students’ academic
success through report cards. She also talked about the three-way conference where students,
teachers, and parents meet on the day of giving the report cards. The third respondent of MSS
related about having student led-conferences twice a year:

They do some things I have never seen done in other schools. It is a student-led
conference; the parents, student, and teacher all meet together. The student brings the
parents into the classroom and says, “This is my classroom.” Each student has a
portfolio that he/she opens to show their parents some of their best work. Parents and
the teacher start a conversation on how the student is doing. After the parents and the
teacher have a conference as well, the parent will have no surprises when looking at
the report card. He can ask the child, “Why are you not doing well in maths?” Then, it
will become a dialogue between the parent and the child. In addition, after that they
get a report card that says what is going on. It really engages the parents about what is
going on. I think that is valuable.

The first OSB parent respondent and her husband attend the parents’ meetings of
OSB. In the meetings, they [parents] communicate, and learn about the academic progress of
their child in the school. The second respondent, and a parent of a student in OSB, claimed that the present school is the best choice of school for her son. Many of the parents in OSB responded that it is at OSB’s PTA (Parents’ Teachers’ Association) meeting that they usually learned about their sons’ academic performance. After the parents’ meetings, the teacher gave the academic results for the term or session to the student's parents. The third respondent noted that most students that had passed through OSB got entry qualification for university admission. This became her reason to seek admission for her child in the school. The fourth respondent and a parent of a student in OSB got information about the happenings in her child’s school via the meetings that she attended.

To sum up, respondents in MSS related that the school accounted for students’ academic success to parents through a three-way (student, parent, and teacher) conference, phone conversations, and home-to-home visits. On the other hand, OSB communicated about students academic success to parents in parents’ meetings, on a special day tagged ‘Parents’ Day,’ and through telephone conversations. Both schools also communicate students’ academic success by means of report cards that students and/or parents take home.

### 4.4.3.3 Levels of parental involvement with child’s school.

Parents who value the education of their children will normally create time to be involved with their children’s school, if at all possible. This is why the researcher inquired to what level parents are involved with their children’s school. The parents and representatives of parents in the two schools related the kind of involvement with their children’s schools.

The first respondent on behalf of parents of MSS related that few parents attend parents’ meetings, but many of them went on field trips with students when they were asked to participate:
No, I do not think there are [more than] 10 or 12 parents that are involved [in parents' meetings], but I do think that is a common thing. However, we do have many parents going on field trips with kids and you know when we need them to do things, we ask them.

The second respondent on behalf of parents with students in MSS pointed out that the involvement levels of parents depended on their willingness to be committed:

There are many opportunities to be involved in our school. There is parents’ council where you can be a member. You can do many things in the community of the school. However, there is that 80 percent to 20 percent rule, where 20 percent of the parents do 80 percent of the work. Nevertheless, we just had a literacy day, and many parents attended. The neighbourhood is good in terms of community involvement.

The third respondent on behalf of the parents with students in MSS, held:

In this community, there is challenge here because I think children do not see home as a place of learning. It is very difficult to send homework with kids, and have it come back. For instance, I said parents are often busy working very late. They are possibly tired and it is time for them to go to bed. Homework is very difficult, because children do not see home as a place of learning. Alternatively, there may be a large family where you find a challenge. Parents are supportive of what is going on in school. However, when it comes to them [parents] supporting the education of their children at home, it becomes a challenge. They may not feel competent in helping their kids or it may just be a reality of [lack of] time.

He further acknowledged that as a community, parents were involved in parents’ meetings:

I think parents are very involved here in the community, especially the Catholic School Community Council, which is a community membership. Parents are members. Parents are involved with the Child Hunger Education Program. They help in the classroom, with extra-curricular sports, and with general issues with children’s schooling. It is very common in the morning, or in the middle of instructions, lunch hour, or after school to see or run into a parent who may be involved in doing one thing or the other. The parents’ involvement here is more than I have seen elsewhere in other schools. More parents are involved in this school generally.

The first OSB respondent, who was also a parent in OSB, is involved with the school by attendance at PTA meetings, and with payment of school fees. Her husband was a former student of that school, who also attends the Barkin-Ladi Old Boys' Association meetings [an organization of the former students of the school who contribute money to support the school]. The second respondent, a parent of a student in OSB, is involved by attending PTA
meetings and with the school activities: "I am involved with the school in all the activities that we are expected to attend."

The third respondent, who also had a son in OSB, talked about her participation in all the activities of the school that involve the parents. The fourth respondent, a guardian of one student in OSB, was involved with the school on two levels, attending parents’ meetings and as a part-time teacher of physical education in the school.

All respondents noted that schools experienced parents’ participation in different ways in the schools. In MSS, interviewees observed that their school experienced 20 percent of parents’ involvement in field trips, parents’ programs, volunteering to help at the school, and attending school community’s meetings. They also noted that parents do little when it comes to assisting children at home with homework. In OSB, all interviewees affirmed being involved with their children’s school by attending PTA meetings, contributing financially, and assisting children with studies at home.

4.4.3.4 Neighbourhood’s safety and/or obstacles against education of children.

Safety is very important in a world that is precarious and where one is surrounded by insecurity. Without safety we can make little progress in anything, especially educating fragile young children. The researcher sought the respondents’ opinions about the safety or obstacles/insecurities inherent in their neighbourhoods. They gave their views based on the locations of the homes of the students and that of the school.

The first MSS respondent, on behalf of parents of MSS, concluded that some parents of her students in the neighbourhood may not expect their children to complete Grade 12:

Many of our families here, although not all of them, the parents or grandparents, do not expect their kids to finish grade 12. I do not know if that is an expectation because of the brothers and sisters in the family. We are really pushing hard with our Grade 7 and Grade 8 classes. We keep asking them: "Do you think you are going to finish Grade 12?" In addition, you know, a lot of them thought completing Grade 12 was not
going to happen. You have to talk to them about what they were expressing: "Well," they say, "My uncle did not [complete]," and that kind of stuff. You know, we have to flip it around and they have to set goals for themselves, right now: "This is my goal and a gift to me that I am going to finish Grade 12." We have to push that. I was surprised at their answers that kids really did not think they were going to finish Grade 12. They did not have that expectation, which is probably different in another school.

The second respondent on behalf of the parents with students in MSS saw the problem of safety in the neighbourhood:

I think there is a challenge of safety for kids in this neighbourhood. In the industries that are nearby, between leaving school that day and the next day, one often finds some kind of vandalism that happens. Once it gets dark in this community, it takes on a very different character. If my kids are living in this community, I will be afraid if they go out in the dark. That presents a challenge. Kids have to feel safe. It is amazing because it is like when the light comes out everything is very calm, and people are out there, taking care of their yards. In addition, why is there the character changing of the students in the community [between day and night]? It is in the home and/or it is in the community. There exist those challenges for them.

The third respondent in OSB noted that her neighbourhood had a high number of young people who are dropouts from high schools. As a result, many children in her neighbourhood had a low level of education. She fears that some of the children who are dropouts could negatively influence her children to be disengaged in school in the near future. The fourth OSB respondent was a female who related that their neighbourhood is such that it encouraged children's education: "My [neighbourhood] is positive because my neighbour's children are students of other schools as well." She also confirmed that her neighbourhood was kind to children; therefore, it was not a threat to her children.

By way of concluding this section about parents and their children’s school, interviewees in MSS thought that parents sent their children to the current school for a quality education, Christian virtues, discipline, and religious beliefs. In OSB, respondents related that parents chose the current school because of the morality, spirituality, academics, and discipline. Respondents in MSS noted that the school accounts for the academic achievement
of students through a three-way conference among each teacher, parent, and student. In OSB, respondents get the account of their student’s academic success by attending Parent Teacher Association meetings; as well, parents have a particular day in every term that they come to see their students learn in the class.

Although all interviewees from MSS and OSB found that parents are involved in the education of their children, they differ in their reports on parental levels of involvement. In MSS, respondents observed that 20 percent of the parents do volunteering work in school, that 20 percent of MSS parents often do 80 percent of the work covered by parents. All the respondents in OSB pointed out that they attend parents’ meetings, and many of them attend many other programs in the school. They also related that parents play an active role in teaching, supervising their children’s study, encouraging them to do their homework in the evenings and weekends at home, and paying an extra-lesson teacher to teach their children after school and at vacation times.

Finally, on the issues of security and of obstacles that stand against the education of children, respondents from MSS viewed safety to be good in the school, but pointed out that the general community seems to be unsafe at night. In OSB, respondents viewed the issues of security and obstacles to youth education as something they keep their watchful eyes on and noted that they tried every good means to eliminate anything that can distract or destroy the process of learning for their children.

4.4.4 Experiences of Parenting Children

This final section addresses respondents’ views on meeting their children’s needs, encouraging and sustaining their children’s educational pursuits, ways of helping children to achieve academic success, and family positive influences. The interviewees from both MSS and OSB gave their views about parents’ practices.
4.4.4.1 Meeting children's needs. The first respondent of MSS held that parents provide a home, love, and compassion:

They give them a roof over their heads – shelter; hopefully, they love them, and they give kindness. I think that the majority of our parents are kind to their children. Sometimes when you do not have money, when you live in poverty, it is very hard to do some kind things. When you are worried about where the money is coming from all the time or if you have spent the money in the first week, you will not have any more for three weeks.

The second respondent of MSS related that parents could lessen the burden for the school if they provided everything for their children's physical needs. She talks about what the school provides, but that the children know that they are getting free, yet inferior clothes. She also explained the difficulties of some of the students, and the way she teaches them to survive:

For some kids, when they go home, they wonder what they will eat. That is why I teach kids how to cook. Nevertheless, they have nothing at home. On what will they survive? I was a foster parent. I teach them, six to twelve year olds how to survive, because I am not always with them. I also teach a group anger management. I see these kids get upset, just so upset, and I say to them; "Are you feeling tired or hungry?" I give them food or a blanket to sleep.

She lamented about the behaviour of wealthy students who waste food by throwing it away when they do not feel like eating it. She pointed to the fact that many kids on 20th Street are in dire need of food. She related that her school provided for the physical needs for students in her school and wondered whether that helped. She emphasized:

With the physical, they can go to those sports and stuff, where parents go with kids to stay with the children for their safety. Again, I do not know how many of them do such [activities]. I always wonder if [students will grow up to think] everything that you [usually] pay money for actually becomes free to them. Therefore, that is a struggle. They are coming here, and I do not know why the church is not crowded with such people for the worship of God, the giver of all gifts. The same with their emotional need, because if parents do not have it [their emotional needs met], how will they help their kids? I think there is a lack in all four areas [physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual].
The third respondent of MSS observed that parents are doing their best in sending children to the school. She listed a few programs for parents and students in their school:

I think that families with challenges or problems are doing their absolute best. The amazing thing with this community is that parents are really struggling with challenges. To overcome them [the challenges], there are ways to go through programs, tons of programs in this school. There is the Home-School Liaison Worker who often will do visits. She goes right into their homes asking the questions: “How are you doing? What is happening? How can we help?” Most schools do not reach out like that. Then there is the care program, the before-school program, the breakfast program, and the lunch program where kids are being fed. There is the after-school program where all clothes that are collected from donors, usually teachers, are kept for the kids. There are the extra-curricular programs that we run here, things like the KHL hockey for kids that will never be able to play the other professional league hockey. We provide them with the sports equipment. This school is a kind of special place. I have worked in different schools where they do not have all these programs.

The first OSB respondent related that she guided her children against bad company of friends:

Birds of the same feather flock together. You cannot tell me that you live with somebody who is a drunkard, or somebody who is a drug addict, and claim that he is just a friend. How am I sure that you are not partaking in that drunkenness or addictions? How would you prove your innocence? Hence, the popular saying, ‘Birds of the same feather flock together.’ We tell them, it is good to make friends, but be careful of the kinds of friends you make, because if you cannot influence them, they will influence you on certain things [good or bad].

The second respondent, who has a son in OSB, confirmed that she provided for her child's needs:

For the physical needs of my children, I take care of their food, clothing, and out of the planned savings of their late father, we use it [the money] to pay school fees. As for the social aspect, occasionally, we go on visitations to my family, and other occasions like their outing days, we normally go together. I make sure that they go to church to have moral lessons. I keep them busy. Occasionally, I sit down with them to discuss their problems.

The third respondent of OSB met the needs of his children through communication and understanding each child, and making sure that they also understood him:

I address my children’s needs when we meet with them to have discussions. They speak their minds. I learn, from them, what their wants are, and I tell them about the
present situation of our family [needs and priorities]. Gradually they will come to understand, though it may be difficult for them to accept at that moment [of expressing their needs]. However, gradually they will get to understand that, yes, what I was telling them is a reality.

The fourth respondent remarked that his faith in the providence of God has been his principle:

As I said earlier, God helps us always. I provide them with feeding when they are at home, and I go to pay their school fees for the school to take care of them. About morals—I believe they have to take instructions in the school. If they come back home, there are catechism classes, and we go to church every Sunday and return together. Socially, they interact with their classmates either in the school or at home. Therefore, that will build them socially.

To sum up this sub-section, in MSS two of the three parents’ representatives noted that parents try to meet the needs of the student for shelter, food, and clothing, as well as sending them to school. One, however, thought that if parents were meeting all the needs of the students, then the school would not have the CHEP program. On the other hand, she also lamented that wealthy children throw out food, while poor children go hungry. In OSB, respondents related that they work hard to provide for their children’s home, food, education, clothing, while engaging in effective communication. Good health, they noted, is priceless, as is trust in God’s providence.

4.4.4.2 Encouraging and sustaining a child’s educational pursuits. To encourage a child is a method of helping students to value hard work. It is important to sustain that encouragement for the child’s successful completion of their educational task. The researcher asked respondents to relate what practical things they do in the area of encouraging and sustaining children’s educational pursuits. They shared their views.

In her opinion about students' high expectations for themselves, the first respondent of MSS pointed to the needs of students:
Well, students coming to the school should have regular attendance, not moving or transitioning to other schools within a short period. Students do well when they stay in one school, not moving about four or five times in a year. It is so important for kids to be able to do well in school. You see kids with that struggle. If you look at it, they have been in four, five, or six schools. You cannot do that! I really talk to parents that they have to make this work here [in this school]. Schooling is about friends, teachers, relationships, and feeling good about oneself. It cannot always about being the new person in the class or community.

The second respondent related how she worked to understand the students:

When students are hungry or having some trouble, a bad day or something is going bad at home, the students say that a teacher or someone has said they will never amount to anything in life. I always say to those students, "I know [how it is], I grew up here. I understand and speak your language, I do not get it from books." God puts me here for that [in MSS for a good purpose]. I am working as an employee, but I am also serving here as a community member.

The third respondent related that he advised parents to guide children so that they read books and do homework and be allowed extra time to attend after-school programs:

They read for their kids. If they are not able to help the kids themselves, this year we have a program tagged “Our Saviour’s Den”. If students need to stay in school, I phone their parents to say, "So and so needs to stay in school. Is it possible for you to come afterwards and take them home?" Their responses are usually, “Absolutely, education is important. We will go out of our way and do what we are supposed to do in order to make things happen, to make sure that the children get the help they need to succeed in school.”

The first respondent at OSB, who had a son in OSB, expected her children to achieve a high academic success, since she provided their necessary needs and discouraged them from keeping bad company:

In the case of high expectations, I try to get the necessary things he [my son] needs for his education; for instance I buy him notebooks, etcetera. In the area of positive relationships, I always discourage my children from any child that I know will have a bad or negative influence on him. I always tell my neighbors that I strive to mould my child’s character. I do not want my children to have a wayward life. I want my child to aspire high [to succeed in life]. I should rather see my child associate with people that will contribute positively to his [good] character. The motivation—I keep encouraging the child.
The second respondent at OSB, who was a female, related that she uses gifts, words of encouragement, and other methods to motivate her children:

You motivate them. For example, when the child graduates or if they make a good result in their sectional exams, then you buy a good package [gift], and give it to him before all other members of the family. We talk to them about working hard and doing well in school. If their results are not very good, we encourage them to do better. Since we buy all the books for their studies, we ask them: "Is it that you are too playful? Is it that you do not understand what they are teaching you?" For me as a teacher, for instance, I help teach my children at home if any one of them has problems with English Language. I read English Language [as a subject] from my primary school through to university.

Relating about high expectations, positive relationships, and motivation, the third respondent, who is also a parent in OSB, pointed out that the way to gain educational advantages for his children was by encouraging them to read, and challenging them to aim high:

As I said, I observe their [his children’s] books and check out their work; then I will know where they are lacking. At that moment, I will encourage them to put more effort and be at their best. At times, I will even personally give them assignments in those areas that they are lacking. Whenever I give them assignments, they work it out for me to see. If they make a mistake, then I correct them.

The fourth respondent in OSB emphasized the importance of education:

Just as I said before, education is very, very important. In fact, when they bring their results home, I check them and where they failed, I try to caution them, asking what happened that made them fail. I buy the textbooks for them to use. In addition, I will praise the child that did well, and then I give him a little token. I buy him a shirt or I buy him something special that he can be proud of and that will keep him doing well in school. Therefore, that next time, when he goes back to school he will say that if I do it well, my father is going to give me another gift.

To conclude this sub-section, parents’ representatives in MSS emphasized regular school attendance, adequate feeding, and parents’ efforts to encourage children to read at home, as part of what parents need to do to encourage the academic pursuits of students. Interviewees in OSB noted that parents provide learning materials, gifts, pocket money, words of praise and encouragement, and advice to listen to their teachers when teaching
them. Parents also give their children assignments and help at study times, and check their report cards.

**4.4.4.3 Ways of helping children to achieve academic success.** The researcher asked interviewees about ways of helping children to achieve academic success. The respondents enumerated their different ways of helping children to become achievers in academics.

The first respondent of MSS noted that parents who engaged their children and inquired what happened in the classroom, guided their children to achieve academic success in school. She elaborated that older siblings influence students in MSS:

> I do not know if the older siblings know how well our students are doing in school. I do not know if that is a part of it. However, certainly, [concerning students’] behaviours, they watch one another. You can see them watching [each other]; if one of them is misbehaving, then the other one is talking to him or her.

The third respondent of MSS pointed out to the last literary evenings they had as one of the positive influences, and that families in their school encourage each other to support academic success:

> Last month we had a literacy evening. We gathered for supper, and participated in programs and activities around literacy. The students were able to score and earn a dollar. They could take it and buy a book with it. The hall had about 300 to 400 people. Parents that came were involved in the learning with their children. You often see one parent picking up several children from the same class to take them to their homes. Therefore, they are doing the care-giving, and providing direct education. Parents are being a part of the community, not just the school community, but the whole community around here.

The first respondent in OSB related that she encouraged active learning for her child at home. The second respondent in OSB reported that she advised her children and gave them gifts after a good performance in their exams. The third respondent of OSB responded that her children's high expectations, positive relationships, and motivation had been achieved through her firm advice and encouragement:
I will sit them down and tell them about our house/background. Therefore, I will tell them: “This is what we have!” Therefore, they should not compare themselves with other children from better backgrounds [in terms of unnecessary demands]. Whatever we get in the house, let us receive it in good faith. In that way, we always discourage them [the children] from comparing themselves with those from a rich family background. On positive relationships, we tell them to be friendly with people, though not everybody. However, we admonish them to be wise in choosing their friends. I also encourage my child to read hard, and I promise to try my best to see that whatever he is in need of, that I will work to provide it for him.

The fourth respondent of OSB related how he assisted his children to achieve academic success:

I help my child to achieve academic success by providing all the necessary things that the child needs. If the child is not doing well in his academics, I try to find out and see how I can help my child to learn. I always tell my children to meet their teachers to explain where they do not understand or where they have doubts.

To recap this sub-section on ways that families helped their children achieve academic success, respondents in MSS pointed out that parents do not regularly engage their children to learn at home, most parents leave education at the professional level of teachers, senior siblings watched younger ones’ behaviour at school, and that their evening literacy event provided evidence of parents’ and community’s support for the students’ academic achievement. In OSB, respondents noted and agreed on various things they do to help children achieve academic success—actively learning at home, giving the child gifts when he/she performs well in school, encouraging the child to work hard and having high academic expectations for them, establishing positive relationship with their children, and encouraging siblings’ help in study.

4.4.4.4 Family positive influences. The family has a big influence on the child, which can enhance or negatively affect educational achievement. The investigator inquired about families’ positive influences. Respondents related their different outlook on the matter concerned.
On this final question, the first respondent of MSS described her job as building relationships with students and parents, getting students to attend school, and removing all obstacles to education, in order to make things easier:

I think my job here at the school is trying to build relationships with the students and the parents, in getting them to attend school, getting them here all the time. If there is an obstacle, or something that they need, for instance, eye glasses, or if it is something that just makes things a little easier, where possible I assist with it. Alternatively, if it is looking for day-care for the parents, just doing that welcoming and extra step with them [parents] is helpful, doing a few kind things, and the next thing they [students] will be coming to school. I keep track by observing the transitioning of our kids from Grade 8 to Grade 9. Once they go to high school, I follow through with that. We lose many kids going into Grade 9. The big school happening [can be intimidating], getting them aware [of new expectations], and giving the other school the history on the students, so they know what is going on with those students' academics [all these aspects are important].

The second MSS respondent noted that parents had their own high expectations that encourage their children; however, she observed that parents often look at influencing the academic achievement of students as the duty of the school:

It [positive influence on students' achievement] is more of the school. They [parents] get their children here in school, and then the school takes over the teaching and learning. Some parents make sure that their children are doing all those kinds of things. Then there are the others [the students with little parental guidance] that just come to school, who hang out together with other students.

The first OSB respondent related that she takes time to teach her child in her spare time, and gets an extra-lesson teacher for studies at home, during vacations. She encouraged siblings to help and guide one another at study or when doing their homework. As her final comment, she related; "I pray you will come out with something [positive findings] so that it will help us parents. You know it is not easy. We try our best, but our best is at times not enough." The second respondent of OSB also encouraged siblings' guidance and assistance among his children. The third respondent sustained her child’s high expectations, positive relationships, and motivation by words of advice:
I advise them to read very well. Sometimes the children have an assignment from school, which they work on at home. If they do not know how to do the homework, I assist them with it. In some cases where I do not know how to do it, I will find another person to help them. I advise my children to behave well. I advise them that evil is not good. I motivate my children. For instance, last term, four of them [her children] took first positions in their sectional examinations. Then I told my husband to try to buy a chicken for these children. He bought it and they were very, very happy that day. I told them that if they take first position in their exams next section, we would do the same thing too.

The fourth respondent of OSB encouraged positive family influence. He admonished senior siblings to help younger ones in learning, learning skills, or by sharing the knowledge gained among them. Finally, he blamed the federal and state governments for not adequately financing the educational sector of the nation. He described education as almost beyond the reach of the poor person. The private schools have everything they need, but their demand for high fees was beyond the reach of the poor person. He called on the government [federal and state] to make amends for the present situation in the elementary and high school educational sector. He made a clarion call to government to provide educational materials for elementary and high schools.

To wrap up this sub-section, respondents in MSS noted the importance of building relationships between students and parents, getting students to have regular school attendance, and removing obstacles to children’s education. They said that parents should view their good influence on their children as a duty. Interviewees from OSB see family influence when they learn together, guide and motivate one another, and develop zeal for helping. One respondent noted the need for government to assist the school because of the students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

To conclude this section on experiences of parenting children, two of the respondents in MSS noted that parents met the needs of student for shelter, food, clothing, and sending their children to school. One, however, thought that if parents met all the needs of the
students, then the school would not have the Child Hunger Education Program (CHEP). On the other hand, in OSB respondents related that they work hard to provide for their children’s home, food, education, and clothing needs. They stressed effective communication, good health, and trusting in God’s providence. Respondents in MSS emphasized the need for parents to encourage children’s regular school attendance and study at home, to feed them, and to encourage them and sustain the academic pursuits of students. Interviewees in OSB noted that parents provide learning materials, gifts, pocket money, words of praise and encouragement, and advice to listen to their teachers when teaching them. Parents also give their children assignments and help at study times, and check their report cards.

On ways that families help child achieve academic success, respondents in MSS pointed out that parents engage their children regularly to know what they learn in school, senior siblings watch the behaviour of younger ones’ at school, and that activities are organized to bring parents and community together to support students’ academic achievement. In OSB, respondents noted various things they do to help children achieve academic success—actively learning at home, giving children a gift when they perform well in school, encouraging the child to work hard and have high academic expectations, building positive relationships with their children, and encouraging siblings’ help in study. Finally, in MSS, interviewees work at building relationships between students and parents, and the school; getting students to have regular school attendance; and removing obstacles to children’s education, while also stressing that parents should view the positive influence of their children as a duty. Interviewees from OSB noted family influences when they learn together. They guide and motivate one another, and develop zeal for helping. One interviewee stressed the need for government to assist the school because of the many students from low socio-economic backgrounds.
4.5 Summary

In this chapter, the concepts that were presented through the ideas and dialogue of the respondents affirm the research question, “What school-wide, teacher, and individual criteria account for academic achievement of students, especially those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds with reference to the school, the individual student, and the family characteristics?” In summary, category 1 respondents—the principals and vice-principal—pointed out certain school characteristics that assist the academic success for students from poor backgrounds. In Mo’s school in Saskatoon (MSS), respondents maintained that record keeping; the school’s Safety, Teamwork, Attitude, Respect, and Responsibility (STARR) program; systematic approach to resources; and the professional learning community characterize the school-wide initiatives that assist the academic success for students from low socio-economic backgrounds. In Obi’s school in Barkin-Ladi (OSB), the respondents—principal and vice-principal—shared that understanding the situations of parents who are low income, subsidizing the fees of their students, and organising a structured after-school program of extra lessons for students are helpful supports for students from low income families.

A respondent in category 1 of MSS holds that common mission and vision, positive assumptions, and eliminating barriers for students are characteristics in their school culture that make students become better achievers. On the other hand, in OSB, respondents of category 1 maintained that the culture of prayer, spirituality, policies of academic promotion to the next grade, and equal treatment of students are characteristics in the school culture that make students become better achievers. MSS respondents pointed out that they have one before-school program at 8:00 a.m. and another after-school program for students whose parents are low income workers. The Child Hunger Education Program (CHEP), which offers
breakfast and lunch to students that need them, augments feeding for the students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Also of immense help are the extra-curricular initiatives that MSS offers, including many games and sports for the students. OSB respondents acknowledge daily Masses, spiritual exercise of prayer, games and sports, clubs and societies, and the extra lessons in English and Mathematics, as some of their before- and after-school programs. Among all the programs offered, MSS respondents found that the set of values in the STARR, CHEP, and the WDYLIST makes the most positive difference in students, while OSB respondents noted spiritual activities and sports as programs that make the most positive difference.

In category 2, the respondents who were also teachers, maintained that they sustain students’ high expectations, relationships, and motivation in various ways. Respondents in MSS pointed to family training and the professional learning community, while in OSB respondents found that good school policies and meeting students’ needs helps sustain high expectations, positive relationships, and motivation. MSS teachers give the following as factors associated with increased academic performance: regular school attendance, school safety, teacher-to-student relationships, and being strict with students to make sure they do their work. Interviewees in OBS proposed strict supervision of students, involving all students in learning, academic competitions, and never giving up on students.

The primary objective of the study is to determine what factors make students self motivated, dedicated, and disciplined despite their poor backgrounds. MSS respondents pointed to an early focus on literacy, data-driven record keeping, the online survey on What Did You Do in School Today (WDYDIST), and the STARR program. OSB respondents stressed that they implore those that can help for financial sponsorship, subsidize school fees, provide educational learning materials, and organize competitions, debates, and quizzes.
Respondents in both schools similarly viewed the importance of encouraging, supporting, and engaging students. Respondents also talked of resilience. MSS attributed the roots of students’ resilience and hope to the moulding the child receives from the family and from the teachers’ guidance. Respondents in OSB point to home training, and examples of successful and educated persons that break through hardships of poverty, to be factors that encourage students’ resilience.

In category 3, some of the respondents were parents, others were guardians, and still others were parents’ representatives. One of the research objectives is to assess the positive influences that families provide for each other as family members to encourage their academic achievements. The respondents in MSS noted the importance of building relationships between students and parents. The school through this medium assists students to have regular school attendance, and explores the several possibilities connected to removing obstacles to children’s educational pursuits and success. They noted that parents should consider the positive influencing of their children as a duty. Interviewees from OSB see family influence when they learn together, guide and motivate one another, and develop zeal for helping. One person noted the need for government to assist the school because of the many students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

In conclusion, there seems to be a complex interplay of factors that help students from economically disadvantaged families become academic achievers in school. All people should work together in the home, school, and society. We all have vital roles to play in this concern for educating students from impoverished backgrounds. In chapter five, I will pull together the results of the study in the form of concise recommendations for schools.
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher will present the summary, conclusions, and recommendations coming from this research study on the factors that contribute to academic success for students from low socio-economic backgrounds, which involved a comparative study of two schools, one in Saskatoon, Canada, and another in Barkin-Ladi (Gwol), Nigeria. The researcher will briefly summarize Chapters One, Two, Three, and some parts of Chapter Four. The conclusions will relate to how to put the findings into proper usage for government and private education policy makers, school administrators, teachers, parents, the public, and even students themselves. Finally, areas for further research are suggested.

5.2 Summary

In Chapter One, the researcher introduced the study by narrating how he became interested in the research as it relates to his personal experiences as one coming from a low socio-economic background, and how he was encouraged by both a friend and a professor when he shared his interest to write his thesis on this topic. The researcher presented his intent to determine the characteristics of schools that help students from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds gain academic success. He particularly made reference to school-wide initiatives; teachers’ professional life experiences and expertise; motivation and expectations that encourage students’ learning and academic success; school culture; school initiated before-school and after-school programs; research surveys (e.g., What did you do in school today? : W.D.Y.D.I.S.T.); and students’ resilience. The researcher’s purpose for the
study was to find supportive factors relating to students’ experiences in the home/family and the school that lead to academic success.

The researcher presented interview questions asking participants to address the following areas: identify school-wide initiatives; characterise school culture; determine extra-curricular initiatives that schools offer; and determine how administrators, teachers, and parents address students’ needs. In addition, the study attempted to determine how administrators, teachers, and parents encourage and sustain students’ high expectations, positive relationships, and motivation; factors that make students self-motivated, dedicated and disciplined; and the positive influences that families provide each other to encourage their children’s academic achievements.

In his conceptual assumptions, the researcher related that authors associate low academic performance with students from low socio-economic backgrounds (e.g., Flouri & Howkes, 2008). Flouri and Howkes (2008) note parents’ style of leadership, mood, low parental education, social class, and family structure as reasons for children’s low academic achievement. Berridge (2007) however, blames the schools for low academic achievement.

The researcher based the rationale and theoretical framework of this study on his personal childhood experiences. The researcher was a child who lacked nutritious and adequate meals and thereby experienced hunger. His parents suffered abject poverty; therefore, as a student the researcher lacked enough money to pay for the school bus and had to trek long distances to school. The parents lacked the resources to provide adequate clothing and educational materials, as well as a proper study environment at home. These resulted in the researcher’s poor academic performance in elementary school, particularly in Mathematics. The researcher related that the following factors influenced his eventual
success: self-motivation; inquisitiveness; his mother’s frantic efforts and love for him; his senior sibling’s guidance; and his teachers’ love and encouragement.

The researcher’s interest led him to devise a study that would explore factors leading to academic success of children from low socio-economic backgrounds in a selected school Saskatoon, Canada, and another school in Barkin-Ladi (Gwol), Nigeria. The research questions focused in the area of school-wide initiatives, programs and approaches supported by administration, teachers’ experiences, and parents’ personal efforts. The importance of the study is that it will add to knowledge that will help children from the low socio-economic backgrounds to achieve academic success.

A number of factors limit the generalization of the study, including the small number of sampled schools, just two, and the fewer numbers of participants. The researcher used one research method, the structured interviews, for the gathering of information, which was also a limitation. The socio-economic levels of the selected population of the study differed because of the economics of the different countries. The school authority in Saskatoon did not give permission to access the parents of their students; rather, they asked selected school workers to represent the parents.

In Chapter Two, the researcher began with a prelude to the focus of the literature review, which elaborated the characteristics of children that come from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In the presentation of related literature, the sub-topics related to family influences, including parental educational background, parental financial and employment stability, parental behaviors and family interactions, and parental level of expectations. The researcher also reviewed literature related to poverty and children’s intellectual development while focusing on the following sub-titles: nutritional needs of children, physical fitness of the children, and parental efforts that stimulate the child’s
intellectual development. The researcher proffered a third sub-topic: aspiration and intellectual development and sub-divided it into four subheadings: child and school engagement, child’s extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, students’ resilience and academic achievement, and child’s character and peer group support. Having presented the related literature in Chapter Two, the researcher introduced Chapter Three.

In Chapter Three, the researcher presented the research methodology. The researcher related that the study was about the factors that lead to academic success of children in Grades 7 and 8, with a focus on students who come from low socio-economic backgrounds. The study involved two schools, one in Saskatoon, Canada, and a second in Barkin-Ladi (Gwol), Nigeria. The research was a descriptive case study of these two selected schools. Essentially, the research involved two case studies, which allowed opportunity for more collection of data. The researcher used a qualitative interview (data) collection technique within a framework of a descriptive case study design.

In his research sample and population, the researcher interviewed and collected opinions of administrators, teachers, and parents and guidance/parents’ representative from the two sample schools in Saskatoon, Canada, and Barkin-Ladi (Gwol), Nigeria. The researcher used only these interviews for data collection. He arranged the interviews based on relevance of participants’ connection to the issues, and included both genders. All 21 participants involved in the study were either employees or parents of students from one of the two sampled schools. The researcher developed interview questions for the three groups of participants based on relevant themes of the research topic.

The researcher used purposive sampling where authorities, those who would have information, of the selected schools in the two countries were involved, including the researcher himself, as the researcher was once in a leadership position in the selected school.
in Nigeria. As such, he was in a position of trust in the Nigerian school, an advantage that would also have been extended in the Canadian Catholic School, given the researcher’s current role as a Catholic priest. Parents and teachers that participated were parents and teachers of students in Grades 7 and 8. The researcher arranged and carried out interviews in suitable places within the selected schools or a place of choice of the participants. He had the approval of the participants who with their fully informed consent agreed to participate in the study. The duration of the interviews was approximately one hour for each person.

In data collection and recording, the researcher used the audio taped interviews and the notes taken at the interview sessions and transcribed them with the aid of a computer Microsoft Word non-commercial-use program into text data. He took his time reviewing, coding, dividing the data into segments, and re-examining the data to avoid overlapping and redundant areas.

In the approach to data processing and analysis, the researcher, with the use of inductive and interactive reading and re-reading of transcripts, attached themes to the different segments under the various participants’ groups—administrators, teachers, and parents and guidance/parents’ representatives. He categorised information in units, grouped common headings, and analysed and summarised the data. He uncovered and noted biases personally from his background and vocation. The researcher placed no participant under any risk, and all participants had the freedom to withdraw their participation at any time before the final presentation of the thesis. The Brandon University Research Ethics Committee (BUREC) approved of the study.

In the section on limitations of the study, the researcher acknowledged using one method for the gathering of information, which was structured interviews; therefore, the integrity and reliability of the data depended on the knowledge, sincerity, and honesty of the
respondents. The researcher was also prevented from conducting direct interviews with parents in the selected school in Saskatoon; the parents’ representatives may or may not have given the true views of the actual parents with students in that school. Given that situation, comparing the two schools may not have the same value when the nature of parental participants was not similar. Crisis and civil unrest in Nigeria at the time of interviews prevented the researcher from reaching some parents from low socio-economic backgrounds because they lived in some of the crisis areas. He also acknowledged that the instrument—interview questions—used for gathering information was not deliberated by research experts and that the interview questions were not tested in the field before usage. With a summary, the researcher concluded the third chapter.

In Chapter Four, the researcher concentrated on his summary of the research questions. With the first research question, the researcher sought to identify school-wide initiatives that assist the academic success of students, especially children from poor socio-economic backgrounds. The respondents in the Saskatoon school (MSS) noted school-wide initiatives that related to record keeping, a systematic approach to resources, the professional learning community, and their Safe, Teamwork, Attitude, Respect, and Responsibility (STARR) program. The Nigerian respondents in OSB pointed to special extra classes in the subject areas of English and Mathematics, and their irrigation farm project, as examples in the area of school-wide initiatives.

Secondly, the researcher proffered a research question asking administrative respondents to characterize what in the school culture makes students become achievers. The respondent in MSS related common mission and vision, positive presupposition, and the elimination of students’ barriers to success as factors that characterise their culture. The respondents in OSB pointed to their policies of promotion of examinations. The policy holds
that students must accomplish seven credits including English and Mathematics and succeed in all their examinations before promotion to the next class. They also related that they give equal treatment to all students who come from both advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds.

The research objective embraced within the third question sought to determine the extra-curricular initiatives the schools offered such as before- and after-school programs. The respondents in MSS related that the school offered the before-school feeding program of breakfast and the after-school feeding program of lunch and extra-lesson programs until evening. They provided these programs especially to students whose parents may be low salary earners and who may be working for long hours. They also have sports programs, such as the girls’ volleyball league, the boys’ basketball, the Kids Hockey League (two persons), cheer leading, and cross country athletics. Teachers lead students in their areas of leadership; for instance, teachers with a specialty in Mathematics would assist students in that area. The Saskatoon school, MSS, has an Actualisation Curriculum (AC) team. As well, they organise a reward program for virtues and select a student of the month as part of their Safety, Teamwork, Attitude, Respect, and Responsibility (STARR) program. The STARR program makes the most difference for all students. This initiative, if used in OSB and other schools in Nigeria, could make a big difference for the Nigerian secondary school students.

The respondents from Nigeria also noted sports and games, for example soccer (football), athletics, basketball, table tennis, and volleyball. They have spiritual programs that keep the students well balanced in virtue and character formation; for instance, they have daily Masses, and they pray five different times a day. The OSB respondents also pointed to programs like societal meetings, and club meetings as some extra-curricular programs for students under the guidance of a teacher or priest who serves as a matron or patron. These are
societies and club associations whose aims and objectives benefit the individual student’s 
growth in different areas of discipline (e.g., Man O War), personal prayer life (e.g. Legion of
Mary), and leading to a good life and citizenship, (e.g., Young Catholic Students of Nigeria).
These societal or club associations give students a sense of leadership. In the judgment of the respondents of OSB, the spiritual activities and the games, especially football, provide the 
most advantage for most students.

The fourth research question sought to determine how experienced principals, 
teachers, and parents address social, physical, intellectual, and emotional needs of students. The researcher found that administrators, teachers, and parents had ways through which they meet the social, physical, intellectual, and emotional needs of their students. Deducting from responses of administrators in the sampled schools, they play an active supervisory role in maintaining and running programs that will keep everyone fully prepared to be the best 
teacher, parent, or student. In MSS, the principal listed a number of programs involving food, 
language, and numeracy, as well as early learning and literacy support. In OSB, the 
respondents related that they differentiate for the students with needs and give assistance to them in terms of school fees, learning materials, and writing and teaching aids, for example.

In learning from experienced teachers, the researcher found that they too work very closely with the students and parents. They are able to recognise the different needs of 
individual students and they offer help on individual levels, as well as referring the students who have needs to the appropriate areas within the school for attention. The respondents in MSS could refer children from families that are considered to be of disadvantaged backgrounds to the early morning breakfast program at 8:00 a.m., and for children whose parents have late working hours to the after-school program from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. In OSB, the respondents would go as far as seeking for philanthropists who would help pay fees
for students who come from families that are of disadvantaged backgrounds. The respondents also give extra classes for students who are lacking academically.

As for parents, they want the best for their children, and so they make sacrifices to ensure they meet the needs of their children as far as their strength can afford them. Parents who are from poor or disadvantaged backgrounds use the available programs that the school provided. In MSS, the respondents related that the relationship of the school with parents was very cordial and the school always comes in where parents are unable to provide for the students. In OSB, respondents related that parents tried at home to give more time for their children, teaching them where they are able; as well, senior siblings assist with homework.

With reference to the fifth area of focus, the researcher sought to determine how principals, teachers, and parents encourage and sustain students’ high expectations, positive relationships, and motivation. From the findings in the study, the MSS principal encourages and sustains students’ high expectation, positive relationships, and motivation by personal visitations and supervision of staff and students. When she discovers that a student is not in school without prior excuse for sickness or another cogent reason, she drives to the home of the student to bring the student back to school. She takes the time to learn and know more about her students. The school organises programs that keep the students interested in the various school activities; for instance, the Safety, Teamwork, Attitude, Responsibility and Respect (STARR) program covers relational and motivational issues. In OSB, the respondents related about how their school encourages and sustains students’ high expectations, positive relationships, and motivation in a number of ways. They pointed to their examination promotion policies, spiritual retreats and recollections (one day of deep spiritual reflection and self-examination in one’s spiritual journey) for students, and the practice of allowing students to enroll in societies and clubs. These they think help students
build their affinity with one another, and develop leadership qualities under their patrons or matrons as the case may be.

In MSS, teacher respondents related that they help by developing positive relationships, allowing students time to complete their work, giving them the help where help is needed, encouraging them to speak well of other students, observing their mode of dressing, and showing them love. The respondents in MSS also related that a well-formulated timetable motivates students. In OSB, teacher respondents play the advisory role for the students, encouraging them to do well in their studies. The teachers give help to students with difficulties in their studies, be it Mathematics or any other subject that they may find difficult. The OSB respondents also related that to keep their students well motivated and with high expectation, they cited examples of people in society who had come from a disadvantaged background but today, because of their past efforts and hard work during their school days, have done well in life. Today they work in exalted offices, and are well-to-do people in society.

Parents’ respondents in MSS related that parents encourage and sustain their children’s high expectations, positive relationships, and motivation by relating with their children’s school, offering the school voluntary assistance for cleaning jobs and other assistance as needed by the school; this is especially done by parents who are not working. Parents take their children to the lakes and other recreational places, which is a way of promoting motivation. In OSB, few of the parents related that they go for holidays, but on weekends, they stay and supervise their children’s work, and discuss with them about relating to friends that have like minds towards their education and living a purposeful life. They also take their children to church on weekdays and weekends for spiritual programs in the evenings and on Sundays for worships, all which help in relational issues.
The research objective under the sixth question sought to determine what factors make students self-motivated, dedicated, and disciplined despite their poor backgrounds. In MSS, respondents related that the Child Hunger and Education Program (CHEP), the early literacy program, the online survey program of “What Did You Do in School Today? (WDYDST)”; the focus on the professional learning community; and the Safety, Teamwork, Attitude, Responsibility, and Respect (STARR) program all have helped in the aspects of self-motivation, dedication, and discipline despite students’ disadvantaged backgrounds. The respondents in OSB related that sponsorship for students, the spiritual activities of daily Masses, monthly recollections, and games are helpful to students raised in poverty.

Under the research objective addressed in the seventh question, the researcher tried to assess the positive influences that family members provide each other to encourage their academic achievements. The child begins their learning from the cradle, which the respondents of MSS emphasized. Positive expectations from parents bring the right response from students and that helps them a lot. Respondents in MSS related that few parents are involved with their child’s school, but they provide housing and food in the home. The CHEP program helps the children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Parents build relationships with their children, and ensure the regular attendance of their children in school. In the case of children from the same family, senior siblings watch the behaviours of younger ones.

With reference to the OSB respondents, the parents pay their wards’ school fees which is in itself is a sacrificial sign that they work positively to give their children a better and brighter future. Some of the parents who are literate showed interest in their children’s education by asking them about what they learned in school and sometimes making sure they carry out their homework under their supervision. These parents even go the extra-mile to give their children assignments and mark the work themselves. Senior siblings help junior
ones in learning at home. Finally, one respondent called on government to assist children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

5.3 Conclusion

The researcher has tried to find out what factors contribute to the educational success of students, with special concern to the students that come from disadvantaged backgrounds. With two schools as samples, the researcher has discovered many factors. Although the selected schools are not from the same country, they share common points of convergence in that they have a number of students within the schools that come from disadvantaged backgrounds. The research has brought to light the programs offered in the two selected schools. These programs help students to make the difference in their academic outcomes, to achieve good grades due to the appropriate instructional support and challenge. That includes the removal of obstacles in the way of students’ educational pursuits, and the intellectual engagement where students can relate their everyday learning to what they see happening in society today.

Educational policy makers; federal, provincial (state), and district (local) governments; education authorities; administrators/principals; and parents can benefit from the research when they employ the use of these good programs. For instance, the Child Hunger Education Program (CHEP); the What Did You Learn In School Today? (WDYLIST) survey; and the Safety, Teamwork, Attitude, Responsibility and Respect (STARR) program, as being practiced in MSS, Canada, could also be implemented in OSB and other schools in Nigeria. Also initiatives such as seeking sponsorship for fee payment for children coming from poor backgrounds, the before- and after-school programs, and the organizing of extra classes in challenging subject areas of study that are being practiced in OSB assist their students.
5.4 Recommendations

The researcher recommends that education policy makers invest more time and resources on programs for children that come from poor backgrounds. Governments and education stakeholders should build networks of schools, school districts or divisions (education area offices), and educational researchers to work towards a clear understanding of how more students can benefit in school by being fully engaged in their learning, regardless of their disadvantaged backgrounds. This statement particularly refers to the Nigerian National Policy on Education, which suffers from poor implementation.

This thesis provides a good start for other schools that do not have such programs as described at the two schools in this study, as these initiatives help students from disadvantaged backgrounds to progress in the teaching and learning opportunities. This work is equally important for teachers and parents in assisting students to do well no matter what situations and environments that their students and children may come from or find themselves in. As the researcher, the researcher encourages principals, teachers, and parents to explore positive relationships toward creating supportive learning environments. School authorities and community leaders should examine the critical link between school and community to pinpoint ways to work together in supporting students both at home and in schools, as a respondent of MSS shared about how she visits the homes of students who fail to come to school.

5.5 Areas for Further Study

There are several suggestions for further study in this area:

- A researcher could carry out a study with more than two sampled schools in or outside of these two countries.
● The selected school in Barkin-Ladi is a single sex (male) school. A researcher could carry out another research study with both schools being single sex (boys only or girls only), or both co-education (mixture of both boys and girls).

● At the time of this research, the researcher was not able to have access to some of the parents that were of disadvantaged backgrounds in the villages, due to civil unrest that has lasted for years in Nigeria. Another researcher could research the same topic in areas that have no unrest.

● A researcher could carry out a study where he/she will interview respondents on a personal level without any ‘representatives’ in the selected schools. This approach will help give fair hearing and reduce any ‘representative’ biases, or assumptions of first-hand information. Representatives could hinder information because of over-protection of respondents, or they may slant their information because of biases.

● A researcher may carry out a study in Nigeria alone, especially in some of the government secondary schools where 90 to 95% of the students come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

● One could initiate and practice the STARR program in Nigeria, as much as is possible in the situation, and study its effects.

● Nigeria and Canada are not on the same socio-economic levels. A researcher could carry out a study in two countries that have less significant difference in the socio-economic levels.

5.6 The Researcher’s Personal Lessons Learned

As the researcher, the researcher completed a study where he felt in the centre of it all, having been born and brought up in Nigeria, and having studied, lived, and worked in his home country for many years. As well, the researcher went on mission to the Roman Catholic
Diocese of Saskatoon where he worked in many parishes as a pastor; and then gained admission in Brandon University to study for his Master’s degree in Education. Thus, it is only right that he shares the lessons learned from this experience as one who has lived it.

Life in Nigeria is hard, and it is tough for families coming from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, especially severely impoverished backgrounds. Nigeria is a country like many Third World countries where the gap between the poor and the rich widens. The public primary and high schools in Nigeria are said to be free, but compared with the schools in Canada, there is a very big gap in the areas of implementation of policies, structures and infrastructures, teaching aids, and quality of trained teachers.

Life in Canada is relatively easy for many compared to life in Nigeria. In Canada, there is even assistance offered to families with low income to reduce the poverty gap between the poor and the rich families. In the elementary and high schools, education is free in Canada. One can hardly distinguish between schools with children coming from low socio-economic backgrounds and those that have few children coming from low socio-economic backgrounds, because they have almost same standard for every school in the various provinces.

Education is a human right for all children. It is the civic responsibility of every country to educate their children, be it a First or a Third World country. With particular reference to Nigeria, the public schools need refurbishing in almost all areas to meet the standards of many other schools, for instance the mission and some private schools’ standards. Everyone ought to assist to make sure the young receive a good education. Among the Hausa people of Nigeria, there is a wise saying; “Rashin sani ya fi dare duhu”—“Lack of knowledge is more than the darkness of the night.” The young of every country need effective and validating education for all the citizenry, especially the young, keeping in mind that the young shall
grow to become the future of their country. That is why the Hausa tribe also added that “karamin sani kunkumi ne”—“Little knowledge is dangerous.” As the researcher, he received excellent support from family and Church in his education in spite of his disadvantaged background.

This thesis is undergirded by the researcher’s passionate belief that all children, regardless of their background, have both the right and the capacity to excel in school, and to give back to their people and to their country. As one who studied Educational Administration, this research has added to my knowledge in regards to addressing all obstacles or barriers that impede the achievement of all students because of their backgrounds. In MSS, students enjoy a good, free education. The researcher prays that one day children in Nigeria will have the same standard structures, infrastructures, and qualified teachers to ameliorate the differences that are evident between schools where children are coming from low socio-economic backgrounds and those private schools that have everything and where children from rich families attend.

The researcher has had this opportunity of learning more about programs that assist children from low socio-economic backgrounds. The researcher will do all within his reach to see that he initiates similar programs when asked to lead a school. In his current role as the Chair of the Education Commission in Jos Archdiocese, he will encourage principals who have students coming from low socio-economic backgrounds to study and implement similar programs like the STARR, CHEP, and where there may be constancy of electrical power, the WDUYLIST program.

The researcher’s thesis adviser has taught him a lot about the difficult but important task of writing and re-writing, and working at his good work to make it better, and at that better work to make it his best, and at his best work toward it becoming so powerful that the
emanating voice will promote the needed changes in education to benefit students such as he once was. In the researcher’s studies, work, and life, he has learned how to keep soaring high like the eagle, with the sky not being the limit but beyond the skies to limitless possibilities, in spite of all the challenges that he continues to meet on his way. The challenges or seeming barriers that he sees today may become tomorrow’s success, depending on how much he gives to aspiration, inspiration, and perspiration. These lessons learned will continue to ring in the researcher’s life as guiding principles. The researcher hopes that his experiences will also assist youth who find themselves in similar situations to know that they too can soar, and can achieve success that could reach infinite heights. If that happens, may they always reach out and mentor others.

In his recent appointment (January, 2013) as the Chair of the Education Commission of Jos Catholic Archdiocese, the researcher is placed in a better position to influence the proprietor and administrators of Jos Catholic Archdiocese on programs and ideas that will be of great help for all students, especially those from low socio-economic backgrounds. The researcher’s current role as the Chair of the Education Commission in Jos Archdiocese includes holding meetings with commission members, most of whom are school principals and educational stakeholders who work with Government; discussing educational issues and ideas; articulating solutions to be implemented by Jos Archdiocesan Education Office; and reporting all our findings, solutions, and proceedings for policy making by the proprietor (the Archbishop) of schools in Jos Archdiocese. The proprietor can then make final decisions that could be of help to students, especially those from low socio-economic backgrounds. The responsibility to mentor this needed change in our educational system is the researcher’s role, going forward from here.
Reference List


Appendix A

January 2010

Dear Administrators:

My name is Joseph Davou Choji and I am currently completing my Master's Degree in Educational Administration at Brandon University, Manitoba, Canada. I am conducting a study to examine the factors that facilitate the academic achievement of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. My study will involve interviewing the prospective parents, teachers, and administrators. The purpose of this study is to identify and document findings on the school-wide initiatives, as well as teacher, parent, and individual student characteristics and initiatives that lead to students' academic achievements. This study will be helpful to administrators, practitioners, and parents as they plan their intervention programs to include the key aspects identified in my study. We want to identify the initiatives that lead to student success, for all children.

You are invited to participate in this study by giving me your consent to be interviewed. The interview will be approximately one hour in length (depending on the extent of the discussion). The attached oral interview questions will be administered during the interview. I can be contacted at 306-946-3630 or my supervisor Dr. Helen Armstrong can be reached at 204-727-7329. In Nigeria I can be contacted at 07032239890. Should you have questions regarding your rights as a participant, you may call Brandon University Research office at 204-727-9712. At the conclusion of the study, all data collected will be securely held in the Department of Teacher Education, with my supervisor, for a period of five years. At the end of the five years, the data will be destroyed. Your participation is strictly voluntary. There is no financial remuneration for participation in this study, and no negative repercussions if you do not wish to participate or if you wish to withdraw from participation at any time. You may also refuse to answer any question without consequences.

By forwarding your contact phone and/or address, and signing at the bottom of this letter, you are consenting to participate in this study. If you agree to participate, I will be in touch to arrange a convenient time for you. At that time, you may ask any questions that you might have concerning the research. Thanks in advance for your anticipated cooperation.

Sincerely,

Joseph Davou Choji

I, ____________________________(print name), having read your letter, consent to participate in this study.
Contact information (address &/or phone &/or e-mail): ______________________________
Signature: ___________________________________________ Date:__________________________

I also agree to have my interviewed audio-taped: Yes___________ No______________

I, Joseph Choji, did personally explain my research to the participant, received this letter signed by the participant, along with their spoken confirmation of participation, and returned a copy of this fully signed letter to the participant on the day of their interview.

Signature: ___________________________________________ Date:__________________________
Oral Interview Questions for the Administrators

1. What is the name of your school? (Note: Pseudonym will be given in research report). Where is it located? Why does it have students from low socio-economic backgrounds?
2. How many principals and vice-principals serve in the school?
3. Clarify the roles of the vice-principals.
4. How many teachers does the school have?
5. How many support staff does the school have? (List in terms of administrative, teacher-assistants, custodians, etc.)
6. What percentage of the teachers are certified/qualified with provincial/national standards of certification?
7. What percentage of your educational assistants are certified/qualified with provincial/national standards of certification?
8. What is the average years of teaching experience in your school?
9. What is the student population?
10. What percentage of the students are from low socio-economic backgrounds?
11. What percentage of students from low socioeconomic status achieve well academically?
12. What administrative strategies do you use to improve the academic achievement of students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds?
13. What are your biggest strengths: a) as a school; b) as a principal or vice-principal?
14. What are your challenges/areas for improvement a) as a school; b) as a principal or vice-principal?
15. In your opinion, what are the positive school-wide initiatives that lead to academic success for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds? Please list and elaborate.
16. What characteristics of a school culture lead students to become better achievers?
17. How many before-school and after-school programs, and extra-curricular activities, does your school offer to students? Please list and describe these programs. If available, please provide written descriptions and/or brochures about these programs.

18. How do students and their families access these programs?

19. Among the programs and extra-curricular activities, which ones make a positive difference in the lives of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and why?

20. Do educational policies sometimes complicate the problems they seek to solve, or address just the symptoms of the problem? Please elaborate why you think they do or do not?

21. Describe a successful administrator in a school that serves students from low socioeconomic backgrounds?

22. Do you have anything more to tell us that might add to our research?
January 2010

Dear Teachers:

My name is Joseph Davou Choji and I am currently completing my Master's Degree in Educational Administration at Brandon University, Manitoba, Canada. I am conducting a study to examine the factors that facilitate the academic achievement of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. My study will involve interviewing the prospective parents, teachers, and administrators. The purpose of this study is to identify and document findings on the school-wide initiatives, as well as teacher, parent, and individual student characteristics and initiatives that lead to students’ academic achievements. This study will be helpful to administrators, practitioners, and parents as they plan their intervention programs to include the key aspects identified in my study. We want to identify the initiatives that lead to student success, for all children.

You are invited to participate in this study by giving me your consent to be interviewed. The interview will be approximately one hour in length (depending on the extent of the discussion). The attached oral interview questions will be administered during the interview. I can be contacted at 306-946-3630 or my supervisor Dr. Helen Armstrong can be reached at 204-727-7329. In Nigeria I can be contacted at 07032239890. Should you have questions regarding your rights as a participant, you may call Brandon University Research office at 204-727-9712. At the conclusion of the study, all data collected will be securely held in the Department of Teacher Education, with my supervisor, for a period of five years. At the end of the five years, the data will be destroyed. Your participation is strictly voluntary. There is no financial remuneration for participation in this study, and no negative repercussions if you do not wish to participate or if you wish to withdraw from participation at any time. You may also refuse to answers any question without consequence.

By forwarding your contact phone and/or address, and signing at the bottom of this letter, you are consenting to participate in this study. If you agree to participate, I will be in touch to arrange a convenient time for you. At that time, you may ask any questions that you might have concerning the research. Thanks in advance for your anticipated cooperation.

Sincerely,

Joseph Davou Choji

I, ____________________________(print name), having read your letter, consent to participate in this study.

Contact information (address &/or phone &/or e-mail): ______________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Signature: ______________________________ Date: ______________________________

I also agree to have my interviewed audio-taped: Yes____________ No___________________

I, Joseph Choji, did personally explain my research to the participant, received this letter signed by the participant, along with their spoken confirmation of participation, and returned a copy of this fully signed letter to the participant on the day of their interview.

Signature: ______________________________ Date: ______________________________
Oral Interview Questions for Teachers

1. People join the teaching profession for various reasons. What inspired you to become a teacher?

2. How long have you been teaching?

3. How would you describe an experienced teacher?

4. Teaching is hectic and has ever-increasing and demanding responsibilities. Do you see yourself as: a) fulfilling your job requirements, and b) enjoying the teaching vocation? Why or why not (to each question)?

5. What motivates you as a teacher?

6. How do experienced teachers address students' physical, social, moral, and emotional needs?

7. Student's expectations for themselves are essential for academic success. In what ways do teachers encourage and sustain students' a) high expectations, b) positive relationship, and c) motivation?

8. How can teachers motivate students to do what they really need to do to achieve in school?

9. How do your students meet their physical needs (for instance, their need for nutritious food and adequate clothing)?

10. Are there simple but profound steps in helping students from low socioeconomic backgrounds become academic achievers? If so, what are they?

11. How do schools account for academic success? List and elaborate the reasons.

12. In addressing the relationship between poverty and lower test scores, what type of interventions a) do you use; b) does your school use, to improve students’ test scores in spite of their low socioeconomic backgrounds? Elaborate.

13. Are there factors that encourage students to become more self-motivated, dedicated, and disciplined despite their low socioeconomic backgrounds? If so, what are they?

14. What other factors correlate with increased academic achievement of students, in your opinion?
15. In your own opinion, what are the positive influences that family members provide each other to encourage their academic achievements?

16. What fosters resilience in students from low socioeconomic backgrounds?

17. What fosters hope in students from low socioeconomic backgrounds?

18. Please add other comments that you think might contribute to our research study.
January 2010

Dear Parents:

My name is Joseph Davou Choji and I am currently completing my Master’s Degree in Educational Administration at Brandon University, Manitoba, Canada. I am conducting a study to examine the factors that facilitate the academic achievement of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. My study will involve interviewing the prospective parents, teachers, and administrators. The purpose of this study is to identify and document findings on the school-wide initiatives, as well as teacher, parent, and individual student characteristics and initiatives that lead to students’ academic achievements. This study will be helpful to administrators, practitioners, and parents as they plan their intervention programs to include the key aspects identified in my study. We want to identify the initiatives that lead to student success, for all children.

You are invited to participate in this study by giving me your consent to be interviewed. The interview will be approximately one hour in length (depending on the extent of the discussion). The attached oral interview questions will be administered during the interview. I can be contacted at 306-946-3630 or my supervisor Dr. Helen Armstrong can be reached at 204-727-7329. In Nigeria I can be contacted at 07032239890. Should you have questions regarding your rights as a participant, you may call Brandon University Research office at 204-727-9712. At the conclusion of the study, all data collected will be securely held in the Department of Teacher Education, with my supervisor, for a period of five years. At the end of the five years, the data will be destroyed. Your participation is strictly voluntary. There is no financial remuneration for participation in this study, and no negative repercussions if you do not wish to participate or if you wish to withdraw from participation at any time. You may also refuse to answer any question without consequences.

By forwarding your contact phone and/or address, and signing at the bottom of this letter, you are consenting to participate in this study. If you agree to participate, I will be in touch to arrange a convenient time for you. At that time, you may ask any questions that you might have concerning the research. Thanks in advance for your anticipated cooperation.

Sincerely,

Joseph Davou Choji

I, ___________________________(print name), having read your letter, consent to participate in this study. Contact information (address &/or phone &/or e-mail): ________________________________

Signature: ________________________________ Date: ________________________________

I also agree to have my interviewed audio-taped: Yes___________ No___________________

I, Joseph Choiji, did personally explain my research to the participant, received this letter signed by the participant, along with their spoken confirmation of participation, and returned a copy of this fully signed letter to the participant on the day of their interview.

Signature: ________________________________ Date: ________________________________
Oral Interview Questions for Parents

1. What made you decide to become a parent?

2. Do you live together with your spouse, or the father or mother, of your child?

3. Are you and your spouse (if applicable) both working outside your home?

4. If you do not work outside the home, please describe your typical/usual day.

5. What is your profession or job(s), if you work outside the home?

6. How many hours do you spend at work each day?

7. How far do you travel to and from work each day? What form of transportation do you use? How long does it take you to get to work?

8. How many children do you have?

9. Do you have a caregiver or baby sitter for your child(ren) at home?

10. Describe a typical evening at your home.

11. Describe a typical weekend at your home.

12. Do you have family holidays or vacations? If so, please describe,

13. What dreams do you have for your children? Elaborate/tell me about them.

14. What motivates you to educate your child(ren)?

15. What influenced your decision to send your children to the current school?

16. If you had any option you wished, where would you send them to school?

17. How does your child's school account for the academic success of students? Please give details.

18. What is the level of your involvement with your child's school? Explain.

19. A neighborhood can make or discourage the academic development and achievement of a child. What advantages or disadvantages does your neighborhood have for your children?

20. Education can be expensive. Is there a risk your child(ren) might be left without any opportunities for formal education? If so, what options might you have?
21. If there was no poverty, how would things be better?

22. How do you meet your children's physical, social, moral, and emotional needs?

23. A student's high expectations for themselves are essential for academic success. In what ways do you encourage and sustain your children as students with a) high expectations, b) positive relationships, and c) motivation?


25. What positive influences does your family provide each other to encourage academic achievements?

26. Are there any other comments you would like to add?
January 26, 2010

Father Joseph Choiji  
Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon  
St. Ann’s Parish  
Box 757  
Watrous SK  S0K 4T0  

Dear Father Choiji,

RE: Brandon University Research Ethics Application – “Factors that Contribute to Academic Success for Students from Low Socioeconomic Backgrounds: A Comparative Study of Two Selected Schools in Saskatoon, Canada, and Barkin-Ladi (Gwol), Nigeria”

This is to confirm receipt of your email agreeing to the conditions set forth by the Brandon University Research Ethics Committee (BUREC).

Enclosed is the Ethics Certificate for this project. Please note that your first Annual Progress Report is due January 26, 2011. Forms are available on the Research Office website at: http://www2.brandonu.ca/administration/vpacademic/research/committees/ethics.asp

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at (204) 571-8507 or goernertp@brandonu.ca, or Ms Kerry Murkin, Coordinator of Research Services at (204) 727-7445 or murkink@brandonu.ca. On behalf of the Committee, I wish you success in your research endeavour.

Sincerely,

Dr. Phillip Goernert  
Chair  
Brandon University Research Ethics Committee (BUREC)

Enclosure

C Dr. Helen Armstrong, Faculty of Education (Teacher Education)
BRANDON UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS CERTIFICATE

All research projects involving human subjects/participants that are carried out by persons connected with Brandon University must be reviewed and approved by the Brandon University Research Ethics Committee (BUREC) before being undertaken or submitted to an internal or external funding source (BURC, SSHRC, etc.)

Name of Researcher(s): Joseph Davou Choji

Department(s): Faculty of Education

Name of Supervisor (if applicable): Dr. Armstrong, Helen

Title of Project:
Factors that Facilitate the Academic Success of Students from Low Socioeconomic Backgrounds: A Profile of Two Selected Schools in Saskatoon, Canada, and Barkin-Ladi (Gwol), Nigeria.

By signing this certificate, I agree: (1) to conduct my project in accordance with the principles for research involving human subjects as outlined in the Brandon University Research Ethics Committee Guidelines for Research Involving Persons and the Tri-Council Policy Statement, Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans; (2) to report any changes to the procedure and/or protocol of this research project to BUREC and, if appropriate, (3) to undergo subsequent review; (4) to submit annual progress reports to BUREC; and, (5) to notify BUREC in writing when the project is complete.

Date Signature of Researcher

December 20, 2009

If Researcher is a Student, please have Supervisor sign below.

I have read and approved this Ethics Application.

Date Signature of Supervisor

Dec 21/09 Helen L. Armstrong