CHAPTER FIVE

POVERTY ALLEVIATION ENDS

The need to fight poverty is self-evident in the world today. Half of humanity is considered poor. This half of the world’s population suffers from increased insecurity (crime) to being stigmatized and criminalized, chronic corruption, social breakdown as well as economic decline to life threatening situations and conflicts (Narayan and Nyamwaya 1996; PRSP 2000; NGO 2000; World Bank 2001, 2001a). These effects, which arise due to poverty, are just too unbearable for all those who live under these conditions. Alleviating poverty is therefore not only necessary but also an urgent matter that needs to be tackled immediately. In Chapter 4 Section 4.1.1 poverty alleviation was understood as a strategy having a goal and requiring a means to reaching that goal. While the means to reaching the goals of poverty alleviation were discussed in Chapter 4 as poverty alleviation measures this chapter will discuss the goals of poverty alleviation. The goals of poverty alleviation can thus be understood as the ends of the set of strategies that are necessary for the elimination of poverty. These ends are therefore what are intended by the efforts towards poverty alleviation (Bell 1986: 2). Students’ attitudes towards the social and economic concepts that are associated with the goals or the ends of the efforts towards the alleviation of poverty, is what this chapter is about. This brings us to the central question of this chapter, which is what are the attitudes towards poverty alleviation ends?

A conception of poverty is necessary for formulating effective strategies towards the elimination of poverty (United Nations 1999). This means that before embarking on answering the central question, what will be the conception of poverty for this chapter needs to be explicated. Thus the chapter proceeds from here with Section 5.1, where poverty will be conceptualized. Section 5.2, will deal with a theoretical exposition of the poverty alleviation ends. Section 5.3 will be on how the concepts of poverty alleviation ends are operationalized. Section 5.4 will present the major findings of the attitudes towards poverty alleviation ends. Section 5.5 will discuss the social location of the attitudes towards poverty alleviation ends. Section 5.6 concludes the chapter with a summary, which will be a survey of the major findings of the attitudes towards the poverty alleviation ends.
5.1 Poverty: an analysis

The section begins with a short elaboration of the two main models for conceptualizing poverty. This is followed by an analysis of Verschoor’s (2000) approach that utilizes Maslow’s needs theory as the space within which to conceptualize poverty. On the basis of this two dimensions of poverty are derived leading to the conception of poverty that will be utilized for this and the chapters that follow.

Poverty is a highly contested concept. It is a multidimensional concept encompassing political, social and economic dimensions among others. Although it is possible to have some consensus on the dimensions that constitute poverty, it is accepted that the very combinations of these dimensions and relative importance of each to the conception of poverty vary from context to context (McGee and Brock 2001). This implies that it is not possible to come up with a universal conception of poverty that will be acceptable to all. The starting viewpoints, of practitioners and researchers, on poverty issues therefore influence the conception of poverty that is utilized in a particular context or organization. Verschoor (2000: 27) identifies three starting points for the conception of poverty which are: the subjective conception of poverty by the poor, the conception of poverty by the political elite, and the conception of poverty that is based on the wider notion of poverty in the local society. Ultimately however the conception of poverty to be utilized in poverty research is highly influenced by the social scientists. It is the social scientist who finally refines the conception coming up with the criteria that discriminates the poor from the non-poor. However in the construction of what poverty is the context is central in determining the relative importance of the dimensions of poverty that should be included in the final conception of poverty.¹

McGee and Brock (2001) have suggested that at least at the rhetorical level there is a broad consensus of what captures the essence of poverty and cite the publications of influential development agencies such the World Bank and United Nations Development Program among others as evidence of this. According to this (rhetorical) consensus “poverty is deprivation or insufficiency on one or more dimensions of wellbeing or

¹ The poor determine the generally acceptable contextual notion of poverty, as it is their contexts that matter in this case. United Nations (1999) argues that the contextual notion of poverty from the point of view of the poor helps to sharpen those conceptions of poverty held by social scientists for instance.