

Chapter 2

School principals and management

2.1 INTRODUCTION

With regard to efficient school management, Silver (1983:185) and Sergiovanni (1990:16) state that there will always be a need for competent, dedicated, and hard working school principals to provide quality education for all learners. *The Teacher* (February 2000:17) and Burns and Lewis (2000) emphasise the necessity for school principals to ensure the smooth running of schools as institutions where atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning prevail to afford all learners the opportunity to achieve academically. Hence, within the professional management structure, school principals have a special position where they should delegate and share responsibility while consulting with all school stakeholders: the onus for successful teaching and learning is on them.

Potter and Powell (1992:12) add that the school principal should “manage the school consistently, fairly but flexibly ... and should delegate responsibility and then trust colleagues to perform [duties] efficiently”. School principals can best fulfil this role through efficient management and continuous co-operation from the school management team and other school stakeholders (Eastern Cape Department of Education July 2001:B-34). The researcher suspects that the extent to which learner academic achievement is adversely affected at schools in the Eastern Cape Province could be due to a lack of managerial and leadership skills of school principals. There is a need for this issue to be investigated, as referred to in the problem statement of this study.

According to Gray and Wilcox (1995:12 & 15-20), Levacic (1995:19-22), and the *Daily Dispatch* (24 January 2002:1), school principals who lacked the necessary managerial and

leadership skills contributed to poor learner academic achievement. The *Sunday Times* (21 November 1999:28) pointed out that the positive “role models ... [of school] principals” as well as the educational “accountability among teachers and [school] principals” were lacking (*Daily Dispatch* 12 February 1999:1). Evans (1997:831) and various articles in the *Daily Dispatch* (10 January 2000:1 & 26 July 2000:7), a leading Eastern Cape Province newspaper, support this view. In the researcher’s view, improved matriculation pass rates may perhaps not be possible at schools in the Eastern Cape Province that are poorly managed by the school principals in terms of the definition of education management as organising, control, delegation, and evaluation skills. In this regard, the *Whole School Development: a training programme for building teams and nurturing spirit in schools and communities* (Department of Education: Province of the Eastern Cape 2003:10, 13) emphasises learner achievement as an “example of a key area of evaluation” and further that during the evaluation process, the school principal can draw conclusions and ask how far the action was successful. In the case of this study, that means the action taken by school principals to improve the current low matriculation pass rates at their schools. Hence, the problem statement of this study raises the question of whether school principals in the Eastern Cape Province are aware of the influence that their managerial and leadership roles may have on matriculation pass rates.

As an introduction to the role of school principals, in the early 1990's Duignan and Macpherson (1992:97 - 98) indicated that school principals should permit and facilitate the necessary changes in a school system to ensure learner academic achievement and, therefore, learner academic success. At the same time, Potter and Powell (1992:13) referred to a ‘good’ school as one that “values quality in teaching and learning; ... has high expectations and encourages [learner academic] achievement and success”. In this regard, Glatter et al (1988:50) emphasised that “... if the school’s success is also the head’s success, its failure is also the head’s failure”. Therefore, it is imperative that school principals in the Eastern Cape Province understand the nuances of their management and

leadership roles since the lack of thereof may be regarded as an obstacle to learner academic achievement and result in low matriculation pass rates. Given the outlined role descriptions of school principals and the problem statement of this study, the researcher will investigate what education management practices school principals are planning to positively influence Grade 12 learner academic achievement.

Jansen (1999:9), and the *Manual for School Management* (Eastern Cape Department of Education July 2001:B-4) stipulate that, together with the school management team, a school principal is responsible for “ensuring that the policies agreed on by the school governing body are put into practice, that all areas in the school function effectively and that people [school stakeholders] work productively towards achieving the school’s vision and mission. Their [the school principals’] formal authority and status will make them responsible for certain kinds of management functions including: planning, organising, delegating, communicating, [and] assuring [academic] quality.” The Eastern Cape Department of Education (2001:B-9) defines a mission statement as a “short, positive statement, which tells the world what the school community’s values, and goals are”. In the light of the problem statement of this study, the researcher will question the academic goals at the schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province and establish whether school principals are placing these goals as a top priority.

With regard to the role of the school principal, the *Government Gazette* (SA National Department of Education February 1999:11-12) outlines the aims of the job description of a school principal as to ensure that

- the school is managed satisfactorily and in compliance with applicable legislation, regulations and personal administration measures as prescribed.
- the education of the learners is promoted in a proper manner and in accordance with approved policies.

Considering the foregoing aims, the researcher will provide an extensive literature study

focusing on the features of efficient managerial and effective leadership skills of school principals. Terms used in this research study will be defined and the influence of certain factors on the matriculation pass rates at schools in the Eastern Cape Province will be investigated by means of examples. The relevant factors are

- the lack of managerial and leadership roles of the school principal,
- school atmospheres not conducive to teaching and learning,
- the absence of school goals, with specific reference to learner academic goals,
- poor school infrastructure,
- school overcrowding, and
- the lack of the role of the school governing body.

2.2 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined: the Department of Education, schools, efficiency and effectiveness, attainable school goals, and teaching.

- The **Department of Education** means the “department established in terms of section 7(2) read with Schedule 1 of the Public Service Act, 1994, Proclamation 103 of 1994, responsible for education at national level” (SA National Department of Education October 1998:4).
- **Schools**, according to the Department of Education: Province of the Eastern Cape (2003:46), are “collectives of people that come together for a common shared purpose. They then decide what structures and processes best serve to meet this purpose.”
- This study uses Levacic’s (1995:19) definition of **efficiency** as securing “minimum inputs for any given quality and quantity of service provided ... [the] maximum output for any given set of resource inputs”.

- In this study, **effectiveness**, as applied in school management, means “how well a programme or activity is achieving its established goals” (Levacic 1995:20) as well as “means-ends relationships between educational processes and student outcomes” (Reynolds, Bollen, Creemers, Hopkins, Stoll & Lagerweij (1996:21)
- An **attainable school goal** can be defined as the end towards which effort is directed; a condition or state to be brought about through a course of action which needs to be initiated by the school principal (Levacic 1995:20).
- In this study, **teaching** is not only a “technical skill but a moral responsibility” towards the learners at a school (Department of Education: Province of the Eastern Cape 2003:90).

The researcher will refer to and elaborate on these definitions throughout the study. In particular, the researcher will place special emphasis on the efficiency and effectiveness of the school principal’s role.

2.3 THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

According to Whitaker (1998:121-124), a principal’s role in any school is seen as most important and as central to an understanding of the micro-politics of that institution. For this reason, school principals will be required to engage in a range of competing demands, with increased educational responsibilities towards fellow stakeholders (Whitaker 1998:124; Pretorius 1999:271), and increased administrative duties (Ostell & Oakland 1995:175). Many attempts have been made to define the role of the school principal, which appears to be complex and needs to be continually clarified and probed.

This implies that it is crucial to investigate the different aspects of a school principal’s role, in the light of the problem statement of this study, with the aim of improving poor matriculation pass rates. This section will focus on the impact of a lack of school principals’ managerial and leadership skills on matriculation pass rates.

It is fitting to begin with a definition of **role** as meaning a designated position within a structure of positions. Thompson (1996:789) defines “role” as a “person’s ... function”. For the organisational theorist, a role can be defined as more than a position within a structure, namely: it is the behaviours associated with the specific role that those in other positions expect the role incumbent to engage in. It is further clarified that a school principal’s role should have the capacity to respond according to circumstances requiring changes and new demands needed to attain, in particular, the school academic goals. In the 1980’s, Glatter et al (1988:58 & 88) established that a school principal’s role contains various expectations and indicates the boundaries of a job description to be fulfilled at a school. It is clear that a school principal’s role is within a defined limit of authority and responsibility as manager and leader. Important for the aims of this research study, the researcher focuses on early research by Bossert et al (1982:54) that emphasises that “creating a school climate that is conducive to student learning also is a fundamental part of the principal’s instructional management role”. The researcher is of the opinion that this role is even more applicable at present in our country’s education system where emphasis is placed on the matriculation pass rates.

As an introductory phase to the investigation into the role of the school principal as a catalyst for the improvement of learner academic achievement, Sadker and Sadker (1991:247), Herman (1993:40), *Quality in Teaching* (1994:104) and Levacic (1995:109) suggest that the following aspects of the role of school principals be probed:

- the effectiveness of their instructional leadership skills,
- the creation of a positive school atmosphere to support teaching and learning,
- the articulation of clear, attainable school goals with the emphasis on improved learner academic achievement,
- diagnosing and remedying instructional problems experienced by learners or

teachers that may hamper the learner's academic achievement,

- the reflection of high expectations for teachers and parents as instruments for the improvement of learner academic achievement,
- monitoring teacher classroom management and school practice in order to identify where there is a need for improvement, and
- reinforcing positive features of teaching methods and, where called for, initiating corrective action.

For the attainment of the above aspects, the researcher underlines the role and responsibilities of the school management team (i.e. the school principal, deputy school principal, and the heads of department) as outlined in the *Manual for School Management* (Eastern Cape Department of Education July 2001:B-37), namely

- forming part of the school governing body
- holding regular meetings with the executive of the school governing body
- administering school finances
- planning
- setting up participatory structures
- developing systems and procedures for implementation of school policies
- conducting professional development through the staff appraisal system
- keeping records
- making decisions
- delegating work
- coordinating work
- solving problems
- monitoring, evaluation and support
- representing the school on behalf of the principal

- orientation and induction of new senior staff members and educators
- assisting in school policy development with school governing body
- organising and co-ordinating curriculum related issues
- organising and co-ordinating co-curricular activities
- maintenance of buildings and grounds
- management of the assets and resources of the school
- assisting in the compilation of a school code of conduct for learners and educators
- ensuring safety and security at school
- attending school management team meetings with the Principal as chairperson
- keeping minutes of all meetings
- obtaining a common understanding of the content of the relevant national and provincial policies and circulars
- exposing the staff to these documents at staff development sessions, phase or grade meetings consulting with the Education Department Officer (EDO) for questions and clarification
- making the relevant documents accessible to the staff
- co-ordinating parental visits
- encouraging educators to expand their professional knowledge
- managing conflict situations.

The general aim incorporated in the foregoing is to improve the overall school atmosphere that will, ultimately, be conducive to teaching and learning. It should be emphasised that a school principal's role as manager and leader is a key factor in the attribution to quality teaching and learning. With reference to the role and responsibility of school principals, it is questioned, in the light of the problem statement of this study, to what extent the lack of managerial and leadership skills of school principals affects learner academic progress.

In order to address the importance of the role and responsibility of school principals, the researcher will briefly refer to the necessity of quality assurance by the school principal. The *Manual for School Education* (Eastern Cape Department of Education July 2001:B-53) indicates that quality assurance represents the “planned and systematic action necessary to ensure that the education provided by schools meets the expectations of the stakeholders and is relevant to the needs of South Africans”. The quality assurance framework provides indicators of good practice against which schools can measure their [academic] performance. According to the manual (Eastern Cape Department of Education July 2001:B-53 - B-54), school principals need to ensure that the following indicators are in place for good school practices:

- The school has a written vision and mission statement that is known to all.
- All decisions are made in consultation with the staff.
- The principal consults with his management team when making decisions and all educators gather in the staffroom ten minutes before the start of the school day for a short meeting.
- Parents are involved in the school’s activities.
- The school entrance and classrooms portray an inviting atmosphere and a timetable is available on the first day of school.
- Educators use curriculum documentation as a core reference for their teaching.
- Regular subject/learning area meetings take place.
- Communication channels within the school are effective.
- The school year is planned in advance.
- The budget is planned well in advance and presented to the school governing body and parents for approval.
- Educators are required to submit budgets for their subject development.
- The school’s disciplinary system is acceptable, fair and effective and educators and

learners feel safe and non-threatened.

- There are clearly defined goals and educators participate in setting such goals.
- The leadership is positive and dynamic.
- Tasks and responsibilities are clearly defined.
- Educators are innovative and prepared to face new challenges.
- Educators and learners take pride in their school.
- A sense of pride is constantly cultivated.
- Educators, learners and the principal all participate in drawing up a code of conduct.
- Staff development forms an integral part of the school's programme.
- There is order and discipline in the school at learner as well as staff level.
- Regular staff management meetings take place.
- Regular class visits by the management team take place.
- Adequate resources are available.
- Staff are motivated and work as a team.
- Interaction with other schools takes place.
- Effective assessment procedures to measure achievement are in place.
- The principal demonstrates good management skills.
- There is adequate staffing provisioning - management, teaching and administrative.
- Staff demonstrate loyalty to school.
- All stakeholders in the school work together without conflict.
- Staff and learners are punctual.
- Change and innovation is accepted.
- The school has measures in place to ensure health and safety.

The researcher maintains that good school practices will not be possible unless school principals are aware of their administrative duties and responsibilities as outlined by the SA National Department of Education (February 1999:12), namely

- To be responsible for the professional management of a public school.
- To give proper instructions and guidelines for timetabling, admission and placement of learners.
- To have various kinds of school accounts and records properly kept and to make the best use of funds for the benefit of the learners in consultation with the appropriate structures.
- To ensure a School Journal containing a record of all important events connected with the school is kept.
- To make regular inspections of the school to ensure that the school premises and equipment are being used properly and that good discipline is being maintained.
- To ensure that Departmental circulars and other information received which affect members of the staff are brought to their notice as soon as possible and are stored in an accessible manner.
- To handle all correspondence received at the school.

From the above descriptions, it is clear that the school principal's role should have a powerful, positive influence on all relevant stakeholders by providing an exemplar of good school practice. Hence, efficient management and effective school leadership by the school principal have become key components where improved learner academic achievement is envisaged through good school practice. To further probe the importance of school principals' roles, in the light of the problem statement of this study, the researcher will investigate how a lack of managerial and leadership skills may affect learner academic achievement.

2.3.1 Management

Paisey (1992:133) emphasises the importance of efficient management by school

principals. Whitaker (1995:74) points out that it is concerned with “orderly structures, maintaining day-to-day functions, ensuring that work gets done; [and] monitoring outcomes and results”. To accomplish efficient school management, school principals have to manage in a multi-dimensional organisational atmosphere with the role expectations of an “entrepreneur, financial executive, marketing manager, legal expert and public relations officer” (Loock & Grobler 1997:35; *Daily Dispatch* 22 March 2002:3). Nathan (1996:22) maintains that an efficient manager is characterised by key managerial skills, which include planning, delegating, organising, and evaluating. In this regard, Whitaker (1998:124) points out that the school principal's role, as a school manager, is primarily concerned with efficiently organising the duties and roles of those who carry out the primary school tasks concerned. Hence, there is a need for school principals to have knowledge regarding all primary tasks to be carried out by the school stakeholders when envisaging improved matriculation pass rates. This makes intense managerial and leadership demands on school principals.

To establish the possible effects of a lack of school principals' efficient managerial skills at schools with low matriculation pass rates, the researcher will look into the school principal and

- management styles,
- school financial management, and
- delegation.

2.3.1.1 Management styles

Knight (1989:171), Kamwangamalu and Virasamy (1999:60-61), and *ReadRight* (3 March 2002:6) are of the opinion that the manner in which school principals plan, delegate, organise and evaluate is closely related to their individual management styles. Bossert et al (1982:52) suggest that the management styles and actions of school principals are

shaped by a “number of non-school factors including personal characteristics, distinct characteristics, and characteristics of the external social environment”. The researcher will investigate the foregoing in the light of the problem statement of this study.

Paisey (1992:143) defines a management style broadly as the “chosen behavioural ... pattern which the individual chooses, implements and sustains in order to achieve the qualitative results he [/she] seeks. The term ‘style’ is best reserved for the impact actually made on others.” According to Paisey (1992:143) and Whitaker (1995:134), the management style of individual school principals, as a visible aspect, may be summed up as the characteristic way in which they go about their managerial tasks in a school. Glatter et al (1988:33) and Williams (1997:13) contend that effective leadership styles will vary with context and that the leader needs to match the appropriate management style to context, depending on the demands of a particular situation.

Referring to efficient management, the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2001:B-3) agrees that school principals may require a task-oriented style to “get the job done quickly and efficiently. At other times a relationship-oriented style, which focuses on team building and morale building, is more appropriate. A good leader chooses the right kind of leadership for the situation.” The researcher suspects that many school principals in the Eastern Cape Province lack appropriate management styles required for the improvement of learner academic achievement under often difficult school circumstances.

2.3.1.2 Financial management

Briefly, Levacic (1995:127) states that the financial management of the school is in the hands of the school governing body with the school principal as chief executive. Together with this, Paisey (1992:16) concludes that “effective financial management, as a facet of educational management, is of crucial importance at schools”. As an important aspect of

this study, it is noted that the attainability of the school goals are influenced positively by the effective control of school finances by school principals (Paisey 1992:87; Potter & Powell 1992:71; *Daily Dispatch* 14 January 1999:6; *Evening Post* 4 January 2000:4) and the school governing bodies (Eastern Cape Department of Education July 2001:F-2). The researcher suspects that the control of school finances at schools with low matric pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province is not effectively managed by school principals. The problem statement of this study, then, raises the question of how school principals at schools with low matriculation pass rates can ensure more effective financial control to assure the attainment of school goals. Given the problem statement, the researcher will also probe the role of school principals as effective delegates of school related tasks.

2.3.1.3 Delegation

Nathan (1996:47) describes delegation by school principals as “entrusting authority” to a responsible person, be it the deputy principal, a head of department, a teacher, or a learner. The main reason for delegation by the school principal is that the task of managing the school efficiently is too complex for any one person. According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2001:B-43), before tasks can be effectively delegated by school principals, they should know the competencies and potential of their staff and should apply the following underlining principles when delegating tasks:

- The person should have the potential to perform the task.
- The delegated task should be in line with the position held by the person.
- A person to whom the task is delegated may not in turn delegate it to someone else.
- Deadlines should be stipulated when delegating tasks.
- In the execution of the task, the person may co-opt others to assist.
- Assistance and guidance must be given where necessary.

- Regular feedback is needed for good control by the principal.
- Some tasks should not be delegated [namely] interviews with Departmental Officials, allocation of duties, control over subject choice, staff meetings, financial control.

Nathan (1996:47) points out that school principals should delegate selected tasks and responsibilities to responsible stakeholders because it

- prevents job overload and leaves school principals with more time for planning and evaluation,
- makes it more likely that all the school duties and responsibilities are carried out more efficiently,
- motivates and promotes initiative, creativity and confidence by giving a responsible delegate the opportunity to undertake a new and demanding task,
- extends the skills and experience of delegates and contributes to their professional achievement, and
- encourages corporate loyalty by promoting a sense of common purpose.

The Eastern Cape Department of Education (2001:B-43) outlines the following advantages of delegation by the school principal to competent stakeholders:

- It is the basis for in-service training.
- The workload is spread more evenly.
- It increases productivity.
- It leads to better utilisation of time.
- The principal has more time to attend to other aspects.
- It leads to greater staff involvement in the management of the school.
- It promotes teamwork.

When the school principal delegates a reasonable task to a staff member, it should become part of that member's job description. According to Herman (1993:23 & 24) and Sergiovanni (2000:3), it is most important to note that through effective delegation, the school principal also empowers stakeholders. As mentioned earlier, empowerment is imperative for quality school management by the school principal. Herman (1993:40) advises that for improved learner academic achievement to be obtained, school principals should continuously re-visit the following areas in their schools' practices:

- the school's vision of continually improving the quality of education offered to learners,
- the attainability of the school's quality goals,
- the concept of educational quality for all the stakeholders inside and outside the classroom,
- the actual quality of the academic outcomes obtained by both the teachers and the learners,
- how successfully stakeholders have been empowered, and
- whether the planning for learner academic improvement is continuous throughout the school year.

The researcher is of the opinion that school principals in the Eastern Cape Province possibly do not delegate school tasks effectively and that this adversely affects learner academic achievement, and thus, the matriculation pass rates.

In the following section, the researcher will attempt to establish the nature of the school principal's leadership role at a school where an improved matriculation pass rate is envisaged. The researcher will focus on the traits of effective leaders and, in the light of the problem statement of this study, will question how a lack of effective leadership skills by school principals can affect matriculation pass rates.

2.3.2 Leadership

The present education system of South Africa underlines “transparency, responsibility, democracy and accountability” by school principals as leaders (Eastern Cape Department of Education July 2001:B-3). In this context they are expected to allow all school stakeholders to take part in making decisions and negotiations regarding the improvement of learner academic achievement. Steyn (2000:267) states that more recent conceptions of educational leadership by the school principal demonstrate a “move away from traditional authoritarian models of decision-making towards more collegial views on role relations between principals and their staff”. In this study, the researcher will focus on the latter and attempt to establish whether this is the case at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province.

At the same time, this study requires a clear distinction between school principals’ role as managers and their role as leaders. According to Whitaker (1995:74-134), one way of expressing this distinction is that leadership is a specific part of management conducted alongside colleagues, face to face, enabling and assisting other stakeholders to achieve set goals. In the case of this study, the goal is to attain learner academic achievement. Whitaker (1995:134) concludes that leadership is a process which seeks constantly to find new and effective ways of integrating human activity, releasing skills and abilities, and, finally, empowering all stakeholders to an active participation within the school. Hence, for successful achievement of the school academic goals, school principals are required to provide effective leadership that will enable colleagues to accept their responsibility towards these goals, and to exercise that responsibility. According to Hoy and Miskel (1996:375), school principals’ description as effective leaders is clearly fragmented; the pace is rapid, and discontinuity is prevalent. The nature of school principals’ job description is very time consuming as it entails long working hours at an unrelenting,

physically exhausting pace. Furthermore, the school leaders' daily activities vary widely hence they constantly have to change tasks to keep up to date with their daily duties and responsibilities. The researcher suspects that at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province, the school principals do not fulfil their role as effective leaders. The researcher will probe and focus on the following aspects of principalship

- the distinction between leadership and management,
- approaches to effective, educational leadership, and
- the main characteristics of effective leaders.

2.3.2.1 Distinction between leadership and management

According to Whitaker (1995:75), the functions of both managers and leaders are often combined into single roles and responsibilities, but an initial distinction between management and leadership is essential. Hoy and Miskel (1996:374-375) maintain that defining school leaders depends not only on the position, behaviour and personal characteristics of school principals, but the situation in which they find themselves. The

researcher will attempt to clarify the nature of leadership required by school principals in order for them to provide improved educational practices which will improve learner academic achievement.

Lambert, Collay, Dietz, Kent and Richert (1996:21) state that the leadership of school principals should be seen as the “reciprocal process that enables participants in a community to construct meanings that lead toward a shared purpose of schooling”. For them (1996:21), then, leadership is not a person, but “the process that makes up the

relationships among us [school stakeholders]”. Leadership is, therefore, the participatory learning opportunities that exist among the stakeholders in a school set-up, which is “not intended to imply that leadership is more important than management” (Whitaker 1995:74).

The management activity is necessary to keep the school functioning efficiently, so that plans come to fruition, procedures work, and school goals are met. Therefore, leadership is concerned with creating conditions in which all stakeholders of the school can give of their best in an atmosphere of learner academic commitment and challenge. In this regard, Schreuder and Landley (2001:77) refer to the manner in which school principals as leaders can best establish positive learning atmospheres by

- constantly emphasising the learning outcomes,
- consistently eliciting expectations of success from learners,
- establishing a culture of work on a daily basis,
- giving help when learners encounter problems,
- promoting commitment by personal example,
- establishing and consolidating an orderly, positive learning environment in the class situation, and
- obtaining the parents' cooperation in trying to establish and consolidate this learning environment at home.

The researcher will attempt to establish, through qualitative research (see chapters 5 and 6), whether the foregoing is prevalent at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province.

The Eastern Cape Department of Education (2001:B-2) stipulates that the education policy requires school leaders and managers to work in “democratic and participatory ways to build relationships and ensure efficient and effective delivery ... Good leadership and good management go together. Leading is about guiding and inspiring, and managing is about

getting things done efficiently and effectively.”

The question, in the light of this study, is whether school principals as leaders and managers of Eastern Cape Province schools are committed to taking on a challenge of improving the current low matriculation pass rates. *The Teacher* (October 2000:20) stresses the “academic, emotional, spiritual, and physical welfare” of learners because they are required to become balanced citizens of their respective communities, but society and schools put most emphasis on learner academic achievement, such as the matriculation pass rate. In the Eastern Cape Province, what plan of action do school principals have to produce for improved matriculation pass rates?

2.3.2.2 Approaches to effective, educational leadership

Gallie and Sayed (1997:463) maintain that effective, educational leadership should

- focus on controlling technical administrative functions related to planning and organisation of the school in particular,
- focus on school management functions as a whole and emphasize human resources development, overall effectiveness of school principals, and responsible empowerment of stakeholders,
- focus on governance functions such as the relationships among policy, decision-making processes, and implementation of decisions, and
- emphasize relationship building between all stakeholders, maximum stakeholder participation, and the necessary school development to facilitate learner academic achievement.

It is clear that school principals' effective leadership roles are thus characterised by the process of assisting colleagues to manage change at schools, especially changes

necessary to improve learner academic achievement. School principals need to acknowledge the challenges that both learners and teachers encounter. With regard to their leadership role, Whitaker (1995:137) suggests that school principals should

- identify the needs in individuals and teams that inhibit the improvement of any academic achievements,
- respond punctually to any queries, questions or comments of learners, teachers or parents regarding the school goals,
- solve education-related problems and difficulties in the whole school system which could inhibit significant learner academic progress,
- notice and reward learner and teacher achievements,
- pursue the visions and plans for the school, and
- increase motivation levels of the learners and the teachers.

The researcher is of the opinion that the above aspects are not upheld by school principals at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province, and that the lack of effective educational leadership of school principals inhibits learner academic achievement.

2.3.2.3 Traits of effective leaders

For many years, educational researchers have attempted to isolate unique traits or characteristics of leaders that differentiate them from their followers. According to Hoy and Miskel (1996:377), frequently studied traits include personality factors, needs, values, energy and activity levels, task and interpersonal competence, intelligence, and charisma.

Blase and Kirby (1992:3) list the following leadership traits, which school principals should pursue to become effective leaders:

- initiative,
- confidence,
- tolerance for ambiguity,
- analytical abilities,
- resourcefulness,
- vision orientated,
- democratic-participatory management styles,
- listening skills,
- problem-centred,
- openness,
- time management skills,
- high expectations of all school stakeholders,
- knowledge of the curriculum, and
- the ability to allocate educational school resources effectively.

Whitaker (1995:75) states that together with the main traits of effective leaders, the leadership skills of school principals contain the key to future success at schools as they should be dynamic, future oriented, and concerned with school improvement, learner academic development and educational excellence. Furthermore, leadership should provide for a framework within which human potential can more effectively be released.

Leadership is therefore concerned with personal and interpersonal behaviour that can allow school principals to establish how learner academic achievement is possible through motivating and inspiring all school stakeholders. Niehaus, Myburgh and Grobler (1999:165-197) are of the opinion that together with their leadership character traits, school principals' beliefs about their own professional and personal ability is essential to the manner in which the whole school will be managed. Therefore, Whitaker (1995:86) adds that the school principal's effective leadership should become a process of energising

rather than one of mere control and regulation through self-actualization. In the light of the problem statement of this study, then, the question arises of whether some school principals lack the necessary leadership traits and skills to contribute to successful learner academic achievement. In an attempt to answer this question, the researcher will investigate the following school principal traits necessary to become an efficient manager and effective leader:

- effective communication,
- empowerment, and
- accountability.

(a) Effective communication

According to Hoy and Miskel (1996:341), all communication at school is “complex, subtle, and ubiquitous; it permeates every aspect of school life”. School academic goals become dynamic only when they are effectively communicated from the school principal to the school stakeholders. Humphreys (1995:159 -160) adds that establishing a direct, effective communication system in a school should be the first and foremost task of school principals because successful information exchange between school principals and the school stakeholders is imperative for efficient management. Hoy and Miskel (1996:341) emphasise that effective communication in a school is an essential prerequisite for education to take place. Hence, communication cannot be isolated from decision-making, the motivation of stakeholders, or the learning process and the achievement of learner academic goals.

Regarding effective communication, the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2001:B-47) states that

- The principal must schedule regular meetings with the school management team to discuss all pertinent issues.
- These meetings should focus on planning, organising and regular feedback on development in the school. Meetings should be held: daily before school starts, weekly to review a plan, and annually/quarterly to plan ahead.

The Department (July 2001:B-51) stipulates further that school principals should create opportunities to communicate and become acquainted with learners, by means of

- communication through school assemblies,
- enrolment meetings of learners and parents,
- interviews with individual learners,
- class visits, and
- sporting and cultural events which will provide opportunities for the principal to communicate informally with learners outside the boundaries of the classroom.

The Manual for School Management (Eastern Cape Department of Education July 2001:B-51) emphasises that school principals should compile and disseminate a special roster of class visits to be conducted during the course of the year. Such visits should take place on a regular basis. Class visits should be used as a “motivational exercise and to encourage a positive approach to learning and teaching” (Eastern Cape Department of Education July 2001:B-51). Once school principals have completed class visits, they or school management team members should provide feedback to the educators on how to improve certain aspects of classroom management. In the light of this study, the researcher questions whether school principals schedule regular class visits and provide feedback regarding these visits to the teachers. The latter will form an integral part of the researcher’s empirical investigation (see chapters 5 and 6 of this study).

Regarding effective communication with parents, the Eastern Cape Department of Education (2001:B-51) clearly stipulates that school principals should strive to maintain regular and sound communication between home and school through general correspondence and communicating on learner progress:

- General correspondence. Parents should be kept well informed on school matters, important events and dates by means of circulars and newsletters.
- Communicating on learner progress. Quarterly parent information meetings should be convened either at the commencement or at the end of each term to discuss the learners' assessment results. All staff members should be available for consultation.

Finally, communicating with the Department of Education is an important part of any schools principal's role as the school forms an integral part of the larger departmental organisational structure (Eastern Cape Department of Education July 2001:B-52). Therefore, it is essential for all school principals to maintain open channels of communication and sound relationships with their respective District Offices. In the light of the problem statement of this study, the question is whether school principals are fulfilling their role as effective communicators to all school stakeholders, especially regarding their schools' goals. It is evident that school atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning can only be generated by effective communication between the school principal and all stakeholders at school level (Gounden & Dayaram 1990:313). The researcher will also investigate the latter through empirical research (see chapters 5 and 6 of this study).

(b) Empowerment

Gallie and Sayed (1997:467) state that school principals' roles need to focus on both efficient school management and effective classroom practices by teachers. To

accomplish this, school principals need to facilitate contact between themselves and all the other role players in the schools, whether the deputy principal, heads of departments, teachers, learners, or parents. School principals' roles should therefore be based on a form of "power" that is manifested through other people and not over other people (Steyn 1998:131). Power, as referred to here, is therefore the use of authority to extend influence or the ability to do (Thompson 1996:699) and to successfully complete school-related tasks. Consequently, empowerment is a purposeful decision by school principals to allow staff members accountable decision-making authority (Herman 1993:23-24). According to Gallie and Sayed (1997:467), a school principal's role should include the empowerment of all the stakeholders to share management responsibilities by means of active participation in attaining the school's goals. In doing so, school "principals who lead by empowerment, and not by garnering power, will enjoy broader support and respect from teachers because of their stature, not their status" (Gallie & Sayed 1997:467).

The Eastern Cape Department of Education (2001:B-2) expects all school stakeholders to participate in managing the school, but ultimately it is the school principal, in collaboration with the school management team, who has the responsibility for ensuring that quality teaching and learning occurs. The school principals ultimately have the authority and power to act decisively. One form of authority is the formal use of power through the formal organisational structures in a school and another is the authority which is nurtured in a school and relies heavily on trust and co-operation between all stakeholders. It can be concluded that the most constructive and effective use of power is by school principals to empower all school stakeholders to develop their ability to manage themselves and their schools. In the light of the problem statement of this study, the researcher questions whether school principals at schools with low matriculation pass rates purposefully empower all school stakeholders to create practices to improve learner academic achievement.

(c) Accountability

As referred to earlier, media demands for accountability by school principals followed after the dramatic failure of education at school level, that is, unacceptably low matriculation pass rates at some schools. The researcher will investigate the seriousness of the lack of accountability as a school principal skill necessary for efficient management.

There is no consensus on a definition of educational accountability by school principals and various procedures have been suggested by educationists for school principals to achieve accountability. According to Bell (1995:102), present-day usage of the term accountability includes, firstly, the “statement of student outcome goals, evaluating whether these goals have been achieved and at what costs”, and secondly, the “acceptance of responsibility for inadequacies”. Bell (1995:102) states further that the “emphasis in [the] accountability arguments is ... for schools to be responsible for [learner academic] results”. Should a school have high learner academic failure, then, the school will also have a low matriculation pass rate. Bell (1995:40 & 102) and Sergiovanni (2000:3-4) state that school principals are accountable for their schools’ failure to both the educational authorities and the school governing body. School principals need to realise that an important aspect of school management is their accountable responsibility towards the creation of school atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning, which will culminate in improved matriculation pass rates.

The *Manual for School Management* (Eastern Cape Department of Education July 2001:B-2) describes accountability as “being answerable for one’s deeds as well as being responsible for and to one’s institution - a duty that should be characterised by nobility of deed and conduct of the highest standard”. Responsible educational leaders need to be acutely aware of their accountability to parents, the community and employers should they envisage the best outcomes for their institutions. This raises the question, in the light of this

study, of whether school principals at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province have been accountable to all school stakeholders. The researcher suspects that school principals in the Eastern Cape Province are not realising their accountability towards learner academic achievement.

In the following section, the researcher will investigate the negative influence that school principals who lack efficient managerial and effective leadership skills may have on their schools' atmospheres. Although the school atmosphere has been referred to in chapter 1, the researcher will attempt through further literature study to highlight and clarify the nature of the relationship between school atmospheres and the matriculation pass rates, especially at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province.

2.4 THE SCHOOL ATMOSPHERE

According to Wiles and Bondi (1983:145), there is a dire need to investigate every possible cause for poor learner academic achievement, of which the school atmosphere is imperative. Glatter et al (1988:118), Poston et al (1992:111), and Whitaker (1995:90) state that the school principal needs to have a vision of the school as an ideal place where teaching and learning can take place in a safe, orderly school atmosphere.

Poston et al (1992:103-104) emphasise that the lack of a positive, interactive school atmosphere will lead to learner frustration; learners will not feel a sense of belonging, and a high learner failure rate may be the final outcome. According to Cullingford (1995:18 & 101), a school or a classroom that portrays a purpose for learners to achieve academically

requires a school atmosphere that supports learner academic achievement and not one that will lead to learner frustration. In this regard, Poston et al (1992:107) outline the following conditions that school principals can apply at their schools to ensure the creation of atmospheres that will be conducive to teaching and learning:

- the existence of fair learner and teacher disciplinary codes, supporting procedures for learners and teachers, including reward and recognition systems,
- all round school building and ground safety conditions,
- a high morale amongst both learners and teachers, and
- all-in-all, an effective school management system.

From the above, it is clear that a school atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning will create a positive situation in which learner academic achievement can be fostered and hence, improved matriculation pass rates.

It is necessary for school principals to realise that a school atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning is not accomplished by incident, but is the result of efficient management and leadership on their behalf. This raises the question of whether school principals in the Eastern Cape Province at schools with low matriculation pass rates lack the necessary managerial and leadership skills to initiate and support a school atmosphere conducive to learner academic achievement. A further question is also whether learners are expected to maintain positive attitudes towards their school careers, learn and pass the Senior Certificate Examination, under poor school conditions. In the researcher's view, there is a need to establish whether schools in the Eastern Cape Province have incorporated approaches into their school practices which facilitate learner academic achievement through the emphasis of school academic goals.

2.5 SCHOOL GOALS

According to Potter and Powell (1992:10), school examination results provide a measure of learner academic achievement and further reflect the school's outcome efficiency. Successful schools have clear, attainable learner academic goals that are understood and upheld by all stakeholders (Bell 1995:232). According to Robertson (1994:93), and Potter and Powell (1992:13), there is clearly a need for schools to incorporate approaches into their school goals that will benefit learner academic achievement. The latter applies especially should an improvement of the matriculation pass rate be envisaged by school stakeholders, as is the case in this study.

Jones (1993 a:36-39) suggests that school principals need to continuously address the following key questions to evaluate the effectiveness of the school management in terms of school goal fulfilment:

- Where is the school presently in terms of its envisaged goals?
- What changes need to occur in the school system in order to attain the envisaged goals?
- How should the necessary changes in the school be managed over time?
- Does the plan in use to attain the school goals contain a set of realistic and prioritised objectives within a pre-determined time scale?
- Does the plan in use show how the prioritised objectives can be achieved in the time frame available?

The researcher is of the opinion that school principals at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province do not have relevant answers to these questions.

The qualitative study to be conducted with sixteen (16) research participants at four schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province is intended to

establish the impact of school principals on matriculation pass rates. The researcher suspects that school principals at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province do not initiate school goals focused on improved matriculation pass rates.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the researcher will also investigate the impact of a lack of school infrastructure on learner academic achievement.

2.6 THE SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

Cruickshank, Bainer and Metcalf (1995:369), Burgess and Bhayrd (1999) and an educational publication, *Educamus* (1993:19) point out that teaching and learning-related problems, especially ones due to a poor physical state of the school, need to be prevented through effective education management. *Quality in Teaching* (1994:112), states categorically that school principals are responsible for the creation of an infrastructure within the school that is supportive of high quality teaching and learning. The researcher is of the opinion that school principals at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province possibly neglect this responsibility.

A statement by the former Education MEC, Mr Stone Sizani, that the “department [of Education] had 6 444 schools to look after and more than 4 000 of them still did not have proper facilities” (*Daily Dispatch* 20 May 2002:1) underscores the seriousness and importance of this issue. The researcher will investigate the conditions of schools in the Eastern Cape Province in an attempt to establish how the following issues affect matriculation pass rates:

- poor physical conditions of schools, and

- school vandalism.

2.6.1 Physical condition of schools

The emphasis on the physical conditions of schools is not new (Hoy & Miskel 1996:203; *Daily Dispatch* 2 July 2003:3) and the condition of the school building makes a powerful impression on the learners by signalling an attitude that reflects the school atmosphere and whether it is conducive to teaching and learning. Hence, together with the school atmosphere in which teaching takes place, the physical component of the school has a profound effect on what both teachers and learners achieve in the classroom (Brown & McIntyre 1995:69). Bull and Solity (1989:16) state that the physical component of a school is provided by the surroundings in which children and teachers are working, that is, for the most part of the school day, the surroundings of the classroom itself. According to Arcaro (1995:3), classrooms should be a safe haven where each learner is valued for his/her unique abilities and is encouraged to take the risk of learning. However, the *Daily Dispatch* (13 June 2001:1) reported the contrary in the Eastern Cape Province: “the [physical] condition of school buildings had deteriorated, which indicated a lack of investment in infra-structure”. The latter has profound adverse effects on learner academic achievement and, consequently, the matriculation pass rate (*Daily Dispatch* 28 December 2001:6). The researcher will investigate the foregoing through a qualitative study at four senior secondary schools in the Eastern Cape Province (see chapters 5 and 6).

According to Poston et al (1992:102) and Jones (1993 a:11), school cleanliness, a pleasant school atmosphere, and the timely repair of school buildings send the message to learners and the public that the school principals “care about ... [their] ... students, therefore the schools ... [become] ... inviting places for ... students”. The question, in the light of the problem statement of this study, is whether school principals give careful consideration to the physical state of the school facilities and, more importantly, whether

school principals make a concerted effort to maintain the physical condition of their schools. A detailed literature study follows in the next section to determine the nature of the physical condition of schools in the Eastern Cape Province.

· **Background study**

In 1996, a pioneer nation-wide school survey was conducted in South Africa, covering a total of 27 964 primary and secondary schools by a consortium comprising the Human Sciences Research Council, the Education Foundation, and the Research Institute for Educational Planning at the University of the Free State (*The Teacher* September 1997:3).

This nation-wide school survey revealed an appalling picture of the physical conditions in which teaching and learning were taking place in many schools throughout the country.

In 1995, in the Eastern Cape Province, there was a backlog of 21 248 classrooms, 1 487 schools without toilets, 1 987 without water, 4 333 without electricity (*Daily Dispatch* 11 July 2003:2). In 1996, in the Eastern Cape Province, 214 (4,00%) of school

buildings were not suitable for education, 521 (11,00%) needed major repairs and 2 579 (44,00 %) needed minor repairs (Bot 1997:2 & 9). In 1997, a School Register of Needs Survey (SRNS) in South Africa revealed another disturbing picture of the physical condition of most schools in the country (*The Teacher* September 1997:15). In the same article, the question is asked: "Who of us [South African citizens] would expect our own children to do well and be the best they can be under such [poor school] circumstances?" Yet, the 1999 School Register of Needs Survey (Motala, Vally & Maropeng 1999:14; *Daily Dispatch* 23 January 1999:3; 7 March 2000:3) noted that learners were still subjected to extremely poor conditions at schools, especially in the Eastern Cape Province. Finally, the 2000 national School Register of Needs found the Eastern Cape Province's school building conditions to be the worst in South Africa (*Daily Dispatch* 4 December 2001:1). During the same year the Province of the Eastern Cape announced the Section 21 functions in terms of

Section 21 of the SA Schools Act, 1996, namely that the governing bodies of ordinary public schools may apply in writing for the Department of Education “to maintain and improve the school’s property, and buildings and grounds occupied by the school” (Department of Education: Province of the Eastern Cape 31 October 2000:1). In 2002, the *Daily Dispatch* (20 February 2002:2; 13 March 2002:5) repeatedly emphasised the poor physical condition of schools in the Eastern Cape Province. In the 2003, the *Daily Dispatch* (11 February 2003:2 a) reported that Grade 12 learners at Goodhope Senior Secondary School, near East London “have their lessons out in the open as they do not have a classroom ... their plight becomes worse when it rains and they move in with Grade 11 pupils to share a single congested classroom”. During the same year the standing committee on education complained about the poor state of school infrastructure in the Eastern Cape Province, reporting on the “shortage of classrooms; dilapidated mud structures; absence of toilets, electricity, telephones and water; vandalism” (*Daily Dispatch* 6 March 2003:2). The latter was reiterated by the Education MEC, Ms Nomsa Jajula, in an article entitled *New impetus to tackle school building backlogs* (*Daily Dispatch* 26 May 2003:3). During 2003 the Eastern Cape Province Department of Education had 6 642 schools with 2,1 million learners (*Daily Dispatch* 11 July 2003:2). With regard to the poor physical condition of schools in the Eastern Cape Province, the researcher will investigate the availability of water, electricity, and adequate sanitation facilities at schools in the Eastern Cape Province and emphasise the adverse effects of their lack or inadequacy on learner academic achievement and, therefore, matriculation pass rates.

2.6.1.1 Water, electricity and sanitation facilities

The following section will include key issues at schools which may adversely affect learner attitudes towards learning, which may culminate in lower matriculation pass rates. The *Daily Dispatch* (17 May 2002:11) reported that the “Eastern Cape [Province] has the highest number of schools without water and electricity of the nine provinces.” The latest

available statistics, according to the *Daily Dispatch*, indicated that “some 2 571 or 41,1 percent of the 6 600 schools in the Eastern Cape have no water on site and 3 786 or 60,5 percent are without electricity”. Hence, there is a need to investigate how the foregoing affects the matriculation pass rates in this province.

• *The unavailability of water and electricity*

The *Daily Dispatch* (14 January 1999:6; 25 January 2000:25 b) and *The Herald* (28 December 2001:2) gave the lack of available water supply, the unavailability of electricity, and inadequate sanitation as indicators why learners do not show academic progress in terms of their learning potential. According to the *Daily Dispatch* (22 January 1999:2 b), the lack of electricity adversely affected learner pass rates and was also “hindering pupils’ progress” (*Daily Dispatch* 4 February 1999:1).

The *Mail & Guardian* (17 to 23 August 2001:32; 11 to 17 January 2002:7) and the *Daily Dispatch* (15 January 2002:4) reported that during 2001, 41,10% of schools in the Eastern Cape Province had no running water. Nationally, during 2002, 27,00% of all schools had no running water (*Mail & Guardian* 15 to 25 April 2002:6). This gives rise to the following questions in the light of this study: Are school principals aware that at schools where there is a lack of running water, a lack of electricity, and inadequate sanitation that learners may become despondent towards these adverse conditions in which they need to study? Do school principals address these adverse issues with the Department of Education with the aim of improving the conditions where learners can learn and teachers can teach more effectively?

On several occasions, the *Daily Dispatch* (29 May 1998:1, 19 March 1999:4 & 2 August 2001:1) reported that education in the Eastern Cape Province was collapsing because electricity and water accounts were not settled by the Department of Education. Yet, this

issue was not resolved by the Department of Education and during 1999 and 2000 many schools in the Eastern Cape Province were still without electricity and running water (*Daily Dispatch* 22 January 1999:2 b; 10 May 1999:1; 17 November 1999:3; 21 January 2000:1; 25 January 2000:2 a & b). At the beginning of 2002, the *Daily Dispatch* (15 January 2002:4) reported that 60,50% of the schools in the Eastern Cape Province still had no electricity. During 2002, nationally, 43,00% of all schools had no electricity (*Mail & Guardian* 15 to 25 April 2002:6). The *Daily Dispatch* (22 August 2002:2) expressed concern over particularly Grade 12 learners, including typing candidates who needed to use electric typewriters, but were unable to do so at schools where there were power cuts due to the Department of Education's failure to pay electricity accounts. When the power was cut by the Umtata municipality for six days due to the Department of Education laxness in paying the electricity bills, concerned parents of Umtata High School told the media that the "[Education] department was acting irresponsibly and should be blamed for poor matric results" (*Daily Dispatch* 7 June 2003:8). In the light of this study, the question is whether school principals, as managers and leaders, are attempting to restore these poor situations to conditions conducive to teaching and learning.

• *Inadequate sanitation*

Regarding the availability of adequate sanitation to learners, based on the norm of one toilet for every 20 learners, a 1996 School Register of Needs Survey reflected a shortage of 46 785 toilets in Eastern Cape Province schools and 34,00% of all schools in this province not having access to on-site water (*The Teacher* September 1997:3). Later, in 1999, the Umtata City Council ordered the closure of nine municipal schools operating without toilet facilities, condemning them as public health hazards (*Daily Dispatch* 4 October 1999:5; 18 October 1999:5). The *Daily Dispatch* (11 September 2001:1) reported further that official statistics in 2000 indicated that nationally "there was ... a

shortage of 24 500 toilet booths". The *Mail & Guardian* (17 to 23 August 2001:33; 11 to 17 January 2002:7) reported that 70,30% of the schools in the Eastern Cape Province still did not have adequate sanitation, now based on a ratio of one toilet for every 30 learners. This situation caused much dissatisfaction among both the learners and their parents.

With reference to the above, it cannot be denied that learners in these schools where there is inadequate water supply, inadequate electricity, and inadequate sanitation are subjected to very harsh school conditions. Moreover, in the light of the problem statement of this study, it is questioned whether school principals are taking remedial action to improve these poor conditions at their schools with the aim of improving the matriculation pass rates.

2.6.1.2 School vandalism

The Department of Education strongly criticised school vandalism for its adverse effects on the learning process (*Daily Dispatch* 5 June 2001:3; 21 March 2002:5). Furthermore, vandalism is reported in the media to be one of the main causes for the poor condition of school buildings (*Daily Dispatch* 29 December 1999:4). During February 2003, 1 500 schools were reported to be vandalised (*Daily Dispatch* February 2003:2 b). Listed below are the main kinds of vandalism rife in Eastern Cape Province schools, in no particular statistical order, namely:

- windows broken (*Daily Dispatch* 22 January 1999:2 c; 23 January 1999:3),
- classrooms burnt down (*Daily Dispatch* 22 January 1999:2 c),
- notice boards ripped off (*The Teacher* May 1999:6),
- doors and lockers either stolen or broken (*The Teacher* May 1999:6; *Daily Dispatch* 24 August 2001:5),
- teacher and learner chairs, tables and desks broken (*The Teacher* May 1999:6),

- toilets vandalised (*The Teacher* May 1999:6),
- computers, photocopiers and typewriters damaged (*Daily Dispatch* 7 May 1999:3),
- documentation pertaining to the school's administration and finances destroyed (*Daily Dispatch* 9 February 2000:4; 14 February 2000:3),
- science equipment destroyed (*Daily Dispatch* 12 June 2001:2), and
- wooden flooring and ceiling boards removed or damaged (*Daily Dispatch* 24 August 2001:5).

Vandalism is a serious problem in the Eastern Cape Province schools. Referring to the kinds of vandalism mentioned in this section, the implications thereof are detrimental to the conditions in which teachers have to teach and learners have to learn. This raises the following question in the light of this study: What do school principals, as managers and leaders, do to reduce school vandalism and to restore or replace damaged school equipment and buildings to create a physical environment more conducive to improved learner academic achievement? The researcher suspects that the school principals are perhaps not adequately involved in attempts to reduce school vandalism. Together with poor physical school conditions, the researcher is of the opinion that school overcrowding also adversely affects learner academic achievement. The researcher will investigate this issue, especially with regard to schools in the Eastern Cape Province.

2.7 SCHOOL OVERCROWDING

A means to indicate overcrowding in schools is to compare the number of learners with the number of teachers. This is called the learner:teacher ratio, which is an indication of the average number of children in one class (Christie 1991:127). Achilles, Finn and Pate-Bain (2002:24) state that class size “involves organising students for the delivery

of instruction, where a pupil:teacher ratio is an administrative statistic that helps account for the distribution of [educational] resources". Throughout the study the researcher will refer to the foregoing and highlight issues pertaining to overcrowding and learner academic achievement.

Fontana (1992:61) states that "cramped classrooms, in which there is insufficient space for children to carry out practical activities, and ... seating arrangements which prevent all children from easily seeing the work being presented or demonstrated by the teacher" reduce learner academic achievement. Achilles et al (2002:25) found that "students in small classes ... misbehaved less frequently, and had greater test-scores". McGoogan (2002:32) also concluded that a "smaller learning community achieve ... better than their counterparts" and that with a smaller learner:teacher ratio, there is a greater possibility of combining modern technology, the latest teaching practices, and "old-fashioned camaraderie and love of learning". The researcher's view is that it is not the case at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province.

In South Africa, *The Teacher* (February 2000:10-11) warns against a high learner:teacher ratio by emphasising that "[large classes inhibit [learner] individual attention" and the *Daily Dispatch* (8 January 2002:5) points out that the Department of Education needs to "pay attention to the abnormal [low] teacher:learner ratio" should improved matriculation pass rates be envisaged. The *Daily Dispatch* (28 December 2001:3 a) also reported that a school principal, Mr Pheyana of Sandi Senior Secondary School in the Umtata District, ascribed the school's poor matriculation pass rate of 47,25% to the high learner:teacher ratio. Sandi Senior Secondary School previously had a smaller learner:teacher ratio and had a matriculation pass rate of 93,44% at the end of 2000, 91,00% at the end of 1999, and 82,00% at the end of 1998. In 2001, Sandi Senior

Secondary school had a “pupil:teacher ratio of 128:1 in science and maths” classes (*City Press* 30 December 2001:6 a). According to the *Daily Dispatch* (26 August 2002:3), overcrowding has been identified as an inhibitor of high matriculation pass rates. Yet, in February 2003 (*Daily Dispatch* 4 February 2003:3) a learner:teacher ratio of 50:1 was reported at Mzamomhle Secondary School situated in the informal settlement at Gonubie, East London.

Background study

As early as 1995, the *Sunday Times* (7 May 1995:7) reported that overcrowded classrooms was one of the most intense problems in the Black education system bequeathed by apartheid to the new education dispensation in South Africa. *The Teacher* (May 1999:2) and the *Daily Dispatch* (22 January 1999:2 a; 15 January 2002:4) reported that one of the greatest implications of overcrowding in South Africa is to come to terms with the fact that almost all school classrooms are at full capacity and that a lack of quality education resulted, also evident in the low matriculation pass rates at these schools. Hence, it is evident that overcrowding affects both learner academic achievement and teacher output adversely and, ultimately, lowers matriculation pass rates. Concerning both learners and teachers in overcrowded classes, Blatchford and Clare (1998:132) state that “in smaller classes teachers are more caring towards learners, and there is more opportunity for learners to personally confide in teachers. Larger learner numbers are associated with increased teacher stress and can lead to teacher burnout.” The neglect of quality education and the rapid increase in national learner enrolment have led to the “disintegration of learning atmospheres and the death of a culture for learning in many Black schools in the country” (Steyn 1999 b:207). In the light of this study, then, it may be asked whether the Department of Education and the school principals can afford a further reduction in the atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning.

The researcher will briefly establish the extent of the impact of the following issues related to overcrowding on the matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province schools:

- high learner:teacher ratios,
- teacher shortages,
- classrooms and school furniture shortages, and
- textbooks and stationery shortages.

2.7.1 High learner:teacher ratios

In 1995, the *Sunday Times* (7 May 1995:7) reported that South Africa as a whole faced overcrowding especially where schools struggled to cope with a shortage of thousands of qualified teachers. In the same year, some schools in Bizana in the former Transkei region had an unacceptably high learner:teacher ratio of 67:1 (*Sunday Times* 7 May 1995:7). At that time, the former Permanent Secretary for Education, Dr Ronnie van Wyk, said that “the Eastern Cape Province urgently needed another 10 000 teachers to ‘wipe out the backlog’ ...” (*Daily Dispatch* 24 January 1996:1).

In 1996, the Department of Education declared a national learner:teacher ratio of 35:1 (SA National Department of Education 1996; *Daily Dispatch* 24 January 1996:1; *The Teacher* October 1998:3). Yet, in 1997 it was reported that “in some rural areas [in the Eastern Cape Province], there is already a pupil-teacher ratio of up to 80:1 or 90:1” (*Daily Dispatch* 14 November 1997:1). The *Sunday Times* (3 January 1999:2) reported that during 1998 the learner:teacher ratio in most schools was appalling. The *Daily Dispatch* (22 January 1999:2 a) claimed that some schools in Mahlangu, Eastern Cape Province, had 900 learners in only 15 classes with up to 80 learners in one class per teacher. Teacher

shortages were still reported at most local township schools in East London (*Daily Dispatch* 22 January 1999:2 c). In addition, the *Daily Dispatch* (8 February 1999:3 a) reported that the Eastern Cape Province still needed to employ a further 20 000 teachers to address learner:teacher ratio imbalances. When considering the facts and statistics cited above, it seems inconceivable that learners found themselves in a favourable educational situation. Rather, it seems inevitable that learners at schools with higher learner:teacher ratios face higher failure rates.

The high learner:teacher ratio raises the question of whether school principals realise that overcrowding is not conducive to learner academic achievement. In the researcher's opinion, the call is for school principals to address this issue through improved school management.

2.7.2 Teacher shortages

Besides high pupil:teacher ratios in the Eastern Cape Province, there were also teacher shortages. Teacher shortages in the Eastern Cape Province are affecting service delivery to the learners, especially through the negative effects of high learner:teacher ratios on the quality of both teaching and learning (*Daily Dispatch* 7 December 1999:8 a; Blatchford & Clare 1998:125; Coetzee 1999:108). The *Daily Dispatch* (8 February 1999:3 b) reiterated that what is required to improve the quality of education in the Eastern Cape Province is to employ more teachers in order to reduce the existing high learner:teacher ratios in classrooms. In February 2003, the Eastern Cape Education Department communication director, Mr Danie Breytenbach, urged that teacher shortages be rectified through a teacher:learner ratio programme at all schools (*Daily Dispatch* 1 March 2003:3). The Sadtu provincial deputy chairman, Mr Thobile Mrara, stated that "80 percent of schools in the [Eastern Cape] province were faced with a shortage of teachers" (*Daily Dispatch* 11 April 2003:2). A memorandum on the shortage of teachers was handed to Makana

education district manager, Gonafeelan Naidoo (11 April 2003:2). Bearing in mind the Sadtu provincial deputy chairman's statement, at the same time the Department of Education "sacked" four temporary teachers at the John Bisseker Secondary School, East London (*Daily Dispatch* 19 June 2003:4). The researcher is of the opinion that this situation clearly affects teacher morale and the manner in which they are willing to fulfil their duties in the classroom and responsibilities towards learner academic progress.

In the light of the problem statement of this study, the question is whether the Eastern Cape Province schools with low matriculation pass rates can afford to have high learner:teacher ratios. Furthermore, what educational changes in the school practices are the school principals making to address these high learner:teacher ratios in an attempt to improve the low matriculation pass rate?

2.7.3 Shortages of classrooms, school furniture, and learner support material

Cruickshank et al (1995:369) and the *Daily Dispatch* (29 December 2000:3; 8 January 2002:5) indicate that shortages of classrooms, school furniture, and learner support material adversely affect learner academic achievement. The researcher will investigate the extent of shortages of classrooms, school furniture, and learner support material in the Eastern Cape Province.

The *Sunday Times* (13 July 2003:9) reports that "South Africa has many enthusiastic learners hungry for knowledge. It also has many under-resourced schools: schools with insufficiently qualified teachers, particularly in the subjects of Maths and Science, few textbooks, little access to information and no science laboratories to make the subject come alive." There is a need for many schools in the Eastern Cape Province to be issued with the necessary resources. According to the *Daily Dispatch* (27 April 2002:12), the Eastern Cape Province is listed "among the provinces with the most poorly-resourced

schools". Nevertheless, this adverse situation has not been urgently addressed by the Department of Education or the school principals (*Daily Dispatch* 24 January 1996:1; 5 January 1999:1; 14 January 1999:6; 18 January 2000:5).

- Background study

Regarding physical learning space shortages, in 1996, there were between 15 538 and 20 000 classrooms too few in the Eastern Cape Province (Bot 1997:9; Steyn 1999 a:70) where an average of 911 learners shared one laboratory (*The Teacher* September 1997:3; *Daily Dispatch* 14 January 1999:6; 9 July 1999:6; *Evening Post* 4 January 2000:4). Furthermore, of the 1 965 schools, only 168 (8,00%) had biology laboratories and only 272 (14,00%) had science laboratories in 1996 (Bot 1997:2). At the same time, according to *The Teacher* (September 1997:3), an estimated 1 167 881 learner desks and chairs, 103 615 teacher chairs and 102 441 cupboards were needed for classrooms, and approximately 40,00% of schools had no furniture for administration. In addition, more than half of the schools lacked administrative equipment such as typewriters and computers (*The Teacher* September 1997:3). Official national statistics in 2000 indicated that "there was a shortage of 21 000 classrooms [and] a need to refurbish 42 000 classrooms" (*Daily Dispatch* 11 September 2001:1). Nationally, in 2002, 80,00% of all schools had no libraries (*Mail & Guardian* 15 to 25 April 2002:6). The *Daily Dispatch* (27 April 2002:12) pointed out that in 2002, national backlogs that remained included a "shortage of 45 116 classrooms, ... 7 409 schools without [running] water, 10 353 schools without power, 2 498 schools without toilets, 21 776 schools without media centres and 23 797 schools without computers". However, the issue of classroom shortages had not been rectified by the government by 2003 (*Daily Dispatch* 5 June 2003:1). The foregoing underlines the importance of this research study. The researcher is of the opinion that the Department of Education and the school principals need to address these issues urgently should improved matriculation pass rates be envisaged for the Eastern Cape Province.

2.7.4 Textbooks and stationery shortages

Although the issue of a shortage of textbooks, stationery, learner support material at Eastern Cape Province schools frequently made headlines in the written media (*Daily Dispatch* 14 January 1999:6; 22 January 1999:2 a; 9 February 1999:4; 9 December 1999:2; 31 December 1999:7; January 2000:2; 7 January 2000:1; 19 January 2000:3; 28 January 2000:9; 5 June 2002:2; 13 June 2002:1; 27 December 2002:1; 24 January 2003:2 b; 6 March 2003:2; *The Teacher* May 1999:2; *Eastern Province Herald* 31 December 1999:3; *Mail & Guardian* 7 to 13 December 2001:9; *Sunday Times* 2 June 2002:7), the Department of Education has not reacted to the plea for early delivery of adequate textbooks and stationery for each school in the Eastern Cape Province. Moreover, the *City Press* (30 December 2001:6 b) reported that the Democratic Alliance's spokesperson, Mr Donald Smiles, said that in 2000 the Eastern Cape Department of Education itself blamed the "delivery of textbooks ... for not attaining a 50 percent [matriculation] pass rate". At the beginning of 2000, learners in many schools in the Eastern Cape Province still needed "the basic building, chairs, desks, books, paper, blackboard and teachers. These are items of fantasy in some rural schools. They [learners] don't even have pencils or paper" (*Daily Dispatch* 25 January 2000:3).

The above issues are a recipe for learner failure as the *Daily Dispatch* (10 July 2001:3) predicts that "non-delivery of these materials [textbooks and stationery] seriously [adversely] affects matric results". The *Mail & Guardian* (7 to 13 September 2001:14) reiterated that textbooks shortages had led to schools "performing dismally at [matriculation] examinations". Regardless of the latter statements, during April 2002 the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (Sadtu) claimed that the Maluti district had "virtually ground to a halt because textbooks have not yet been delivered" (*Daily Dispatch*

18 April 2002:13). Education Minister, Professor Kader Asmal, visited the Maluti area as the matter “affected pupils, teachers, parents and education” (*Daily Dispatch* 8 May 2002:1). Asmal also stated that an existing problem was the failure of learners to return textbooks to schools and that the school principals should encourage learners to return these books (*Daily Dispatch* 8 May 2002:1). The *Mail & Guardian* (26 April to 2 May 2002:1, 5) further reported that education at more than 200 other schools in the Eastern Cape Province had “ground to a halt as frustrated learners, teacher unions and parents enter the second week of a massive protest against the non-supply of stationery ... [as] students are losing valuable time and they are suffering [academically]”. In this incident approximately “60 000 pupils protested over a lack of stationery” in the Eastern Cape Province (*Daily Dispatch* 11 May 2002:1). The school principal of Goodhope Senior Secondary School, near East London, Mr Jerome King, complained in February 2003 that “textbooks for Grade 12 were nonexistent” (*Daily Dispatch* 11 February 2003:2 a). Based on the outcomes of the foregoing reports, it can be concluded that, together with textbook and stationery shortages, overcrowding (with all its adverse implications) will certainly hamper matriculation pass rates. The issue of school overcrowding needs to be addressed in all earnest by the Department of Education together with the school principals.

In the light of the problem statement of this study, the question is how school principals can improve their management skills to ensure a school atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning and where learner academic achievement is evident. The researcher suspects that many school principals in the Eastern Cape Province lack the essential managerial and leadership skills necessary to make a positive impact on learner academic progress. Moreover, the question is what the role of the school governing bodies, in conjunction with the school principals, is regarding the improvement of learner academic achievement and thus matriculation pass rates.

2.8 SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

The researcher will attempt to establish what the contributing role of the school governing bodies is regarding the successful management of schools by the school principal. In establishing the latter, the researcher will examine how the school governing bodies together with the school principals can contribute to the improvement of the existing low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province.

2.8.1 Composition

The South African Schools' Act of 1996 (SA National Department of Education 1996), which came into operation at the beginning of 1997, stipulates that all state schools in South Africa should have governing bodies, composed of the school principal, parents, teachers, learners and non-teaching staff, in their active and responsible roles, to encourage rational, collective decision-making. Du Preez and Grobler (1998:29) found that parents serving in school governing bodies create more efficiently functioning schools.

2.8.2 Role and responsibilities

In terms of Article 20 of the South African Schools' Act (SA National Department of Education 1996), the school governing body should promote the best interests of the school and simultaneously ensure learner academic achievement through the promotion of assessment standards throughout all grades which should conform to the national education standards. Harber and Trafford (1999:51) maintain that, together with the school principal, the school governing body needs to initiate a school atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning. It should be noted that the prime, active function of the school governors should be one of constantly ensuring that school principals and teachers are fulfilling their educational responsibilities (Macbeth 1989:132).

The chairperson of the Federation of South African School Governing Bodies, Mr Paul Colditz, emphasised that the “most important role of governing bodies is the appointment of teachers” (*Daily Dispatch* 7 May 2002:3); secondly, Education MEC, Nomsa Jajula stressed school financial management (*Daily Dispatch* 15 February 2003:3). The *Daily Dispatch* (25 June 2002:8) reports that school governing bodies’ role should also be to “take action against lazy teachers”, that is teachers who do not fulfil their role and responsibilities. The *Government Gazette* (SA National Department of Education February 1999:14) states that as communicator, the school principal needs to “co-operate with members of the school staff and the school governing body in maintaining an efficient and smooth running school”. Therefore, in broader terms, governing bodies, and in particular the school principals, have the overall responsibility for overseeing the management of the school, its finances, its staffing, and the implementation of a mandated curriculum. In chapters 5 and 6 of this study, the researcher adopt a qualitative approach to examine whether the school governing bodies at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province successfully contribute to the efficient management of their schools.

According to *The Teacher* (September 2001:16), the school principal’s responsibility should be to ensure that decisions of the governing body are properly carried out by the concerned school stakeholders. In order to fulfil this responsibility, school principals should provide information regarding the school policies pertaining to school buildings and funds to their governing bodies. Jones (1993 a:38), Levacic (1995:109), the *Daily Dispatch* (5 August 1998:5), and Spengler and Calitz (1999:49) emphasise that school principals’ relationships with their school governing bodies are crucial to a process which should lead to the finalisation of all school-related priorities and goals. In the case of this study, these are clearly outlined learner academic goals.

The Eastern Cape Department of Education (2001:C-10) assigned the following obligatory functions to a school governing body:

- promoting the best interests of the school
- adopting a constitution and a code of conduct for learners
- developing the vision and mission statement of the school and be part of the strategic planning process
- supporting the principal, educators and other staff of the school
- determining the starting and ending times of the school day
- determining the school uniform
- recommending the appointment of staff by the State
- appointing staff at school
- encouraging parents educators and learners to render voluntary services to the school
- developing the school's policy on admissions, language and religious observances
- administering and controlling the school's grounds and buildings
- suspending learners in certain circumstances
- preparing a budget each year
- enforcing of the payment of school fees and to recover school fees
- appointing both an accountant and auditor or other suitable person to audit the school's records and financial statements and to ensure that control measures are in place to safeguard the administration of school funds
- determining and stipulating how the school will promote multilingualism.

From the above it is evident that the main duty of individual members of school governing bodies is to execute the functions assigned to them. This will ensure the smooth running of the school, create an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning, and contribute to

an improvement of the matric pass rates.

From the discussion in this chapter, it is clear that there is a need for school governing bodies, together with the school principals, to devise a school development plan to improve matriculation pass rates. In this process some of the actions taken should focus on improving the present, day-to-day operation of the school, and on improving future school management. According to the *Manual for School Management* (Eastern Cape Department of Education July 2001:B-5), the school development plan should seek to “improve the capacity of a school to achieve the educational aims of the country and more specifically, it should focus on the aims and the values of the school”. The manual (2001:B-5) states further that for school development to have a greater chance of success, it should

- have a small set of realistic and prioritised objectives
- be time bound - a medium term plan of two or three years would be ideal for most schools
- spell out the responsibility of all stakeholders individually and collectively and it is important that they all should understand and consent to their roles
- outline the resources required as well as ways in which such resources should be managed
- be presented in a format that can be easily followed by most people in the school community.

In the light of this study, the question arises of whether school principals are called upon by the school governing bodies to render an account of why schools have low matriculation pass rates. In addition, school governing bodies should also be required at any time to explain or justify to the Department of Education their view on and actions planned towards improved matriculation pass rates. Effective development of school structures through efficient education management and effective leadership by school principals cannot be compromised. In the case of this study, the emphasis is on the development and

transformation of the management structures necessary at some schools in the Eastern Cape Province to ensure an improvement in poor matriculation pass rates. The researcher suspects that many school principals, as the executive officers of the school governing bodies, lack the necessary managerial and leadership skills to guide the schools towards improved matriculation pass rates. The role and responsibilities of the school principals regarding matriculation pass rates are a serious issue which needs to be addressed and emphasised by all stakeholders, especially school governing bodies.

In conclusion the researcher focuses on systematic evaluation by the school principal, aimed at ongoing assessment of the performance of the South African education system.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher refers to systematic evaluation as the “assessment of the education system, using all relevant information impacting on the system such as resources and facilities, management structures, curriculum, teacher characteristics and learner characteristics” (Eastern Cape Department of Education July 2001:E-5). Systematic evaluation is learner-centred and its fundamental concern should therefore be to assess whether the learner, as the primary concern of the education system, is performing according to expectation and whether the processes, systems and resources making up the system could be better organised to improve learner academic progress. The researcher is of the opinion that this is not the case at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province where school principals lack the skill to efficiently evaluate their school practices to ensure learner academic success.

2.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter covered the management and leadership roles of school principals and how a lack of these skills adversely affects matriculation pass rates. From the discussion, it is evident that learners at most schools in the Eastern Cape Province are subjected to unfavourable conditions that inhibit their academic progress. Hence, it is concluded that

there is a dire need for schools with low matriculation pass rates to develop school atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning, fostered through open communication by all school stakeholders. School goals need to be based on the belief that **all** learners are worthy of being taught under the best possible educational conditions.

Mismanagement of aspects such as planning, delegating, organising, and evaluating by school principals clearly has detrimental effects on educational conditions and further results in lower matriculation pass rates. Without the necessary fundamental changes in the aforementioned aspects of school management, however, the efficiency and effectiveness of schools will continue to deteriorate. The researcher is further of the opinion that school principals need to focus on a participatory decision-making process, which emphasises empowerment for all school stakeholders. In East London, a member of the legislative education standing committee, Mr Alfred Metele (ANC), urged “members of school governing bodies to unite in their work and in fighting mismanagement at schools (*Daily Dispatch* 11 September 2003:5).

In a study of one hundred and fifty senior secondary schools selected at random throughout South Africa, Monteith, Smith and Marais (2001:89) found that school principals experience high stress levels because of “colleagues not doing their work, dealing with crisis situations, inadequate salary, frequent interruptions, excessive paper work, poorly motivated colleagues, lack of opportunity, [and] an assignment of increased responsibility”.

The researcher contends that this intensity could even be more severe for school principals at schools with low matriculation pass rates combined with the adverse issues mentioned in this chapter. The researcher will consider the foregoing when drawing conclusions related to the efficacy and effectiveness of school principals at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province (see chapter 6). Chapter 3 will examine the influence of teachers, learners, and parents on the Eastern Cape Province matriculation pass rates. This investigation will also probe the role of school principals

further.
