

## **Chapter 3**

### **The influence of teachers, learners, parents, and the parent body on the matriculation pass rate**

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#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Schools are complex, social institutions where learners, teachers, and parents are the most important stakeholders (Macbeth 1989:150-151; *Daily Dispatch* 1 November 2001:3; 13 April 2002:3). Herman (1993:26-27) explains that the reason for the existence of schools, and the stakeholders, is the role they should play in the provision of quality education for all learners, as learners should eventually form productive, future citizens and leaders of their respective communities. To achieve this, school principals need to emphasise learner academic goals, “including a broad array of knowledge and intellectual skills” (Sadker & Sadker 1991:142). Skills, such as self-discipline and co-operation, need to be instilled in learners by school stakeholders (Jones 1993 a:37; *Daily Dispatch* 12 January 2000:6) as “student outcomes are the essential criteria for the effectiveness of education” (Reynolds et al 1996:25).

Van der Westhuizen and Mosoge (1998:48) point out that education management development should not only focus on the school principals, but on the “staff, learners and governors at their schools so that everyone involved understands what good management and leadership practice constitutes”. The *Daily Dispatch* (12 February 1999:1; 12 January 2000:6) and *The Teacher* (May 1999:9) state that all learners should be allowed equal educational opportunities to achieve academically: more specifically, to pass their Senior Certificate Examination at the end of Grade 12. At the same time, the researcher sympathises with the *Daily Dispatch Supplements* (June 2003:8) question: “[W]hat about those students who didn’t make it [Senior Certificate Examination]? Whose hearts sank

when they realised they hadn't passed, and whose hopes of a university education are dashed?" The research accordingly suggests that all stakeholders become actively involved in practices that will improve low matriculation pass rates and simultaneously give all matriculants a better future in South Africa. In the researcher's opinion, in the Eastern Cape Province with its recurring low matriculation pass rates, there are many school-related factors pertaining to the teachers, learners, and the parents of Grade 12 learners, which adversely influence learner academic achievement. Due to the emphasis placed on the Senior Certificate Examination results in South Africa, the researcher will investigate the extent to which teachers, learners, and parents influence the matriculation pass rates.

This chapter will focus on the role of the teacher as a starting point as Taylor (1982:185) emphasised that learners are dependent on teachers to create and maintain an effective learning situation which has a sense of purpose, order, structure, and especially of meaning. Jones and Jones (1995:9) state that "teachers have control over many factors that significantly influence the [academic] achievement and behaviour of students". *The Teacher* (February 2000:17) points out that "an education system is only as good as its teachers ... Ideally, we [the community] need teachers who are reflective, show empathy, are team players, who persevere ... teachers who are proud of their profession." The *Daily Dispatch* (26 September 2002:3) ascribed "good [matriculation] results to dedication by teachers and pupils" and stated clearly that a shortage of teachers "would affect their [learners'] preparations for the matric final exams" (*Daily Dispatch* 22 October 2002:3).

In the 1980's Simon and Beard (1985:81) argued that one of the main reasons for a constant high learner failure rate is teachers who are either incompetent or lazy and lack classroom managerial skills. Almost two decades later, in the Eastern Cape Province the *Daily Dispatch* (22 March 2001:9) reported that "teachers are uncommitted to education as an essential service to nation building". In this report, the Superintendent General of Education, Mr Philip Qokweni, maintained that the low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province were "mainly due to the poor quality of teachers" (22 March

2001:9). In February 2003, the Defence Minister, Mosiuoa Lekota, addressed this issue and “lashed out at uncommitted and lazy teachers, labelling their acts as ‘criminal’” (*Daily Dispatch* 11 February 2003:2 c). He went on to say that “it is criminal for teachers to go to school and not do their job” (11 February 2003:2 c). At the same time, the Education MEC, Ms Nomsa Jajula, threatened that “action would be taken against educators who reported late for school and grossly neglected their duties” (11 February 2003:2 c). Learner academic achievement needs to be underlined by the school principals because through their experience of constant failure, the learners may totally reject school and its educational values (Fontana 1992:47). According to Jones and Jones (1995:12), “young people need caring professionals [the school principals and teachers] willing to help them take responsibility for their behaviour and develop plans aimed at altering unproductive conduct”. This study raises the question of whether schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province have caring professional teachers to guide the learners through their final school year. An investigation into the influence of teachers on the Eastern Cape Province matriculation pass rate is warranted.

It is emphasised that not only learners and teachers but parents, too, play an important role in determining a good matriculation pass rate, that is, in terms of active participation and interest shown in their children’s academic progress (Macbeth 1989:4; Arcaro 1995:56; Maeroff 1998:425; *Sunday Times* 9 September 2001:15). Nelson, Duffy, Escobar, Ortolano and Owen-Sohocki (1996:253) state that education “research shows that when parents are involved, [learner] test scores improve, incidents of violence decrease ... [Parent active] involvement is the key to creating a sense of belonging.” Furthermore, parents can be valuable resources to school principals and teachers regarding learner academic progress. Therefore, to draw accurate research conclusions, the researcher needs to investigate the parents’ influence on matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province.

The literature study in this chapter will focus on teachers', ill-disciplined learners' and parents' influence on matriculation pass rates. The researcher also intends to investigate the adverse conditions to which teachers in the Eastern Cape Province schools are exposed.

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### **3.2 THE TEACHER**

The *Government Gazette* (SA National Department of Education 18 February 1999:19) summarises the main aim of a school-based teacher as to

- engage in class teaching, including
- the academic,
- administrative,
- educational and
- disciplinary aspects and
- to organise extra-curricular and co-curricular activities so as to ensure the education of the learner is promoted in a proper manner.

The researcher will investigate whether teachers in the Eastern Cape Province fulfil this aim, and further determine how the school principal should assist teachers in these aspects by providing a school atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning.

According to Smith and Van Zyl (1991:27-28), Duignan and Macpherson (1992:95), and the *Sunday Times* (17 February 2002:13), as key motivators of staff members, school principals should do everything possible to create the ideal school atmosphere which will be conducive to teaching for the teacher and learning for the learner. Gounden (1991:53) observes that a school principal, as “a manager of education becomes one of the most

important influences on the working lives of staff who report directly or indirectly to him [her]”. According to Potter and Powell (1992:12), through their active involvement in the management of their schools, school principals should

- be aware of teachers’ needs inside the classroom,
- offer feedback to school stakeholders in response to learner academic performance,
- make use of praise for both learners and teachers to improve teacher and learner morale, and
- encourage teachers’ long-term professional development and direct that development for the good of the school. (In the case of this study, that means to improve learner academic achievement and ultimately, the matriculation pass rates.)

Le Roux (1990:426), Blase and Kirby (1992:1), and Hoy and Miskel (1996:374) state that school principals should strive for possible ways to encourage a high level of teacher motivation, inspiration and morale, that taken together, will capture the essence of a positive school atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning. In creating such an atmosphere, Wiles and Bondi (1983:141) maintain that it is the responsibility of school principals to ensure that teachers effectively execute all educational tasks required of them, especially those that pertain to learner academic progress.

In terms of the South African Constitution, learners have the right to be educated by their teachers, to have their academic potential tested, and to have their examination scripts accurately assessed in order to reflect the level of their academic achievement (*The Teacher* May 1999:3; *Mail & Guardian* 3 to 9 May 2002:9). The *Manual for School Management* (Eastern Cape Department of Education July 2001:B-41) stipulates that the role of educators in assessing learners’ academic work includes

- setting high expectations for learners - all learners can learn;
- conducting regular assessments of all learners by collecting evidence of how they are progressing towards the achievement of outcomes;
- identifying learners who need support;
- providing additional or alternative learning opportunities to assist learners in the attainment of outcomes;
- reporting to parents, learners and colleagues based on evidence recorded during assessment.

Despite the above, the *Daily Dispatch* (14 January 1999:6; 19 January 2000:1-2; 7 February 2002:1) reported that in the Eastern Cape Province schools the single most correctable cause of miserable matriculation pass rates is the poor performance of teachers in the classroom situation. The researcher is nevertheless of the opinion that the adverse school conditions under which some teachers have to teach may also adversely affect their morale which, in turn, may result in negative attitudes towards their learners and their profession. According to Mashoai Loyiso, Sadtu's Mount Ayliff and Kokstad regional official, "teachers' low morale was caused by the government's failure to build proper school building structures to create an environment conducive to teaching and learning" (*Daily Dispatch* 11 February 2003:2 c). This raises the question of whether school principals, as suggested by Smith and Van Zyl (1991:28), treat teacher motivation and morale as top priority to capture the essence of positive school atmospheres.

Glatter et al (1988:11) emphasise a teacher's "managerial, as well as academic responsibilities" towards learners. Therefore, it is imperative for school principals to note that job descriptions for educators should be in line with the roles and responsibilities as outlined by the Personnel Administration Manual (PAM) document (Eastern Cape Department of Education July 2001:B-44). Burns (1987:151) and Blase and Kirby (1992:

43) highlight the need for teachers to be mainly concerned with learner academic achievement in classroom atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning, which is in line with their job description. It is possible that school principals in the Eastern Cape Province do not ensure that teachers fulfil their duties towards learners, which then culminates in lower learner academic achievement as well as lower matriculation pass rates. This raises the following questions: Do school principals envisage a change in undesired teacher attitudes regarding their (teacher) daily academic duties and responsibilities towards learner academic achievement? What role do teachers fulfil regarding the attainment of learner academic achievement?

The researcher will focus on the imperative role that teachers need to fulfil in order to contribute positively to learner academic achievement, and will attempt to delineate characteristics of effective teachers with special reference to effective classroom management. Taking into consideration the poor physical conditions at some Eastern Cape Province schools, the researcher will highlight some difficulties that teachers may experience at schools with low matriculation pass rates. Ultimately, the researcher will examine the extent to which a lack of an effective teacher role could impact on matriculation pass rates by elaborating on

- definitions of school-based teachers,
- the role of the teacher in the classroom,
- a lack of teacher qualifications,
- effective classroom management, and
- low teacher morale.

### **3.2.1 Definitions of school-based teachers**

For the purpose of this study, a **teacher** refers to “any person who teaches ... at any public

school”, and a public school means a “school as defined in section 1 of the South African Schools Act No 84 of 1996” (SA National Department of Education October 1998:4). Bull and Solity (1989:41) describe a teacher as an agent of change and “takes decisions on what to teach based on what ... pupils have already learned, what they need to learn and in what order of priority”. According to Glanz (1995:65), “teachers are seen as the link between society that plans and formulates educational goals” and “effective teachers ... are sensitive to differences among students while at the same time treating all [learners] equally and fairly”. Mosoge and Van der Westhuizen (1997:196) define a teacher as “any person who teaches, educates or trains learners at a school”.

The *Education Law and Policy Handbook* (1999:4-9) defines educator to mean “any person who teaches, educates or trains other persons ... at any school ... or performs education management services ... provided by ... the department of education”.

The foregoing should be in accordance with the Employment of Educators Act, 76 of 1998 (Brunton 2003: C-2 to C-130). Considering these definitions of school-based teachers, the researcher will investigate by means of qualitative research (Chapters 5 and 6 of this study) whether teachers in the Eastern Cape Province comply with these definitions.

### **3.2.2 The role of the teacher**

According to Russell and Munby (1993:9-10), teachers’ “professional roles can be said to include models

- of pupils,
- of subject matter,
- of how learning takes place, and
- of how lessons are conducted”.



Burns (1987:158) asserts that teachers' roles should heighten teachers' awareness of themselves and the learners whom they teach with special attention to learner academic progress. In this respect, Potter and Powell (1992:63) maintain that "causes of poor [learner academic] performance lie in ... the teaching". In the researcher's view, the low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province are due to the fact that teachers do not portray a role which encourages learner academic achievement.

To understand the role of school-based teachers, it is necessary to elaborate on the teaching, administration, and communication aspects of the profession as listed in the *Government Gazette* (SA National Department of Education 18 February 1999:20-22). The researcher will focus on the indicators relevant to the problem statement of this study. With regard to teaching, teachers are required (1999:20) to

- engage in class teaching which fosters a purposeful progression in learning and is consistent with the learning areas and programmes of subjects and grades as determined.
- be a class teacher.
- prepare lessons, taking into account orientation, regional courses, new approaches, techniques, evaluation, and aids in their field.
- take on the leadership role in respect of the subject, learning area or phase, if required.
- plan, co-ordinate, control, administer, evaluate and report on learners' academic progress.
- recognise that learning is an active process and be prepared to use a variety of strategies to meet the outcomes of the curriculum.
- establish a classroom environment which stimulates positive learning and actively engages learners in the learning process.
- consider and utilise the learners' own experiences as a fundamental and valuable

resource.

The administrative duties of the school-based teacher (SA National Department of Education February 1999:21) include to

- co-ordinate and control all the academic activities of each subject taught.
- control and co-ordinate stock and equipment which is used and required.

To further clarify the role of the school-based teacher, the preamble to the South African Council for Educators' (SACE) code of conduct (*Education Law and Policy Handbook* 1999:4-9) states that teachers who are registered with the South African Council for Educators:

- acknowledge the noble calling of their profession to educate and train the learners of the country;
- acknowledge that the attitude, dedication, self-discipline, ideals, training and conduct of the teaching profession determine the quality of education in this country;
- acknowledge, uphold and promote basic human rights, as embodied in the Constitution of South Africa;
- commit themselves therefore to do all within their power, in the exercising of their professional duties, to act in accordance with the ideals of their profession, as expected in this Code; and
- act in a proper and becoming way such that their behaviour does not bring the teaching profession in dispute.

The South African Council of Educators Act, 31 of 2000 reiterates the above (Brunton 2003: E-2).

The following communication duties of the school-based teacher are listed in the *Government Gazette* (SA National Department of Education February 1999:21-22), namely to

- co-operate with colleagues of all grades in order to maintain a good teaching standard and progress among learners and to foster administrative efficiency within the school.
- collaborate with educators of other schools in organising and conducting extra and co-curricular activities.
- meet parents and discuss with them the conduct and progress of their children.
- participate in departmental committees, seminars and courses in order to contribute to/or update one's professional views/standards.

Brunton (2003: A-44 to A-58) summarises the norms and standards for educators. This study then raises the question of whether teachers fulfil their role as effective administrators and communicators and what the input of school principals is in ensuring the latter situation.

This study will focus on the importance of a teacher's role in terms of classroom management with the aim of improving learner academic achievement and, ultimately, the overall low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province. To clarify the role of the school-based teacher, the researcher will investigate the

- teacher *in loco parentis*,
- core duties for school-based teachers,
- teacher as promoter of learner academic interest and involvement, and
- teacher as facilitator of learner academic involvement.

### *3.2.2.1 In loco parentis*

Wood (1990:55), Smith and Laslett (1995:59), and Green (1995:23) emphasise that teachers should fulfil an *in loco parentis* role. According to Macbeth (1989:160) and Bell (1995:5), this term clearly stipulates that teachers should take care of the learners in their charge with the aim of realising learner academic progress. In addition, according to Perrott (1988), in this role, teachers should assist their learners to become acceptable, responsible, contributing members of their society. He (1988:121) goes on to say that the teacher's role *in loco parentis* is "to further the process of education in their pupils, developing their [the learners'] critical awareness, and an ability to question, to create and innovate". More importantly, *Quality in Teaching* (1994:113) emphasises that teacher responsibility as *in loco parentis* is to initiate and maintain quality education offered to all learners through teacher quality. The researcher suspects that teachers in the Eastern Cape Province schools do not fulfil their *in loco parentis* role and that the lack thereof has adversely affected learner academic achievement and, therefore, matriculation pass rates. This study thus questions whether school principals make teachers aware of their *in loco parentis* role thereby to provide quality education to learners.

### *3.2.2.2 Core duties of school-based teachers*

The *Government Gazette* (SA National Department of Education 18 February 1999:9-10) describes the core duties and responsibilities of school-based teachers in outlining the workload per teacher as follows:

- All educators should be at school during the formal school day, which should not be less than 7 hours per day, except for special reasons and with the prior permission of the principal. The principal will exercise his/her discretion in this regard based

on the provincial policy. The 7 hours per day includes the breaks and the period/s in which the learners are not at school.

- Scheduled teaching time during the formal school day will be specified with time allocation per post level. The allocation of subjects, timetable and resultant schedule teaching time to be determined by the Principal after consultation with the educator staff.
- All educators may be required by the employer to attend programmes for ongoing professional development, up to a maximum of 80 hours per annum. These programmes to be conducted outside the formal school day or during the vacations.

In addition, the South African Government (*The Teacher* April 1999:14; *Daily Dispatch* 5 March 2002:5) stipulates the following:

- scheduled teaching, that is, when the teacher is meant to be actively involved with the learner academic content,
- effective classroom management, and
- professional duties, such as, attending meetings, workshops and seminars, preparation for successful teaching, and accurate, continuous assessment of learner academic progress.

Nathan (1996:123) describes one of the most detrimental teacher actions that impedes learner academic progress as when “teaching is unsatisfactory, where pupils fail to achieve standards commensurate with their potential”. The *Government Gazette* (SA National Department of Education October 1998:14, 20) stipulates that if “it is alleged that an educator is unfit for the duties attached to the educator’s post or incapable of carrying out those duties efficiently, the employer may appoint in writing a person to inquire into the relevant allegations” and further that an “educator shall be guilty of misconduct if the educator - is negligent or indolent in the carrying out of the duties attached to the educator’s post; without leave or a valid reason, is absent from office or duty”. The researcher is of

the opinion that school principals at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province possibly do not ensure that teachers carry out all the duties attached to their post, and that this results in poor learner academic progress.

· *Background study*

The former Eastern Cape Province Education MEC, Mr Stone Sizani, referred to teacher absenteeism, that is, the abandonment of teacher duties, as one of the province's most serious concerns and stated that on "average more than 16 000 teachers - about 23 percent of the total complement - were away from work at any one time, costing the province R3,5 million a day" (*Daily Dispatch* 29 May 2002:5). According to the *Daily Dispatch* (11 February 2003:2 b), on the first academic day at Eastern Cape Province schools, only 65,00% of teachers had turned up and "14 principals had been absent". Regarding teacher absenteeism, the Education MEC, Ms Nomsa Jajula, revealed that as many as "16 769 teachers were absent during the head count. This is clearly unacceptable. The department is losing R5,3 m a day due to absenteeism: but the cost to learners cannot be put in rand terms at all" (*Daily Dispatch* 23 April 2003:1). She also explained (23 April 2003:1) that "there is a 98 percent correlation between teacher absenteeism and the matric pass rate". In May 2003, *The Teacher* (May 2003:3) reported that the "Eastern Cape education department points to rampant truancy amongst its 74 000 teachers". McManus (1995:5) contends that the neglect of any one core teacher duty impedes learner academic progress. It is of concern to the researcher that teachers neglect their academic duties and their classroom management responsibilities towards the Grade 12 learners through high absenteeism. It is evident that teacher absenteeism deprives learners of education, and hence, is an issue that requires all school stakeholders' attention, especially that of the school principals.

This study therefore questions whether school principals stipulate core duties to teachers,

and do a follow-up when teachers are not committed to these duties. A further question is whether schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province can afford to employ teachers who will neglect their core duties or are often absent. In the researcher's view, teachers who do not fulfil their role as *in loco parentis* and neglect their expected core duties also contribute to learner disciplinary problems.

### *3.2.2.3 Promoter of learner academic interest and involvement*

The study questions whether teachers at schools that have low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province focus on learner academic interest and involvement in the classroom activities. In the researcher's experience, learners who show no academic interest and are not actively involved in the learning process tend to contribute to learner disciplinary problems that lead to classroom atmospheres not conducive to teaching and learning. Hence, the researcher deems it necessary to investigate a teacher's role regarding learner academic interest and active involvement in classroom activities.

#### *• Active learner academic interest*

According to Avenant (1990:206-210), good school education guarantees learner academic interest that, in turn, should contribute to increased learner academic achievement. Avenant (1990:206 - 210) maintains that learner academic interest can be increased by an academically stimulating classroom atmosphere where

- the learning backlogs that may have arisen in a disinterested learner have been eliminated,
- learners feel secure and accepted by their teachers and their peers,
- learners are allowed to make relevant academic contributions during class time,
- learners are encouraged to be actively involved in the subject-matter during class

time,

- learners are fully aware of the school's academic goals, and
- each learner's unique, distinctive academic-related problems are attended to by the teacher.

The researcher suspects that teachers at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province perhaps do not adequately emphasise learner academic interest and that this lack culminates in little or no learner academic achievement. Moreover, it would be difficult to create a learning-conducive classroom atmosphere in overcrowded, under-resourced classes where learner disciplinary problems are rife. Consequently, low learner academic interest would likely result in less learner academic involvement.

• *Active learner academic involvement*

According to Ridley and Walther (1995:31), it is the responsibility of teachers to provide meaningful ways for learners to become actively involved in their academic progress. Morse and Ivey (1996:3) add that effective teachers should be determined to encourage learners to become actively involved in the learning process to enhance learner academic achievement. Ridley and Walther (1995:35) indicate that active learner academic involvement is characterised by "students [who] feel confident about succeeding ... [where teachers are] willing to give extra [academic] assistance if it is needed or desired". In the researcher's opinion, overcrowding and its many related adverse issues at many Eastern Cape Province schools possibly prevents teachers from giving learners adequate individual academic assistance where it is required, thereby contributing to low learner academic achievement.

This raises the following questions: Have principals of Eastern Cape Province schools with low matriculation pass rates contributed to classroom atmospheres conducive to



active learner academic involvement? Are teachers aware of their educational expectations in terms of the promotion of learner academic interest and active involvement in the learning process? This chapter will examine the promotion of Grade 12 learner academic interest and active learner academic involvement with reference to the lack of Grade 12 teacher effectiveness and teacher qualifications. Teacher effectiveness and quality and its influence on matriculation pass rates will also be examined.

### **3.2.3 Effective teachers and teacher quality**

This section will investigate whether teachers in the Eastern Cape Province have the qualities of effectiveness and successfulness. The researcher suspects that the lack of teacher effectiveness and teacher quality at schools in the Eastern Cape Province have detrimental effects on matriculation pass rates.

#### *3.2.3.1 Teacher effectiveness*

Hoberg (1994:46) defines effective, successful teachers as teachers who

- can develop a supportive encouraging academic climate,
- show empathy, genuineness and enthusiasm and
- utilise instructional time effectively to enhance student goal achievement.

Farrell and Oliveira (1993:9-10) describe teacher effectiveness as that portion of learning gained that can reasonably be attributed to the teaching process itself for which teachers are responsible. With this concept of effectiveness, it can therefore be deduced that effective teachers assist learners to achieve academic success. Cullingford (1995:11-12)

maintains that the signs of an effective teacher can be detected in the way the classroom is managed, that is

- a shared working atmosphere;
- an awareness of the needs of each pupil;
- a purposeful, well-organised classroom and
- the celebration of [learner and teacher] successes”.

It is evident from the foregoing that effective teachers are committed to teaching and will at all costs assist their learners to learn. This commitment should motivate teachers to keep searching for more effective teaching methods, even when they are confronted by negative learner attitudes and behaviours. Hopkins and Stern (1996:504-505) stress that “feelings of affection and reciprocity between teacher and learners create a positive attitude toward learning. Good teachers try to communicate warmth, even if learners do not reciprocate.” According to Burns (1987:158), effective teachers will provide effective teaching, which will reflect the following main features:

- good personal relationships between teachers and learners,
- child-centred approaches throughout the teaching-learning process,
- a promotion of learner discipline and learner actualisation,
- a provision of a classroom ethos that enhances learner productivity,
- learner personal growth, that is, self-esteem and confidence, and
- critical awareness of learner academic progress.

Burns (1987:158) adds that the majority of teachers and learners feel that effective teachers are not a myth, even though it is questionable whether effective teachers can exist within an ineffective schooling system; that is, featuring school management by school principals that is not efficient and leadership that is not effective. It is questionable whether teachers at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province provide

effective teaching to Grade 12 learners. The researcher is of the opinion that Grade 12 learners therefore sit for the Senior Certificate Examination without being adequately prepared for it. The researcher will examine teacher quality in an effort to determine its influence on learner academic achievement and, consequently, on matriculation pass rates.

### *3.2.3.2 Teacher quality*

Hopkins and Stern (1996:516), and Cullingford (1995:14) define teacher quality as the individuality, intelligence, and artistry of individual teachers that have a powerful, positive influence on the learning process of learners. For the improvement of matriculation pass rates, *The Teacher* (September 2001:4) stipulates that the “quality of teachers ... is the crucial factor”. *Quality in Teaching* (1994:14) adds that teacher quality, with the aim of attaining school academic goals, should include the following dimensions:

- thorough knowledge of the curriculum content,
- pedagogic skills, including the acquisition and ability to use a repertoire of teaching strategies,
- the ability to be self-critical about the teacher-learner situation,
- empathy and commitment to the acknowledgement of the dignity of the learners, and
- managerial competence, as teachers need to assume a range of managerial responsibilities within and outside the classroom.

The researcher contends that this particular “quality” could be lacking in many teachers who currently teach Grade 12 learners in the Eastern Cape Province.

*Quality in Teaching* (1994:14) states that teacher quality should represent a *gestalt* of quality features rather than a discrete set of measurable behaviours that develop independently from each other. Hopkins and Stern (1996:511-517) list the following key

features of teacher quality:

- commitment to the teaching profession in terms of learner academic achievement,
- a love of children,
- mastery of subject didactic and multiple models of teaching, and
- the ability to collaborate with other teachers.

The integration of teacher competencies across the above dimensions of teacher quality should mark outstanding teaching. In this regard, Glanz (1995:65) states that teacher quality reflects teachers who impart educational information expeditiously and skilfully, that is, teachers who are

- knowledgeable,
- energetic,
- flexible,
- creative,
- independent, and
- innovative.

According to Glanz (1995:65), teachers who lack these features, which make up teacher quality, are ill-suited to meet the challenges of teaching, especially in terms of the achievement of learner academic success. Hence, it can be questioned, in the light of this study, how school principals promote these characteristics of highly effective teachers, and the holistic concept of teacher quality. The researcher is of the opinion that teacher quality is lacking in some schools in the Eastern Cape Province and that this lack could contribute to low matriculation pass rates.

It is evident that effective teachers and teacher quality, though not indispensable, are a vital

requirement if schools envisage improved learner academic achievement (in the case of this research study: improved matriculation pass rates). The researcher suspects that in many schools in the Eastern Cape Province, quality education and teacher accountability need to be restored through constructive educational management by school principals.

The researcher regards it as important that teachers understand the role they are required to fulfil, especially with reference to the provision of quality education for all learners. The following section will discuss the role of the school-based teacher and the influence that teacher qualifications may have on learner academic progress.

### **3.2.4 Teacher qualifications**

*The Teacher* (September 1997:7) states that the “legacy of apartheid education spawned generations of unqualified and under-qualified Black teachers. Consequently, Black children received an inferior education while their White counterparts benefited from being taught by highly qualified teachers.” Under-qualified teachers in the teaching profession, especially in the former Transkei region, adversely affect the quality of education delivered to their learners (*Daily Dispatch* 7 June 1999:5).

#### **- Background study**

In the area of teacher training, the Institute for South African Surveys for 1999/2000 showed that in 1998, 26,00% of 360 000 teachers nationally fell into the category of unqualified or under-qualified, compared to 36 percent in 1994 (*Daily Dispatch* 17 January 2000:8). The Institute (17 January 2000:8) describes “unqualified or under-qualified” as a teacher having less than a senior certificate and a three-year teaching diploma, respectively. At the

beginning of 2002, the *Daily Dispatch* (15 January 2002:5) indicated that, according to the SA National Department of Education director general, Mr Thami Mseleku, there were an “estimated 83 000 under-qualified teachers” in South Africa, with the greatest concentration of these teachers in the rural areas. Later that year, the *Sunday Times* (29 September 2002:17) reported that nationally there were still 47 000 under-qualified teachers in the teaching profession. It is thus evident that school principals need to be aware of the academic qualifications of their newly appointed staff members and whether they are suitably qualified to prepare the Grade 12 learners for their Senior Certificate Examination. Grade 12 learners deserve (and require) well qualified teachers who can guide them through their final academic school year and prepare them adequately for their final examinations. This raises the question of how school principals are presently addressing the issue of under-qualified and unqualified teachers with the aim of improving poor matriculation pass rates.

It should be noted, however, that although the SA National Department of Education had reduced the number of unqualified and under-qualified teachers from 112 000 to 85 501 in less than three years (*Daily Dispatch* 15 March 2000:5), teacher shortages still remain a contentious issue, especially at schools with low matriculation pass rates. In May 2003 it was reported that an estimated 3 000 teachers in the Eastern Cape Province face retrenchment to save the province R189 million per annum (*Daily Dispatch* 27 May 2003:1). The question is whether school principals are addressing the serious issue of teacher shortages and teacher qualifications in order to improve learner academic achievement and thus the matriculation pass rates.

### **3.2.5 The teacher redeployment process**

Stear (1997:3) and later the *Daily Dispatch* (19 April 1999:1) reported that the teacher redeployment had created uncertainty among many teachers, damaging their morale. This

process was hotly debated in the media (*Daily Dispatch* 7 January 2000:2; 19 January 2000:3 b; 3 February 2000:4; 29 December 2001:3 a; 8 January 2002:5; *The Teacher* May 1999:15; *Mail & Guardian* 9 to 15 November 2001:18), particularly as delays in teaching at the beginning of 1998 were mostly caused by it. Furthermore, Catu attributed the poor 1999 Senior Certificate Examination results to the teacher redeployment process (*Daily Dispatch* 20 January 2000:4)

At the beginning of the government teacher redeployment process in 1995, there were 10 289 teachers in excess of school complements who would be placed in more than 11 000 vacant teaching posts. Up to February 2000 the Department of Education had offered 10 000 teachers positions in these schools, of whom 5 114 had accepted and 4 386 had delayed applying or accepting these positions (*Daily Dispatch* 17 February 2000:5). In 1999, the new school year started chaotically for many schools in the Eastern Cape Province with the government's redeployment programme still not finalised as teachers had not received their final school allocations (*The Teacher* February 1999:4). Shortly thereafter, the *Daily Dispatch* (21 April 1999:2) reported that Duncan Village's Ebenezer Majombozi High School East London had lost ten teachers in the redeployment process, leaving only twenty-seven teachers for 1 200 learners.

In April 2002, the *Daily Dispatch* (12 April 2002:7) reported that “more than 100 Eastern Cape [Province] teachers are refusing to return to work at schools where they were summarily posted as part of the Education Department's controversial redeployment programme” and almost all of these teachers were consulting doctors or psychologists and receiving medication for stress. It was indicated that since 1998 approximately 10 000 Eastern Cape Province teachers had been declared “in excess” and 9 700 redeployed to fill 11 000 vacant posts (*Daily Dispatch* 12 April 2002:7). Later, the *Daily Dispatch* (9 May 2002:6) announced: “One cannot turn the [education] system into an army and teachers into soldiers who are redeployed wherever the state wills. They [the teachers]

are professionals who have the right to choose where they work. The redeployment process was a disaster for precisely this reason.” The question is how the school principals addressed the government redeployment process in order to improve staff morale.

In the following section the researcher will focus on the teacher and classroom management to establish the impact it has on learner academic achievement.

### **3.2.6 Classroom management**

For the purpose of this study, classroom management is referred to as “the sum of activities necessary to allow the core or main task of the teaching-learning situation to take place effectively” (Kruger & Van Schalkwyk 1996:7). Kruger and Van Schalkwyk (1996:7) point out that classroom management aims at the “establishment of certain conditions in the classroom in which effective teaching and learning can take place”. Flippo (1980:114), Kruger and Van Schalkwyk (1996:7-11), Whitaker (1995:84 - 85) and Pithers and Soden (1998:1-9) emphasise the need for effective teacher classroom management. Schreuder and Landey (2001:78-79) underline the necessity of the development of teacher classroom management skills through professional development. Knight (1989:172) states that “all teachers have an important classroom management role” and Marland (1975:24) adds that “pupils behave better in a room which is well organised and has individual character”.

Sadker and Sadker (1991:70), and Jones and Jones (1995:13) found that teachers who maintain effective classroom management, prepare their lessons well and implement



various teaching methods that will enhance learner academic interest and involvement. According to Fontana (1992:124), effective classroom teachers will organise their classrooms in such a manner that the learners are not neglected and are continually actively engaged in productive academic activities which, simultaneously, aim at eliminating learner disruptions. Bull and Solity (1989:70), Jacobs and Gawe (1996:334, 348-349), and Fontana (1992:58) concur, stating that effective classroom management should include educational actions to avoid classroom disorder. According to Cullingford (1995:125), effective teacher classroom management should result in “children [having] high [academic] standards, ... who are self-confident and self-disciplined, unafraid to ask ... questions and able to work collaboratively with each other”.

Lomax (1996:68) indicates that total quality classroom management is only possible where dedicated teachers and learners are actively involved in the classroom situation, striving to achieve the highest possible academic achievements for learners. Hence, total quality management will enhance learner responsibility towards their own individual learning. According to Arcaro (1995:32), if effective classroom management is lacking, it may contribute to learner failure. In the case of this research study, then, this implies that a lack of teacher classroom management will result in lower matriculation pass rates. To explain the correlation between classroom management and matriculation pass rates, the researcher deems it necessary to elaborate on teacher classroom management in terms of

- effective classroom routines, and
- adequate learner responsibility towards learning.

#### *3.2.6.1 Classroom routines*

Ridley and Walther (1995:27) emphasise that during effective classroom management, many academic unde-achieving learners need to be taught specific classroom rules and

procedures to improve their academic achievement. Cruickshank et al (1995:376-377) suggest that many learners fail at school, both behaviourally and academically, not because they lack intelligence or personality, but because they do not obey the classroom routines that exist as a component of classroom management. To improve learner academic achievement, Heckman (1996:121) advocates that teachers create classroom conditions in support of learner-teacher interactions. For the purpose of this study, the question is: What constitutes classroom management routines that will contribute to a classroom atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning?

According to Jacobs and Gawe (1996:334, 348-349), and Fontana (1992:58), classroom management routines involve non-academic matters that will ensure that classes function smoothly, namely:

- orderly distributing and collecting materials and papers,
- controlled leaving and entering classrooms,
- making efficient transitions between activities and classes,
- efficient starting and ending academic school days, and
- cleaning classrooms.

Effective classroom management, therefore, features efficient usage of instructional time, in combination with good learner behaviour. At this stage it is a probability that inefficient classroom management is the order of the day at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province and that learner disciplinary problems and overcrowding further hamper efficient teacher classroom management.

### *3.2.6.2 Learner responsibility*

According to Jacobs and Gawe (1996:335), ineffective classroom management can be transformed into effective classroom management when teachers adopt a participative approach through “the co-operation of their pupils ... This is possible when teachers involve pupils meaningfully in the planning of classroom activities ... Effective classroom management involves pupils in decision-making processes both in the phase of designing appropriate activities and in the interactive phase of implementing and maintaining such activities.” Humphreys (1995:127) adds that effective classroom management is only possible where the teacher ensures that the devised classroom systems are effectively implemented, giving responsibility to learners, and believing in their (learners’) ability to meet it. Smith and Laslett (1995:57-58) conclude that “teachers agree that they have little chance of managing classes successfully unless they are able to establish positive relationships with most of the pupils in them, and hopefully, with all of them ... constant failure inevitably begins to influence the opinion children hold of themselves”. It is, therefore, evident that learner responsibility towards classroom management is imperative.

With respect to teachers and effective classroom management, Jones and Jones (1995:126) emphasise that “teachers should work together to consider not only how their classroom management and instruction influence students’ behaviour and academic achievement but also how the school environment can be altered to encourage positive student attitudes”. Bull and Solity (1989:41) state that through a positive classroom atmosphere, learners will be able “to learn more quickly and effectively”. Furthermore, according to Arcaro (1995:41), there is, therefore, a need for a positive classroom atmosphere that features the following:

- a safe place, both physically and emotionally;
- students assume ownership for behaviour and learning;
- students participate in making rules;
- students develop personal goals and evaluate progress;
- respect and trust are the foundations for all interactions.

The researcher suspects that good learner behaviour is lacking in some Eastern Cape Province schools, which further inhibits positive classroom atmospheres characterised by good teacher classroom management. This study raises the following questions: Do principals at schools with low matriculation pass rates work closely with their staff members in order to identify areas of shortcomings in teacher classroom management, and do school principals design training programmes to meet those needs? Do school principals take on an advisory and a supportive role towards teachers who find the classroom situation very difficult to manage? Finally, do teachers want to bring about the necessary classroom management changes required to improve learner achievement and simultaneously positively influence matriculation pass rates? The researcher will investigate the possibility that low teacher morale can affect their classroom management.

### **3.2.7 Teacher morale**

Evans (1997:832) describes **teacher morale** as “a state of mind determined by the individual’s anticipation of the extent of satisfaction of those needs which s/he perceives as significantly affecting her/his total work situation”. The researcher wishes to establish the reasons for low teacher morale at schools in the Eastern Cape Province, because Humphreys (1995:68) maintains that staff morale “is the lifeblood of any staff group”, and may not be neglected in any school that emphasises learner academic achievement. The researcher will investigate how a lack of teacher morale in the Eastern Cape Province affects teacher classroom management, particularly as Sadtu (*Daily Dispatch* 11 March 2003:3 a) stated that the Department of Education needed to “boost the morale of teachers, among other things, to see improved matric results this year”. The MIP task team also stressed that “boosting their (teacher) morale, should be applied soon” (*Daily Dispatch* 11 March 2003:3 b).

Nathan (1996:128) states that poor teacher academic performance in the classroom arises from a lack of self-motivation, which, according to *The Teacher* (May 1999:15), may be the result of a high level of learner disciplinary problems. The latter is a cause for teacher stress, teacher job dissatisfaction, and ultimately, low teacher morale and burnout (Buwalda and Kok 1991:118; Dunham 1992:62; Van der Linde & Van der Westhuizen 1999:192). With regard to low teacher morale, the *Daily Dispatch* (19 April 1999:1) reported that a national educational survey in South Africa revealed that more than half of the teachers in service were prepared to quit their teaching careers because of “increasing pupil delinquency”. According to the report, teacher motivational levels decreased by 37,00% in the period 1995 to 1999. Besides stress due to the government redeployment process, many teachers experience high levels of stress related to “organisational climate, ... functioning in an atmosphere of inadequate autonomy, poor recognition of good performance, and especially lack of opportunities for innovation” (Van Zyl & Pieterse 1999:74). Whitaker (1995:80) provides the following additional reasons for low teacher motivation leading to low teacher morale:

- poor and inadequate teacher rewards from school principals for work done efficiently and effectively,
- low morale in the school, difficult relationships, conflicting values and attitudes, and
- poor working conditions at schools characterised by a lack of educational facilities and resources for teachers and/or learners.

Furthermore, Humphreys (1995:68-69) lists the following as the main requirements for the creation of a positive staff morale:

- a high level of successful interaction among staff members,
- decisions are made by the whole staff, and
- school principals are available and approachable to both teachers and learners.

Reynolds et al (1996:25) add that the well-being of teachers is an “acceptable objective for a school as an organisation; it contributes to stability in the organisation, which may lead to an increase in output”. The *Sunday Times* (29 September 2002:17) highlights that teaching is “a stressful job that offers limited opportunities for promotion and few incentives”. It is possible that teacher morale could be lacking at some schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province, especially due to poor working environments. The researcher will focus on how the working environment can affect the quality of teacher academic performance since the topic of teacher job dissatisfaction, especially in the Eastern Cape Province has received much attention (*Daily Dispatch* 20 September 2001:1; 1 November 2001:1; Burgess 2002). This issue is an integral part of the study as the Education Minister, Professor Kader Asmal visited schools that did not have a 100% matriculation pass rate in the Eastern Cape Province, in order to “see for himself what is going on in these schools and what the circumstances are that led to them not achieving a 100 percent pass rate” (*Daily Dispatch* 26 April 2003:6). In June 2003, the Education Minister announced that “working conditions for teachers are appalling” (*Daily Dispatch* 22 June 2003:1). The researcher is of the opinion that these appalling working conditions lower teacher morale and lead to teachers who are not committed to education.

#### *3.2.7.1 Teacher working environment*

Fontana (1992:62) states that teachers operating in unsuitable classroom conditions may find that “the strain upon the nerves tends to make them irritable with the children, causing the children to become ... less co-operative with whatever the teacher is trying to do. Thus, in addition to the sheer problems caused by the working environment, there are deteriorations in teacher-child relationships.”

Dunham (1992:82) states that a poor teacher working environment can be generated from

three important kinds of pressures, namely the physical, the financial, and the organisational. The physical aspects of poor working conditions include badly constructed buildings which prove to be inadequate for effective teaching. The financial aspects include reduced school budgets with lower levels of expenditure on equipment and textbooks, staff redundancies, narrowing of promotion opportunities, and the restriction of career prospects. The organisational pressures are related to aspects such as mismanagement by school principals, including difficult and frustrating staff relationships which may result in little support of the staff by the school principal. The qualitative research of this study (see chapters 5 and 6) is intended to establish whether these kinds of pressures adversely affect teachers in the Eastern Cape Province.

This study raises the question of whether teachers can be expected to make a successful contribution to learner academic achievement when they (the teachers) are subjected to poor working environments that are not conducive to teaching learners. In answering this question, the researcher refers to Ridley and Walther (1995:16-17), who outline the following basic teacher educational needs to contribute to a suitable teacher working environment:

- a safe school environment where there is co-operation between learners, all academic staff members, and parents,
- mutual respect among teachers and learners,
- a visually stimulating classroom,
- learner academic involvement in class room activities,
- a clear instructional focus and academic outcome,
- clear classroom organisation and structure,
- clear and fair school rules and expectations for all learners, teachers, and parents,
- a supportive, well-functioning school administration system,
- access to educational materials and technology,

- a sense of teacher control over the direction and outcomes of the classroom situation, and
- a sense of continuous own improvement.

Schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province could possibly have poor teacher working environments.

It is questioned, then, whether there are means at schools with low matriculation pass rates to support the upliftment of staff morale. According to Hill (1994:224), the following aspects can improve staff morale at school:

- learner academic achievement,
- recognition for achievements,
- work satisfaction,
- responsibility entrusted to teachers,
- advancement, that is, promotion, and
- adequate possibility of personal growth.

The researcher suspects that these aspects to ensure a suitable teacher working environment are lacking at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province. Accordingly, it can be questioned whether school principals in the Eastern Cape Province schools with low matriculation pass rates strive towards the fulfilment of the basic working environment for teaching staff. Can teachers be effectively motivated to be concerned about learner academic achievement when working under unhygienic, unsafe, and disharmonious conditions? Hoy and Miskel (1996:259) assert that “the only people who can change the instruction in the classroom are the teachers themselves”. Marland (1987:89) adds that teachers need to be motivated in order to make a concerted effort to improve their overall classroom management and, ultimately, learner academic achievement. It is possible that school principals do not make enough effort to motivate



teaching staff to become more actively involved in learner academic progress.

An editorial of the *Daily Dispatch* (9 May 2002:6) states that teachers are the Department of Education's "most precious resource because they fulfil the core function of the department, which is to educate our children", but the physical infrastructure within which the teachers work is largely "poor and deteriorating" with the result "that many of our demoralised teachers are failing our children. And, as our pathetic 45 percent matric pass rate last year [2001] showed, most of our children are failing school." The *Government Gazette* (SA National Department of Education 18 February 1999:12-13) states that school principal responsibility toward the staff is to "provide professional leadership within the school ... [and to] be responsible for the development of staff training programmes". The researcher questions whether schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province provide suitable working environments for teachers to teach in and whether school principals attend to these issues. Furthermore, it is doubtful whether school principals provide staff teaching programmes to support and uplift teacher morale. The next section will focus on the influence the learners may have on matriculation pass rates.

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### **3.3 THE LACK OF LEARNER DISCIPLINE IN THE CLASSROOM**

The *Education Law and Policy Handbook* (1999:4-9) defines a **learner** as a "pupil ... who is taught by an educator; ... any person receiving education or obliged to receive education" in terms of the South African Schools Act, 64 of 1996 (Department of Education: Province of the Eastern Cape 25 June 1999:2). Bearing in mind that Gounden and Dayaram (1990:310-314), and Duignam and Macpherson (1992:97-98) found that not only teachers, but learners themselves may adversely influence learner academic achievement, this section will examine how ill-disciplined learners can influence the matriculation pass rate.

Poston et al (1992:106) state that in educationally sound schools where learner academic achievement is reached, a daily regimen of sound learner discipline is clearly discernable. This is the responsibility of the school principal (Wiles and Bondi 1983:143; *Daily Dispatch Supplement* 21 January 2000:3). Blase and Kirby (1992:4) add that student achievement is “viewed as an indirect result of principals’ actions that affect instructional climate and classroom organisation”. Blase and Kirby (1992:1) and Nathan (1996:75) maintain that school principals play a critical role in school effectiveness and their role should be regarded as the key to quality education and an essential component of maintaining a good school atmosphere in which learners and teachers can work towards the fulfilment of the school goals. Hoy and Miskel (1996:204) add that the lack of fundamental education management by the school principal adversely affects the quality of education rendered to learners which may further lead to decreased learner academic achievement. In this regard, Avenant (1990:16) advises that a school “principal should manage the school climate so that it provides for effective management of children’s learning and behaviour in class ... unruly kids have caused havoc at their schools”. In the Eastern Cape Province, the *Daily Dispatch* (11 September 2000:8) warns against the fact that undisciplined learners lose interest in schoolwork and neglect their studies. Moreover, “poor management at schools and lack of discipline, by both learners and educators, contributed to last year’s [1998] bad matric results” (*Daily Dispatch* 8 February 1999:3 b). In January 2003, the Eastern Cape Province standing committee on education visited schools in the province and found that “bad discipline amongst teachers and learners was rife in most of the 157 schools visited ... [and that] absenteeism ... could be cited as the most striking example” (*Daily Dispatch* 6 March 2003:2).

This study questions whether desirable levels of learner discipline in Eastern Cape Province schools where low matriculation pass rates were achieved are, in fact, maintained through school principals’ fair and consistent management and leadership.

The following section will focus on the relationship between learner disciplinary problems and low matriculation pass rates.

### **3.3.1 Learner disciplinary problems**

Learner disciplinary problems will be examined to establish the extent to which they influence matriculation pass rates. The researcher will focus on the following aspects, which could have a bearing on learner disciplinary problems:

- educationally sound definitions of learner disciplinary problems,
- examples of learner disciplinary problems in the Eastern Cape Province,
- causes of the problems, and
- their influence on matriculation pass rates.

#### *3.3.1.1 Definitions of learner disciplinary problems*

To determine how school principals together with school stakeholders can curb learner disciplinary problems, various definitions of learner disciplinary problems will be examined.

School principals are required to know how to identify poor learner disciplinary behaviour in order to deal with and alleviate it. In this study, poor learner behaviour refers to any learner behaviour that

- appears problematic, inappropriate and disturbing to teachers (Galloway, Ball, Blomfiela & Seyd 1982:135-136),
- interrupts the child's own learning or that of his [/her] classmates ... [or any learner behaviour that] is antisocial in that it has detrimental effects on the child's interaction with his [/her] teacher or classmates (Bull & Solity 1989:136),
- does not conform with the rules set at school (Silo 1994:25),

- impinges on learning and teaching (Brown & McIntyre 1995:71),
- interferes with the teaching process and/or seriously upsets the normal running of the school (McManus 1995:3),
- obstructs successful learning in that it affects the fundamental rights of any learner, that is, any one learner's right to feel safe and to be treated with respect (Mabeba & Prinsloo 2000:34 - 35).

Evertson (1989:87) distinguishes disruptive learner behaviour, meaning that a “student’s behaviour was distracting to others and interfered with class activities”, from inappropriate learner behaviour, meaning that “although the student did not disturb others, he or she was not engaged in the assigned task”.

This study raises the question of how the lack of school principal managerial and leadership skills can, covertly, condone rife learner disciplinary problems. The researcher will focus on the extent to which learner disciplinary problems in the Eastern Cape Province schools with low matriculation pass rates hampers the creation of school atmospheres conducive to effective teaching and learning.

### *3.3.1.2 Examples of learner disciplinary problems*

For optimum, effective teaching and learning to occur, classrooms need to be efficiently managed by teachers in an attempt to minimise learner disciplinary problems. This is possible once school principals and teachers familiarise themselves with a wide range of examples of poor learner discipline. Jones (1993 a:25) provides the following examples of learner disciplinary problems:

- continuously talking out of turn,
- idleness,

- hindering fellow learners from learn,
- being wilfully late for class,
- contributing to an unacceptably high level of noise during teaching and learning,
- persistently disobeying classroom rules, and
- verbally abusing or being physically aggressive towards fellow learners or teachers.

The above examples of learner disciplinary problems are by no means exhaustive nor does it imply that these problems exist at all schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province. It is possible that school principals may not successfully address learner disciplinary problems because they may not be aware of the causes of problems that could influence learner academic achievement. The next section examines the causes of learner disciplinary problems.

### *3.3.1.3 Causes of learner disciplinary problems*

McManus (1995:127) and Mabeba and Prinsloo (2000:35) question whether the main causes of learner disciplinary problems in classrooms merely exist because of learners who constantly seek attention from fellow learners or their teachers. McManus (1995:127) encourages school principals, teachers, and parents to investigate and identify other possible causes for learner disciplinary problems besides learners constantly seeking attention from fellow learners or their teachers.

Possible main causes of learner disciplinary problems lie in areas such as

- incompetent teachers who cannot control and manage learners during class time,
- low learner morale (Potter & Powell 1992:63),
- low learner motivational levels (Humphreys 1995:105)

- inefficient school management by the school principal,
- the absence of clear school policies regarding the academic responsibilities for both learners and teachers,
- a lack of parental control over learners' academic progress (Silo 1994:25),
- a lack of lesson preparation by teachers,
- excessive enrolments at schools (Mabeba & Prinsloo 2000:35).

The researcher is of the opinion that most of these causes of learner disciplinary problems possibly exist in schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province. The qualitative research (see chapters 5 and 6) will examine the causes at these schools.

#### *3.3.1.4 Consequences of poor learner discipline*

Adverse consequences of a lack of learner discipline, due to a lack of classroom management in secondary schools in South Africa, are a matter of great concern for teachers and researchers. Arcaro (1995:125), Humphreys (1995:125-126), and Mabeba and Prinsloo (2000:36) contend that effective classroom management is based on the principle that during class time "pupils should be held responsible for consequences of their own behaviour". Macbeth (1989:161) concludes that acceptable learner behaviour only depends on the preparedness of learners to conform to effective classroom management that exercises learner self-discipline. Good classroom management should be aimed at educating learners to take responsibility for their academic progress.

The *NUE Comment* (April 1999:20) and the *Daily Dispatch* (12 January 2000:1) state that teachers need to contribute to maintaining an acceptable level of classroom discipline to create optimal educational opportunities to increase learner skills, knowledge, competence, and confidence. Poor learner behaviour and the adverse consequences of such behaviour will hamper learner academic achievement. Hence, learners need to

acquire skills that will contribute to their academic progress and, simultaneously, motivate them to be greater academic achievers. The researcher will examine reasons for low learner motivational levels.

- ***Low learner academic motivation***

According to *The Teacher* (February 2000:3) and *ReadRight* (28 October 2001:4), an issue that needs to be addressed by school principals is the lack of learner academic motivation that impedes academic progress. *The Teacher* (September 2001:10) indicates further that the teacher is responsible for motivating learners and assisting them to achieve their set learning goals. The researcher question whether learners are motivated to achieve academically at schools that are poorly managed by their principals; nor can learners be motivated when working under poor educational conditions and with unco-operative teachers and parents. Furthermore, in the researcher's view, the previously achieved low matriculation pass rates at some Eastern Cape Province schools could have decreased learners' motivation to achieve academically. This raises the question of what school principals are doing to restore learner academic motivation.

Regarding learner academic motivation, Arcaro (1995:40) points out that for learners to take ownership of their learning, the teacher needs to set the tone and expectations by creating a classroom "atmosphere of trust and respect necessary for students to begin to take risks in learning". Therefore, for the learners to set higher academic goals, they (the teachers) need to bring about a positive change in their level of motivation, that is, a desire to achieve academic success which, in turn, implies a desire to pass. Humphreys (1995:105) emphasises that learner academic "failure can have a devastating effect on a child's motivation to learn". The researcher suspects that learners at schools with low matriculation pass rates have been exposed to many matriculants' failing year after year and that has not motivated them to achieve academically.

Therefore, there appears to be a strong correlation between low learner motivational levels and low matriculation pass rates. It is possible that school principals do not ensure that teachers encourage learners to take responsibility for the consequences of their own ill-disciplined behaviour and that the latter contributes to lower matriculation pass rates. This raises the following questions: Do school principals consider the necessary changes in classroom management to improve the likelihood that children will behave in the desired way which will facilitate learner academic achievement? What is the role of the parent in assisting learners to achieve academically?

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### **3.4 THE PARENT BODY**

According to the *Education Law and Policy Handbook* (1999:4-9), a **parent** may be defined as any one of the following:

- the parent or guardian of a learner;
- the person legally entitled to custody of a learner; or
- the person who undertakes to fulfil the obligations of a person referred to in ... [aforementioned] ... towards the learner's education at school."

With regard to effective classroom management, *ReadRight* (26 August 2001:6) states that it is widely recognised by educationists that active "parent involvement can make an important contribution to school effectiveness". Hence, at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province, it is important for school principals to identify ways to increase active parent involvement in their schools. This holds true particularly as the *Daily Dispatch* (29 December 2000:3; 17 January 2001:1) reported that learner



academic achievement can be improved with the active participation of all school stakeholders, especially the support of their parents. According to Heystek and Louw (1999:21), the relationship between parents and schools should change from a “client type of relationship to a partnership relationship ... Previously parents were perceived as clients, and they did not have any say in the school and the management of schools. Currently it is expected that parents must be partners, which indicates that parents are a part of the decision-making process and its implication in schools.” There is a possibility that in the Eastern Cape Province schools with low matriculation pass rates, school principals place too little emphasis on the positive input that active parent involvement may have on learner academic achievement. Furthermore, it can be questioned whether open communication channels are in place at schools to promote active parent involvement and enhance learner academic achievement. There is a dire need for school principals of South African schools to express the importance of active parent participation in all school activities with the aim of improving the standard of education for all learners.

Jubber (1988:287-297) states that it is the responsibility of school principals to encourage parents to become actively involved in the education of their children and, in particular, their children’s academic achievement. The 1996 South African Schools’ Act (SA National Department of Education 1996:14; Brunton 2003: B-2) makes provision for parents to participate in the governance of schools, which should boost active parent involvement in school matters. *The Teacher* (January 2000:13) sums up active parent involvement at schools as: “Education is about parents assisting schools in leading a child towards a responsible adult life.” The following section will discuss the role parents play in the life-world of their children, and to what extent a lack of that role may affect their academic achievement.

### **3.4.1 The crucial role of the parent in learner academic achievement**

Cruickshank et al (1995:20) and Humphreys (1995:170) emphasise that parents have a phenomenal influence on the academic development of their children through their role as parents. Marzano, Pickering and Pollock (2001:65) and the *Daily Dispatch* (8 January 1999:1) add that parents can make an instrumental difference to the academic achievements of their children through creating a conducive atmosphere for learning at home, and by supporting their children during their time of study at school and at home. Section 8 of the South African Schools' Act (SA National Department of Education 1996:14), Macbeth (1989:63), and *The Teacher* (January 2000:13; April 2001:15) support this view. The question is whether parents of Grade 12 learners at schools with low matriculation pass rates support learner academic progress by providing home atmospheres conducive to learning. It is doubtful whether school principals inform parents at general school meetings, or otherwise, that parent assistance is required to ensure that learners undertake and complete sufficient homework and preparation for examinations.

#### **- Active parental involvement**

Jones (1993 b:48-49) urges school principals to make parents aware that a true partnership between the home and school will have a positive effect on learner academic progress. Jones (1993 b:46) emphasises active parent involvement as the one factor that probably affects learner academic progress most, and concludes that a lack of active parental involvement has an adverse effect on learner academic achievement.

According to Jones (1993 a:28-29), active parent involvement should begin with early communication between teachers and parents, in particular, children with behavioural problems which may reduce their (learners') academic progress. Therefore, one aim of active parental involvement should be for school principals to discuss how parents and schools can work together to assist learners to overcome behavioural problems that result

in learner academic underachievement or failure. School principals and parents need to become actively involved in developing a behavioural change programme for ill-disciplined learners. The researcher is of the opinion that some parents may be hesitant to involve themselves in school matters. Heystek and Louw (1999:27) cite the following reasons why parents may not be actively involved at schools and not support their children's academic progress:

- parents' preconceived, negative attitudes towards schools in general,
- parents' feelings of inferiority towards academic staff members,
- parents' lack of knowledge about the effective functioning of schools,
- the lack of provision of structures or opportunities for effective communication by the school,
- demographic reasons, that is, parents may live far from the school that their child is attending,
- parents do not know why and how they can be involved in their children's academic progress,
- parents may feel that teachers are qualified to ensure learner academic achievement,
- parents may feel that teachers are salaried to educate their children, hence there is no need for them as parents to be actively involved in the education of their children, and
- parents may be prevented by poor economic circumstances from visiting the teachers or the school principal at school.

Bearing the above in mind, the South African Council for Educators' Code of Conduct (*Education Law and Policy Handbook* 1999:4-10) stipulates with regard to the educator and the parent that a teacher, where appropriate, should

- recognise the parents as partners in education, and promote a harmonious relationship with them; [and]

- do what is practically possible to keep parents adequately and timeously informed about the well-being and progress of the learner.

This study raises the question of what further ways can be identified by school principals to allow more active parent involvement in their children's academic progress. *ReadRight* (4 November 2001:8) suggests that parents who want to assist their children achieve academically should

- accept, nurture and respect their children by allowing them to develop academically.
- find their children's strengths and encourage them to develop these strengths.
- where possible, guide them in their studies.
- encourage their children to achieve academically.
- work with their children's teachers. Parents should follow up on their children's progress and on subjects that need special academic attention.
- motivate their children by assisting them in setting realistic academic goals.
- assist their children to establish a regular and consistent study routine.
- assist their children to draw up a time table of regular study hours.
- provide their children with a study area. A well-ventilated place to study with adequate lighting, and few distractions, like loud noise, promotes effective studying.

The *Daily Dispatch* (23 October 2002:11) adds that parents should “create a structured environment in the home. Setting up a calm space helps the students to settle down and study ... Parents should be a support system.” These suggestions for improving active parent involvement will support learner academic achievement. However, in the researcher's experience, some parents of Grade 12 learners in the Eastern Cape Province schools with low matriculation pass rates cannot provide such circumstances.

In conclusion, Macbeth (1989:153) expresses the concern that teachers are undoubtedly “handicapped by the fact that they are not trained to work with parents, and not allocated time in which to do so”. Despite the fact that “many teachers have felt threatened by the increasing involvement of parents in education” (Humphreys 1995:169) and that parent contacts are often time consuming and energy demanding (Jones & Jones 1995:13), school principals still need to encourage active parent involvement in school-related matters. Arcaro (1995:57) states that parents may be prevented by economic circumstances from taking a more active role in education and some parents have to contend with their own negative memories of school. Nevertheless, Heystek and Louw (1999:27) point out that active “parental involvement can make a significant improvement to the standard of education”. The researcher suspects that school principals do not take the initiative to develop an open communication system that aims to promote active parent involvement in their children’s academic progress.

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### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

From the literature study in this chapter, it is clear that good learner relationships with both teachers and parents strongly relate to good quality learner discipline, which is the foundation for good classroom management. It is possible that school principals do not encourage co-operation between learners, teachers and parents because they (school principals) may not realise that the sum of their combined efforts is greater than their independent attempts at improving matriculation pass rates.

According to the acting superintendent-general, Mr Philip Qokweni, the Grade 12 intervention programme aims to “improve the matric results and the filling of vacant teaching posts are some of the steps being taken [by the Department of Education] to improve education in the Eastern Cape [Province]” (*Daily Dispatch* 6 May 2002:2). Nevertheless, in the final analysis, quality leadership and guidance provided by the school

principals to the learners, teachers, and parents is necessary in attempting to improve matriculation pass rates. The sound and effective functioning of schools is dependent upon a combined effort on the part of school principals, deputy school principals, heads of departments, learners, teachers and parent bodies.

This chapter indicated clearly that schools can and do make a valuable difference in the educational progress of learners, but the active involvement of all the stakeholders is still required. The literature study indicated that the school stakeholders at many schools in the Eastern Cape Province have not made possible the optimum provision of educational opportunities for learners of all ages to acquire lifelong learning and critical thinking skills. According to resources quoted in the literature, the Department of Education has not yet made every effort to achieve equity in a unified education system by providing facilities and resources, human and physical, for all learners.

Chapter 4 will present the empirical research design and qualitative methodology to be employed at four senior secondary schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province.

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