

Chapter 5

Analysis and interpretation of the qualitative research

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the procedure to be followed in the qualitative research. This study is an empirical investigation into whether school principals who lack effective managerial and leadership skills are partly responsible for the continuous low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province. The researcher will also probe whether school principals in the Eastern Cape Province are capable of maintaining a school atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning.

5.1.1 The research procedure: a brief reference

Chapter 4 described the qualitative research design and methodology of the study. This chapter presents the findings of the qualitative research. Four English medium, senior secondary schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province were selected, and participated in this study over a period of twenty days; some scheduled appointments were cancelled without notification. For reasons of anonymity, the schools' names are omitted and referred to as school 1, school 2, school 3, and school 4. The following groups of research respondents were selected from these schools:

- Group 1: four school principals, one from each school,
- Group 2: four Grade 12 teachers, one from each school,
- Group 3: four Grade 12 learners, one from each school, and
- Group 4: four parents of Grade 12 learners, one from each school.

The researcher first conducted interviews with the school principals (Group 1), then the Grade 12 teachers (Group 2), then the Grade 12 learners (Group 3), and finally the parents of Grade 12 learners (Group 4). After completion of the ethnographic interviews of one group, the data were interpreted before conducting interviews with the next group.

This chapter will present a detailed analysis of the information gained from the ethnographic interviews, participant observation, and the artefacts. The aim will be to determine what themes emerged that could be of assistance in determining the nature of the managerial and leadership skills of school principals. A collaborative integration of all the data collected from the respondents will thus be presented. Certain correlations with the literature study of this study will be made as the patterns emerge. Conclusions will be drawn from the entire presentation of research data in preparation for recommendations.

Thereafter, a proposed flow model on how school principals could improve the present practice to ensure improved matriculation pass rates at their schools will be postulated. This model will be presented in chapter 6.

5.2 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Detailed notes made by the researcher enabled him to make perceptive observations about the schools and the sixteen respondents. The researcher strived to present an objective, insider perspective.

5.2.1 Results regarding the school principals

As an introduction to the research study, the researcher aimed to provide an in-depth description of a typical day in a school principal's schedule at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province. Throughout this section of the research, the tasks with which school principals were engaged on a typical school day

formed the main focus of this section. The researcher investigated whether the school principals were based mainly in their offices, completing paperwork, talking on the telephone or whether they travelled the schools extensively, walking the corridors, and visiting classes and the staff room. The researcher set out to note how many interactions school principals had with staff members, learners, and parents.

During the respective visits to schools, the researcher reported on the following patterns:

- short staff meetings,
- unresolved learner disciplinary disputes,
- few, brief visits between school principals and parents, and
- school principals' absence from schools.

The following section is a presentation of these patterns.

5.2.1.1 Staff meetings

The school principals at schools 2 and 4 extended first breaks by approximately 30 minutes each to convene staff meetings where they outlined the academic and extra-mural programme for part of the second term, 2002. The researcher noted that no written term planners were provided to the staff members or the learners. During these meetings, the secretaries did not take minutes. It was noticed that only some staff members noted dates and events in their personal diaries. The school principals did most of the briefings and very few staff members asked any questions or participated in the respective meetings.

For the full duration of these meetings, some staff members appeared uninterested and were not involved in the discussions. At school 3, four staff members arrived midway through the meeting. During these meetings, the researcher noted that there were teachers absent at each school, respectively.

At schools 1 and 2 there were no early morning meetings before the classes resumed and the school principals did not convey the daily school events to their academic staff members. This caused a communication gap between the school principals and staff members. For the duration of the school visits, the school principals at schools 3 and 4 had very brief meetings with their deputy school principals. These meetings took place in the school principals' offices. At school 2, the school principal discussed a sports fixture for that particular afternoon and the other visit entailed a short discussion regarding outstanding school fees for the previous year, 2001. During the researcher's visits, none of the school principals' meetings dealt with issues related to teacher classroom management. None of the school principal respondents kept minutes of the meetings that they had with their staff, hence the researcher could not refer to any artefacts, such as minutes of previous staff meetings. The school principal respondent at school 1 indicated that he wrote notes and reminders for his staff in his diary, but this diary was not available at the time of the research.

5.2.1.2 Unresolved learner disciplinary disputes

During the visits to the four schools, the researcher observed that staff members at each school brought disruptive learners to the school principals' offices. At schools 2 and 3 the school principals relied on the teachers to give the learners suitable punishments. At school 4, the school principal indicated that, at a later stage, he would give a suitable punishment for the incurred offence. None of the school principals recorded the offences. All three school principal respondents at schools 2, 3, and 4 gave the respective teachers and the learners an opportunity to provide input on the offences. During the interviewing, the researcher established that school principals did not follow up on these matters. The researcher noted that all the teachers who brought the defaulters to the school principals were frustrated and were clearly annoyed with the learners' disruptive behaviour. None of

the learners was perturbed about the poor behaviour and the negative impact it had on academic classroom activities and fellow learner academic progress. Their behaviour and actions, in the presence of the school principals, were insolent and disrespectful. The school principals were upset about the reported disrespectful learner behaviour.

The researcher did not notice any school rules, learner discipline policies or any code of learner conduct displayed in any of the school principals' offices or in any of the schools' corridors. On enquiring about previous sets of school rules and regulations, school principals at schools 1, 3, and 4 produced outdated school rules and regulations. School principal at school 4 indicated that he was "not sure if the staff knew" of the existence of these rules. Only the school principal at school 1 could provide the researcher with a copy of the Departmental Circular regarding learner discipline (referred to in chapter 2 of this study). This school principal added that he "has not studied it yet". Furthermore, the researcher established from school principal responses that none of the school principals sent notices to parents regarding any school rules and regulations.

5.2.1.3 Few, brief parent visits

During the researcher's visits, school principals at schools 2 and 4 had short visits from parents. Both visits entailed matters regarding learners who were being reprimanded for continuous, unacceptable classroom behaviour. Both the visits were brief and the school principals did not resolve the matter as they said that they would attend to the matter at a later stage. The researcher established that these school principals did not make follow-up dates and did not provide adequate guidance on how to solve the particular poor learner classroom behaviour. During the time of the research, no follow-up letters were sent to the respective parents by the school principals. This emphasised that the school principals were not involved in the solving of learner disciplinary problems. It indicated further that these respective school principals were not interested in identifying learner disciplinary

problems. The researcher regarded and interpreted these activities as unsatisfactory procedures and poor managerial skills by the school principals. It was further questioned, in the light of this study, whether a lack of parent support and active involvement in curbing poor learner classroom behaviour partly contributed to the continuous low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province.

5.2.1.4 School principals' absence

During the researcher's visit, the school principal at school 1 apologised for the inconvenience caused by his having to attend a meeting with the municipality concerning a problem with their school's water supply. The school principal at school 4 had to attend a meeting at the Department of Education regarding the late delivery of textbooks and stationery.

All in all, the school principals' activities during a typical school day comprised making phone calls, and speaking to staff members and learners. During the researcher's visits, school principals at schools 2 and 4 put up notices in their staff rooms regarding a timetable change and school principal at school 3 announced a Sadtu meeting. Not one of the school principals made a class visit.

During the researcher's visits to the respective schools, he managed to establish a link between reality and the theoretical assumption about the real-life world of school principals, as portrayed in the literature study of chapter 2 of this study. It is necessary for school principals to ensure the smooth running of schools as institutions where atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning prevail to afford learners the opportunity to achieve academically (see chapter 2; *The Teacher* February 2000:17; Burns & Lewis 2000). Furthermore, efficient management is concerned with "orderly structures, maintaining day-to-day functions, ensuring that work gets done; [and] monitoring outcomes and results"

(Whitaker 1995:74). Through the observations of the activities at the four schools, the researcher concluded that the schools' atmospheres were not conducive to teaching and learning and that the school principals were not concerned with their management and leadership roles.

The following section will refer to similarities and differences between the findings of the qualitative research and the literature study. To draw accurate conclusions, the researcher referred to all the findings of the qualitative research study and artefacts.

5.3 ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEW ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The analysis and interpretation of the data gathered during the ethnographic interviews will be discussed under the following headings:

- Group 1: school principals,
- Group 2: Grade 12 teachers,
- Group 3: Grade 12 learners, and
- Group 4: parents of Grade 12 learners.

The exploratory questions for the groups during the semi-structured interviews are recorded in Addenda A, B, C and D of this study, respectively. The researcher analysed the interviewee responses of Groups 1 to 4, searching for events, words and phrases, that is emerging patterns, which occurred repeatedly. Finally, the recurring patterns were analysed to indicate how the events were similar or different. The gathering of information generated by the four data-collection categories was descriptive.

In order to gain an insight into the research interviewees' responses and draw meaningful

research conclusions, the researcher noted as completely as possible all responses. The aim was to establish, in the light of this study, whether a lack of efficient managerial and leadership skills by school principals was partly responsible for the continuous low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province. As a background study, the researcher focused on the conditions of the school grounds and the outside buildings as revealed during the visits to the four schools. This formed part of the artefact analysis as school buildings and equipment, including school documents, and school rules and regulations are regarded as artefacts (McMillan & Schumacher 1997:455-456).

5.3.1 Observations and artefacts

In a thorough analysis of the current artefacts, namely school grounds and buildings, the researcher made the following observations. The condition of all four schools visited by the researcher pointed to the fact that little or no care was taken of the school grounds. The grass was uncut and overgrown with weeds. At all the schools, the researcher noticed litter scattered on the school premises. No dirt bins were available at schools 1 and 3. Consequently, these school grounds appeared very dirty and uninviting to the researcher. There is clearly a need for the school principals of these schools to work closely with the stakeholders regarding the physical appearance of the school premises, especially the grounds and gardens. To ensure an improvement in the condition of the school grounds and gardens, the school principals should be required to give instructions in writing to the ground staff and to do follow-ups, as a form of control, to establish whether the instructions have been carried out by ground staff members. The researcher established that currently the school principals did not give the ground staff written instructions. At schools 2, 3 and 4, the school principals did have meetings with their ground staff, but no minutes of meetings were available. At school 1, the school principal indicated that the same members of ground staff had been at the school for many years and were familiar with their job descriptions and that they “did not need any reminders” from him.

· **The exterior condition of school buildings**

All school buildings of the schools visited by the researcher were very neglected and clearly in need of repair and maintenance. The researcher noticed that all four schools visited had broken windows. At schools 1 and 2, there were doors missing at the entrance to three classrooms. All in all, the physical condition of all the school buildings was in a shocking state. The researcher's findings regarding the poor condition of school buildings corresponded with the reference made to the condition of schools in the Eastern Cape Province in the literature study of chapter 2, especially the *Daily Dispatch* (20 February 2002:2; 13 March 2002:5).

· **The interior of the school buildings**

The researcher found that at all the schools visited, the school corridors were not clean and the walls lacked paint. Furthermore, at all the schools, the corridors appeared dull and not interesting as there were no posters or learners' projects on display.

During the ethnographic interviews with the school principals, the researcher questioned the poor condition of the school buildings and grounds. It became apparent to the researcher that the school principals did not show adequate interest in the appearance of the school buildings and grounds. The researcher established that none of the school principals reported the poor condition of the school buildings and grounds to the parents and did not request them to make any effort to improve them. It also became apparent to the researcher that parents were not actively involved in the maintenance and repairs required at the respective schools. At school 4, the minutes of the school governing body annual meeting, 2002, stated briefly that the Department of Education needed to make a concerted effort in improving the poor physical condition of their school. No other

comments on the matter were recorded at the meeting.

The next section will discuss the responses of the four school principals of schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province.

5.3.2 Group 1: School principals

The following recurring main themes, constituents or patterns emerged from the analysis of the data gathered during the ethnographic interviews with the four school principals. All the school principals reported

- on the poor physical exterior and interior condition of their schools, including the unavailability of running water, electricity, and inadequate proper sanitation
- that school rules and regulations for the learners were not clear and not displayed in the schools
- that school vandalism was rife
- that school overcrowding was a disconcerting factor, especially in regard to limited classroom space, textbooks and stationery shortages, and the unavailability of educational resources for both learners and teachers
- a lack of teacher efficiency in the classroom
- on poor teacher classroom management skills, especially organisational skills
- a concern over continuous learner disciplinary problems
- that the school atmospheres were not conducive to teaching and learning
- a lack of active parental involvement in their children's academic progress.

In this section the researcher will provide a detailed description of the above patterns.

5.3.2.1 Poor physical condition of schools

The school principals of schools 1, 2 and 3, respectively, were of the opinion that the physical condition of their schools was “in the worst state ever” (school principal of school 2). They stated that there were simply no school funds available to improve the poor physical condition of their schools. They added that they “expected the Department of Education” (school principal of school 3) to improve the poor physical condition of their schools. At schools 1 and 4, the school principals indicated that there is also a need for the parents to get involved with fund raising in order to facilitate the process of improvement of poor physical school conditions. They added that it had been many years since the Department of Education had contributed to the “maintenance of their school buildings and grounds” (school principal of school 1). The school principals of schools 2, 3 and 4 added that their communities were very poor and that fundraising efforts were to no avail.

The researcher observed that the poor physical condition of schools, as reported by the school principals, corresponded with various media reports (see chapter 2). The literature reviewed emphasised that the financial management of a school was the responsibility of the school principal and the school governing body, but previous financial budgets at all the schools indicated that the school principals did not budget sufficiently for school maintenance. The school principal of school 4 said that the poor physical condition of his school discouraged learners from taking pride in their school as a whole and did not motivate them academically. He added that the poor physical condition of the classrooms could be a contributory factor to poor learner academic performance.

• *Unavailability of running water and electricity*

All four the school principals indicated that in the past and at present, the Department of Education paid their water and electricity accounts. They added that their schools had

previously experienced the unavailability of running water and cuts in electricity supply due to outstanding accounts, and this had a negative impact on learner attitudes towards the Department of Education and their schooling. The school principals of schools 3 and 4 made continuous efforts to report the power cuts to the Department of Education, but the Department did not react immediately. Furthermore, the school principals of schools 1, 2, and 3 indicated that their schools had inadequate sanitation facilities, a commodity which learners “longed for” (school principal of school 2). According to these respondents, the lack of learner toilets, in turn, contributed to increased learner absenteeism and consequently to learners falling behind academically.

The school principals of schools 2 and 3 expressed concern over the unavailability of running water and the lack of adequate sanitation, which could become a health hazard. They admitted that such poor physical conditions of schools could be a contributory factor to low learner and teacher morale and school atmospheres not conducive to teaching and learning. According to the literature review, school principals need to take the necessary measures to ensure healthy environments at their schools.

The poor condition of schools portrayed by the school principals correlated with the current situation at Eastern Cape Province schools cited in the media (see chapter 2).

5.3.2.2 Absence of learner rules and regulations

The school principals of schools 1 and 2 assured the researcher that they should have a prominent role in the design of effective classroom management through “clear, revised school rules” (school principal of school 1). The school principals of schools 3 and 4 stated that there was a need at their schools for clear school rules and regulations for learners as their academic achievement was poor and their behaviour was deteriorating. They admitted that all learners needed to be issued with a copy of their schools’ rules and that these should also “be visible in the school” (school principal of school 2). The school

principals of schools 3 and 4 indicated that learner disciplinary problems had escalated to such an extent that there was clearly a need to emphasise the school rules and regulations. The school principals of schools 1 and 2 indicated that their school rules had been displayed in the past, but learners “pulled them off the walls” (school principal of school 2). All the school principals agreed on the importance of school rules should they envisage improved learner academic progress.

On further enquiry, the researcher established that the school principals of schools 1 and 2, together with the teachers, had already started to outline school rules and policies, especially policies to improve learner homework, curb learner absenteeism, and improve learner behaviour. These school principals could not indicate how long it would take before these rules, regulations and policies would be in place. The qualitative findings confirmed that for the existence of a school atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning to prevail, school principals needed to introduce and implement fair learner disciplinary policies. This correlated with the literature review. The qualitative findings indicated that all the school principals did not have such policies in place.

5.3.2.3 School vandalism rife

The school principals of schools 2, 3 and 4 indicated that school vandalism has been a serious problem at their schools and that vandals mostly targeted their schools during school holidays, especially the December/January holidays. The school principals of schools 2 and 4, respectively, stated that there had been at least one report of school vandalism per term at their schools, which also contributed to the poor physical condition of their schools. They stressed that their schools could not afford additional insurance or any security guards to combat the continuous problem of vandalism and suggested that the Department of Education should “step in” (school principal of school 4). The school

principals at schools 3 and 4 indicated that vandals mostly “broke windows and doors and school furniture” (school principal of school 4).

The foregoing corresponded with the literature review, especially the media reports of similar incidents at schools in the Eastern Cape Province. Both school principals of schools 2 and 4 said that they had reported the vandalism to the police, but to no avail. According to all four the school principals, the poor physical condition of schools, aggravated by vandalism, contributed to negative learner attitudes towards their own communities. The school principals felt that, due to school vandalism, learners were subjected to poor learning conditions in schools that already lacked the basic educational resources. According to the school principals, vandalism deprived the learners of classrooms conducive to teaching and learning and, furthermore, “made learners negative towards the education system” (school principal of school 1). The school principals’ statements correlated with the literature review, especially that school vandalism adversely affected the facilitation of the learning process.

5.3.2.4 Overcrowded schools

All the school principals agreed that overcrowding at their schools adversely affected their schools’ matriculation pass rates. Learner class lists and teacher registers dated back to 1997 showed that there were always very high learner:teacher ratios at schools 2, 3 and 4. All the school principals indicated that high learner:teacher ratios directly implied that there was a shortage of actual classroom space, shortages of desks and textbooks, and shortages of teachers, which contributed to school atmospheres not conducive to teaching and learning. The school principals indicated that their school governing bodies could not afford to pay for the shortage of teachers to reduce the existing high learner:teacher ratios.

They found it an “impossibility” (school principal at school 1) to address the problem of school overcrowding without the Department of Education soon providing adequate, qualified teachers.

The school principals of schools 2 and 4 also stated that in many Grade 12 classes, the learner:teacher ratios were greater than 50:1 in a very small classroom. The school principal of school 1 reluctantly indicated that, due to a shortage of teachers, there were up to 80 learners in one class with only one subject teacher, and cheating was rife and affected CASS negatively. All the school principals showed concern over the fact that overcrowding deprived Grade 12 learners of the individual attention that they were “entitled to “ (school principal at school 1). All the school principals commented that it was educationally unsound to expect one teacher to teach and accurately assess so many learners’ tests and examinations. In their view, this was the reason learner academic progress was not regularly monitored by teachers. They complained that they did not receive any guidance from their school governing bodies on how to approach or address school overcrowding. They added that in overcrowded classrooms there was “very little possibility for [learner] academic improvement” (school principal at school 1). The school principal of school 3 stated that, should the Department of Education envisage an improved matriculation pass rate, the existing high “pupil:teacher ratio should be decreased as soon as possible”.

The reality of school overcrowding and the additional financial problems incurred at these schools are in line with the literature review, which reported serious financial difficulties at schools in the Eastern Cape Province. Furthermore, the qualitative research proved that learners in larger numbers had less possibility of producing better test results than their counterparts. All the school principals agreed that the Department of Education needed to address the existing high learner:teacher ratio as their schools could not afford to employ more teachers to improve this situation. They felt that their communities were poor, parents

were not involved in the academic progress of their children and “basically left us to do the job” (school principal at school 2).

5.3.2.5 Teacher inefficiency

The school principals of schools 1, 2 and 3 expressed their concern that the teachers at their schools were very inefficient and that this was evident through the poor academic results achieved by the learners in their particular classes. All the school principals complained that they did not have the time or the educational resources to assist teachers to be more efficient classroom managers. However, they would like the Department of Education to offer more workshops where teachers could improve their classroom managerial skills. The school principals complained that the teachers’ administrative duties, such as keeping registers and completing reports, were often incomplete or inaccurate. To substantiate their complaints, the school principals of schools 2 and 3 produced incomplete learner registers done by teachers. The school principal of school 2 pointed out that he did follow up on many teacher duties, but that these attempts had still proved ineffective. According to him, the teachers “were not interested to make an effort in improving their efficiency”.

The school principals of schools 1 and 3 said that teachers often handed in examination papers late for moderation by subject heads, adding that the teachers merely said that they did not have enough time as they had to set more than one grade paper for more than one subject. In addition, the school principals found many errors in the question papers. None of the school principals had examples of previous examination papers available for the researcher to scrutinise. Furthermore, they claimed that the marking of examination scripts often did not occur in good time and many teachers did not complete the marking in time. All the school principals stated that it was difficult to deal with or remedy this issue due to the teachers using the existing high learner:teacher ratios at their schools as an excuse. The school principals of schools 1, 3 and 4 claimed that teachers indicated that they had

too many scripts to assess, but agreed that this may be a valid reason for inefficiency by the teachers. They maintained that inefficient teachers contributed to school atmospheres that are not conducive to teaching and learning. The findings correlated with the literature review in chapter 3 that advocated the provision of a classroom ethos that enhances learner productivity and the promotion of learner discipline through teacher effectiveness.

The school principals of schools 2, 3 and 4 stated that it was disconcerting to have to report that they received complaints that some teachers “allowed pupils to mark fellow pupils’ tests” (school principal of school 2) which needed to be controlled tests marked by the teacher for CASS. They reported that this practice gave learners the opportunity to cheat during the marking of scripts. According to them, the incidence of cheating contributed to learner disruption during classes and further serious learner disciplinary problems. All the school principals agreed that adequate teacher efficiency would contribute positively to an improvement of learner academic progress. The school principals of schools 2 and 3 stated that, unfortunately, there were many inefficient teachers in their schools who were not willing to make a concerted effort to change their negative attitudes towards the teaching profession.

5.3.2.6 Lack of teacher classroom management skills

The school principals of schools 1, 3 and 4 reported that there was a need among the teachers to be informed about more effective teacher classroom management skills that contribute to school atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning. The school principals of schools 1 and 2 indicated that the lack of teacher classroom management skills adversely affected learner academic progress. The literature review (see chapter 2) emphasised the necessity for school principals to encourage teachers to expand their professional knowledge, which would lead to improved classroom managerial skills.

- *Poor teacher classroom organisation*

The school principals of schools 1, 2 and 4 said they were embarrassed by the “improper classroom organisation of teachers” (school principal of school 1), in particular Grade 12 teachers (school principal of school 4). These school principals indicated that learners complained that teachers did not insist on classroom order especially when learners entered or exited classes, which “caused chaos” (school principal of school 4). They added that learners complained that teachers arrived late for classes and hardly ever dismissed them in an orderly fashion. The school principals of schools 2 and 4 replied that they had previously tried to address the problem, but the teachers did not heed their advice. All the school principals agreed that improved classroom organisation would also serve as motivation for improved learner academic progress as learners themselves would also “become more organised in their approach” to their academic progress (school principal of school 1). These aspects corresponded with the literature review (see chapter 3), which indicated that it is imperative for school principals to develop teacher classroom skills to enhance effective teaching and learning, and hence improved learner discipline. It is the responsibility of the school principal to ensure an effective instructional climate and classroom organisation (see chapter 3). From the school principals’ responses, it is clear that they lack the necessary managerial and leadership skills to make a positive impact on teacher classroom management as a whole.

The school principals of schools 1, 3 and 4 emphasised that not all the Grade 12 teachers in their schools were adequately qualified to teach Grade 12 subjects. A reason given by the school principals of schools 1 and 3 for allowing under-qualified teachers to teach Grade 12 learners was that there are teacher shortages, especially due to the government redeployment process. The school principals of schools 1 and 2 also indicated that some Grade 12 teachers had died, resigned or retired, but that the Department of Education had not yet filled the vacant teacher positions. These school principal respondents indicated that their schools did not have sufficient funds to “employ replacement teachers” (school

principal of school 2) and that this resulted in higher learner:teacher ratios. They expressed their concern in this regard and realised that teacher under-qualification contributed to low matriculation pass rates. All the school principals stressed that more qualified teachers should be appointed by the Department of Education to reduce the high learner:teacher ratios and afford the learners better learning opportunities.

The researcher pointed out to all the school principals that the Department of Education prescribed a learner:teacher ratio of 35 learners to 1 teacher. All the school principals indicated that they had learner:teacher ratios greater than 35:1 because they had a shortage of academic teaching staff. The school principals at schools 1 and 2 said that they had combined classes so that some would not be without teachers. It became evident to the researcher that the aforementioned did not comply with the policies of the Department of Education.

5.3.2.7 Learner disciplinary problems

The school principals of all four schools expressed their concern over teachers' verbal reports of poor learner behaviour during class time, which occurred on a "daily basis" (school principal of school 3). They were of the opinion that the learners did not pay any attention to reprimands from the teachers or themselves, and many times the same learners committed similar offences. The school principals of schools 1, 2 and 4 indicated that they and the teachers concerned "gave up on the defaulters" (school principal of school 4) who continuously committed the same offences. All the school principals added that dealing with disruptive learners is very difficult and very time consuming because they "wouldn't listen" (school principal of school 1). This raises the question of how school principals who lack the ability to stipulate learner rules and regulations, or put the necessary supporting structures in place, can demand learner discipline from the teachers.

Moreover, the school principals of schools 2 and 4 indicated that teachers always brought disruptive learners to their offices and expected them to solve the problem without the teachers dealing with these issues themselves. This action, in turn, caused more learner disturbances due to teachers leaving their classes to go to the school principals. The school principal of school 4 indicated that he had clearly told the teachers concerned not to leave their classes unattended during subject periods except for a very serious case of learner misconduct, but rather report minor defaulters to them at break times or immediately after school. He added that most teachers did not respect this request and that learner disciplinary problems disrupted the school atmosphere.

All the school principals felt that the high incidence of learner disciplinary problems at their schools “created a breakdown in the teaching and learning process” (school principal of school 1) and lowered levels of teacher morale (school principal of school 4). According to the school principal of school 1, the disruption in the teaching process led to learners’ developing negative attitudes towards their schools. All the school principals emphasised this problem. The school principal of school 2 indicated that he had raised the deterioration in the culture of teaching and learning at an annual general meeting and the school governing body had stated that they would address the issue in the near future. The school principals of schools 2 and 4 indicated that although they reprimanded Grade 12 learners for misbehaving, these learners seldom showed remorse for their actions. All the school principals admitted that they did not always have follow-up sessions with the teachers or the learners to determine whether learner behaviour had improved. The extent of learner disciplinary problems reported by the school principals corresponded with the literature review (see chapters 2 and 3), particularly in chapter 2, which emphasised that learner achievement is viewed as an “indirect result of principals’ actions that [positively] affect instructional climate and classroom organisation”. Undisciplined learners lose interest in their schoolwork and neglect their studies and this, in turn, destroys effective

instructional climate and classroom organisation. The foregoing was the situation at all the schools visited.

All the school principals were of the opinion that teachers did not manage to control their classes effectively and this contributed to the continuous poor learner behaviour. They reiterated that the poor learning environments at their schools, together with school overcrowding and teacher inefficiency, were part of the cause of learner disciplinary problems and, ultimately, contributed to the continuous, low matriculation pass rates. In the light of this study, it is questioned how school principals who lack the ability to address the foregoing issues can expect an improvement in their schools' matriculation pass rates. Given the above, the researcher is of the opinion that these school principal respondents were not fulfilling their job description, that is, to ensure improved matriculation pass rates through curbing learner disciplinary problems.

5.3.2.8 School atmospheres not conducive to teaching and learning

The school principals of schools 1, 2 and 3 raised their concern that they lacked the knowledge to improve the poor situation at their respective schools. The school principals' responses in the interviews made this evident to the researcher. At the same time, all the school principals referred to the need for the co-operation of the unwilling teachers, ill-disciplined learners, and the parents who were not actively involved in their children's academic progress. The school principal of school 4 indicated that he was addressing the issues with the assistance of the whole staff, but had "not yet seen any improvement". All the school principals stated that the lack of successful disciplinary measures by the teachers contributed to the prevailing school atmospheres not conducive to teaching and learning. They indicated that the lack of a school atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning was a multi-faceted problem especially as the parents were not actively involved with their children's academic progress. Moreover, the communities were poor and could not contribute to an improved school budget.

All four the school principals indicated that the poor physical state, including the poor school infrastructure and condition of school buildings and grounds, impacted negatively on school atmospheres, resulting in an unfriendly and uninviting atmosphere for learners and teachers alike. This, according to the school principals, had resulted in a drop in learner academic motivation as well as increased learner absenteeism. The school principals of schools 1, 2 and 3 maintained that learner academic progress would continue to decline unless they made concerted efforts to promote learner academic achievement.

The school principals of schools 3 and 4 suggested that “as a start” (school principal of school 3) they needed to report the matter of the poor infrastructure and physical state of their schools to the Department of Education and the parent body. They added that this might increase parent participation in school-related matters. The literature study clearly emphasised that school principals need to ensure a positive learning school atmosphere by creating a culture of work on a daily basis, promoting commitment by personal example and providing and consolidating an orderly, positive learning environment in the class situation (see chapter 2).

Furthermore, from the school principals’ responses it was evident that although they made some suggestions on how to address issues which impact negatively on matriculation pass rates, they did not carry out these suggestions and lacked follow-up procedures. The school principals, therefore, did not possess the necessary distinct organisational, control, delegation and evaluation skills to effectively contribute to school atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning. It became clear to the researcher that the school principals did not fulfil their role as accountable managers and leaders regarding the establishment of school atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning.

5.3.2.9 Parents not actively involved in learner academic progress

All the school principals stated, without hesitation, that active parent involvement in learner academic achievement did not exist at their schools. They indicated that they had attempted to make contact with parents through parent meetings, but very few parents attended these meetings and that they had “actually stopped having these parent meetings” (school principal of school 1). The school principals of schools 1 and 2 stated that they realised that parents did not know how to become actively involved in their children’s academic progress.

The school principals of schools 1, 2 and 3 indicated that at present their only contact with parents was if parents were called in to see them, mainly because of learner disciplinary problems or outstanding school fees. According to them, even then the parents showed very little interest in their children’s academic achievement and often did not arrive for scheduled meetings or offer apologies when they did not arrive for the meetings. The school principals of schools 2 and 3 stated that this clearly indicated that the parents were not interested in the children’s academic performance. The school principal of school 4 said that he had made various attempts to get the parents in to discuss their children’s academic progress, but most parents did not respond to these invitations. It should be noted that all the school principals showed concern over the fact that many parents did not realise how important their active involvement was, especially when improved matriculation pass rates were envisaged.

All the school principals said that there was a need for their school governing bodies to inform parents about the importance of parent meetings and that their attendance would be valued by the school principal, the staff, and the learners. According to the literature study (see chapter 2), it is the role of the school principal to educate the community regarding the importance of continuous communication between the parents and all school stakeholders. It is clear that the school principals did not make enough effort to communicate with the parents when it was necessary, but instead depended on the

governing body to intervene.

Given the traits of effective leaders, such as initiative, analytical abilities, resourcefulness, vision oriented, democratic-participatory management styles, time management skills, and high expectations of all school stakeholders (see chapter 2), it became evident to the researcher that the school principals lacked these traits. More importantly, the school principals showed a lack of effective communication, empowerment and accountability skills.

5.3.3 Group 2: Grade 12 teachers

The following constituents or patterns emerged from the analysis of the data gathered during the interviews with Grade 12 teachers at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province. The teachers

- stated that they were uncertain of their educational role and responsibilities in the classroom
- emphasised the adverse effects of overcrowding on the learner academic progress, especially regarding the shortage of educational resources, textbooks, and stationery
- reported on serious issues related to ill-disciplined learners that might hinder learner academic progress
- expressed a low level of staff morale towards the teaching profession.

This section will provide a detailed description of the above aspects.

5.3.3.1 Poor teacher role

The teachers at all four schools agreed that all the roles and responsibilities fulfilled by them would be imperative should they want to improve learner academic progress and decrease learner disciplinary problems. The teachers from schools 2, 3 and 4 emphasised that their role in the classroom was complicated by learners who did not heed or respond to warnings to spend more time studying and that this contributed to low teacher morale.

- *Uncertainty about core teacher duties and responsibilities*

Although all the teachers agreed that one of their main duties was to ensure that there was an acceptable level of discipline in the classroom, they seemed to be unsure of their core duties and responsibilities.

The teachers at schools 2, 3 and 4 indicated that it should be the responsibility of the school principal to provide guidance to them, in the form of a development programme to highlight their duties and responsibilities. These teachers indicated that their school principals did not guide them sufficiently in this regard at present. The teachers at schools 1 and 2 said that their school principals “have never given any attention to their core duties and responsibilities” (teacher at school 2) necessary for classroom atmospheres to be conducive to teaching and learning. All the teachers seemed unsure of how to efficiently fulfil the core duties and responsibilities as the school principals did not evaluate or give feed-back regarding the manner in which most of their duties were performed. This indicated a lack of school principal interest in classroom activities. It became evident to the researcher that the school principals did not show the necessary managerial and

leadership skills towards teachers, especially with regard to the effectiveness of the teachers' instructional leadership skills (see chapter 2). The school principals did not guide and encourage the teachers to perform their duties and responsibilities in an accountable manner.

- *Inefficient classroom management*

During the interviews, the teachers frequently stressed that effective classroom management was imperative and that they were aware that it was their duty to manage their classes efficiently. They said that improved classroom management would ensure a vast "difference to the poor manner in which pupils behaved" (teacher at school 1), and therefore, it would also improve learner academic progress. However, none of the teachers had a plan of action to improve their classroom management practice and added that they relied on their school principals' advice "which was not happening" (teacher at school 4). According to the literature study in chapter 3, it is the responsibility of the school principal to monitor classroom management and school practice in order to identify where there is a need for improvement, especially in the areas of actions to avoid classroom disorder, activities necessary to allow the main task of the teaching-learning situation to take place effectively, and establishing conditions in the classroom in which effective teaching and learning can take place (see chapter 2).

It became evident from the teachers' that the school principals did not provide adequate guidance on efficient teacher classroom management and classroom policies. The teachers at schools 1, 2 and 3 indicated that their school principals "do not visit their classes" (teacher at school 4) and, furthermore, "how would they (the school principals) know what is going on in classes" (teacher at school 3). The teachers at schools 2 and 3 indicated clearly that their school principals were "to blame for the disorder at school" (teacher at school 3). All the teachers indicated that the school principals did not provide

them with enough clear learner rules, procedures and policies for effective classroom management. School principals should schedule regular meetings with their staff regarding planning, organisation, and regular feedback on school academic development, focusing on learner academic progress (see chapter 2). From the teachers' it was clear that the school principals were not doing so and that this caused teacher classroom management to deteriorate and culminate in teacher stress. In the light of this study, the researcher asked about job satisfaction and all the teachers interviewed indicated that this aspect was almost non-existent in their life-world experiences at their respective schools.

All the teachers were aware that job satisfaction could lead to more dedication to the teaching profession.

The teachers at schools 2 and 3 said that during early morning assemblies the school principals should make the learners aware of classroom routines, how the learners should behave during class time, and emphasise the general school rules, "once they have been set" (teacher at school 2). These procedures for the school principals correlated with the literature study in chapter 2, which indicated that school principals should create opportunities to communicate issues to teachers and learners at various assemblies. The teachers at schools 1 and 3 added that there was also a lack of clearly formulated learner academic goals to which learners could aspire.

Regarding effective classroom management, the teachers at schools 1, 3 and 4 indicated that they would appreciate it if the school principals could "work closely alongside" them (teacher at school 1), advising them on how to implement classroom rules, especially in their classes with "large numbers of pupils" (teacher at school 4) and where learners were "unruly" (teacher at school 4). These respondents indicated that the foregoing contributed to classroom atmospheres not conducive to teaching and learning. All the teachers agreed that classroom rules, which were set with input from the school principal, all the teachers, all the learners, especially the Representative Council of Learners, and the parents would

reduce learner disciplinary problems to a great extent. The teachers at schools 3 and 4 emphasised that the implementation of efficient classroom rules would facilitate learner academic progress.

From the teachers' responses, the researcher established that they lacked the skills to co-ordinate and control the academic activities of the subjects they taught; 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, as well as the skill of effective classroom management (see chapter 3).

5.3.3.2 Classrooms overcrowded

In 1996, the Department of Education declared a national learner:teacher-ratio of 35:1. All the teachers indicated that their school principals were unable to adhere to the prescribed learner:teacher ratio, especially in their schools which were also in poor physical condition. The teachers at schools 1 and 2 stated that the poor physical condition of schools discourages learners from learning, especially when there is a power cut by the municipality. Consequently, the teachers felt that due to the large number of learners per class, it was "impossible to give individual attention" (teacher at school 3) to all the learners' academic problems and questions. According to the teachers at schools 2, 3 and 4, the latter reduced learner academic achievement and resulted in more opportunities for unruly learner behaviour.

In chapter 2, Jansen (1999:9) and the *Manual for School Management* (Eastern Cape Department of Education 2001:B-4) stated that a school principal together with the school management team 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“. The researcher maintains that the current high learner:teacher ratio is an indication that the school principals do not adhere to stipulations by the Department of Education and school governing bodies and this contributed to the continuous, high matriculation failure rates at Eastern Cape Province schools.

- *High, continuous noise level*

According to teachers at schools 1, 2 and 3, in cramped classes with high

learner:teacher ratios, the learners were often left to “learn by themselves” (teacher at school 2) or had to obtain academic assistance from fellow learners. This contributed to a continuous, high level of noise, which was detrimental to teaching and learning. The teachers at schools 1 and 2 added that, due to classroom overcrowding, the learners were seated too close to one another or shared desks, which encouraged them (the learners) to talk to each and be distracted from their academic work. This caused a further decrease in learner academic progress. All the teachers indicated that the school principals did not “give attention to the noise“ factor (teacher at school 3). It became apparent to the researcher that the school principals lacked the necessary effective management and leadership skills to contribute to the creation of a work ethic in the schools through the placement of supportive classroom management structures conducive to teaching and learning.

- *Shortened assessments*

The teachers at all four schools were discontent about the fact that, due to the large number of learners per teacher, it became very time consuming to mark tests or examinations. For

this reason, the teachers at schools 1, 2 and 3 shortened assessments. Also, to save time on marking large numbers of class tests, the teachers at schools 1 and 2 openly admitted that they allowed learners to mark fellow learners' tests. These teachers said that they realised that this practice had its own detrimental implications, such as cheating, which often occurred and influenced CASS negatively. They continuously warned learners not to cheat, but to no avail. They had also reported the matter to the school principals, who initially reprimanded the learners and then "left the matter there" (teacher at school 4). The researcher realised that the school principals lacked follow-up skills, and too often ignored adverse issues that might impact negatively on learner academic progress.

- *Increased use of the lecturing method*

The teachers at schools 2, 3 and 4 indicated that overcrowded classes mostly "reduced their teaching styles to lecturing" (teacher at school 4). They added that the lecturing method was clearly not a good teaching method to use should they envisage improved learner academic progress, because it did not allow for personal academic contact between teachers and learners. All the teachers indicated that their classes were too overcrowded, however, to introduce a greater variety of more effective teaching methods.

- *Shortages of educational resources*

The teachers at all four schools indicated that they would be better equipped to prepare the Grade 12 learners for their final matriculation examination if they (the teachers) had teacher and learner educational resources, including reference books, televisions and educational videos, and computers. According to them, the schools did not have the financial means to supply additional educational resources, and the parents did not buy or donate any learner educational resources. The teachers at schools 1 and 3 indicated that they had

“some educational resources, but it disappeared ” (teacher at school 3) from their classes.

These teachers suspected that learners took their study guides without their permission and did not return the study guides to them.

Furthermore, the teachers at schools 1, 2 and 3 said that many of the posters and charts in their classes had been “damaged or removed by learners” (teacher at school 2). In the teachers’ view, this meant that the learners “did not show respect towards their schools” (teacher at school 1). For this reason, the teachers at schools 1 and 2 indicated that they did not bring any of their own resources to school because they “feared that it would go missing or be damaged” (teacher at school 2). All the teachers stated that they had often asked the school principals to forward requests to the school governing bodies and the Department of Education for additional educational resources for both learners and teachers.

The teachers at schools 1, 2 and 3 indicated that they did not have any overhead projectors in their classes and, therefore, only had blackboards on which to write notes. These teachers indicated that, should they be provided with overhead projectors, they could “spend more time preparing notes at home” (teacher at school 3) and, therefore, more time with individual learners during class time. All the teachers agreed that the learner academic progress could be improved with the aid of more educational resources and well-qualified teachers, but realised that the schools could not afford these without the financial assistance of the Department of Education. It became evident to the researcher that the school principals did not possess the necessary financial management skills to propose a school budget where adequate funds would be made available for educational resources for teachers and learners.

• *Textbook and stationery shortages*

All the teachers despondently expressed the view that it was “very difficult to teach and to

prepare” (teacher at school 1) Grade 12 learners for the Senior Certificate Examination when most of the learners did not have their own textbooks from which to study. A “textbook shortage has forced pupils to share textbooks” (teacher at school 4) in the classroom and also after school. The school principals of schools 2, 3 and 4 had reported that many matriculants took books home during the year and did not want to bring them to class for fear that their textbooks would be taken by others who did not have textbooks of their own. The teachers at schools 1 and 2 stated further that “more and more textbooks were not returned at the end of the [Grade 12 academic] year” (teacher at school 2) and that this created an even greater shortage of textbooks for future Grade 12 classes. The foregoing corresponded with the literature review in chapter 2 which emphasised the shortage of textbooks and stationery at Eastern Cape Province schools (*Daily Dispatch* 18 April 2002:13; *Mail & Guardian* 26 April to 2 May 2002:5). The teachers at schools 2, 3 and 4 were of the opinion that the loss of textbooks at the end of the year was due to a lack of textbook control measures by their school principals. The researcher established through further interviewing that the teachers also did not follow-up on outstanding textbooks.

All four the teachers showed empathy for the learners who experienced textbook shortages and hoped that the Department of Education would, in the near future, provide each Grade 12 learner with his/her own textbooks for all subjects. They complained that many of the older textbooks were in “a bad state” (teacher at school 1) as they had pages torn out and were “scribbled in” (teacher at school 2). According to them, this further complicated effective teaching and learning. They all indicated that they had reported this matter to the school principals, but the problem had not been solved. All the teachers maintained “without a doubt” (teacher at school 4) that the matriculation pass rates would improve if all Grade 12 learners had their own textbooks and learner academic support material for all subjects.

According to the teachers at schools 2 and 4, a shortage of textbooks at school meant that they had to write notes on the blackboard and allow learners to copy the notes down. This was time consuming and infringed on teaching time or time allocated for learners to spend on class work exercises. Learners who did not copy notes from the blackboard often became “bored, disruptive and difficult to control” (teacher at school 2). All the teachers expressed grave concern over the impact of textbook and learner stationery shortages and hoped that the school principals and the Department of Education would “understand the seriousness of this matter” (teacher at school 1). The teachers at schools 1 and 4 indicated that due to poor school conditions and school overcrowding, which caused further textbook and stationery shortages, many learners appeared to be “very unmotivated and unsure as how to improve” their academic results (teacher at school 1). According to the teachers, there was an urgent need for the school principals and the Department of Education to address school overcrowding in conjunction with the poor physical condition of schools, in order to improve poor learner academic achievement.

The researcher found that the teachers’ responses corresponded with reports in the literature review in chapter 2 that “non-delivery of these materials [textbooks] seriously affects matriculation results” (*Daily Dispatch* 10 July 2001:3).

5.3.3.3 Ill-disciplined learners

All the teachers indicated that issues related to ill-disciplined learners had caused them to become “very negative towards the teaching profession” (teacher at school 4). The teachers at schools 1 and 2 complained that ill-disciplined learners continually “interrupted their lessons” (teacher at school 2). They said that ill-disciplined learners also created a continuous, high level of noise that “disrupted the classroom activities” (teacher at school 1). According to them, ill-disciplined learners often attempted to “rule” fellow learners (teacher at school 4). They added that the “school principal[s] did not act strictly enough”

(teacher at school 4) on this serious issue and there was a need for Grade 12 learner discipline policies. The latter made these teachers very despondent towards their school principals and their school management systems.

According to the teachers at schools 1, 3 and 4, ill-disciplined learners were very often academically weak and, therefore, contributed to low pass rates for tests and examinations. The teachers indicated that parents were aware of the latter but did not provide adequate home support for learner academic progress to realise. The teachers at schools 3 and 4 stated that parents were “simply not interested” (teacher at school 3) in their children’s academic progress. They added that the school principals needed to give parents advice in this regard. All the teachers were of the opinion that ill-disciplined learners kept their fellow learners from progressing academically as it became almost impossible for learners to concentrate in a noisy class where ill-disciplined learners deliberately caused “classroom havoc” (teacher at school 4). The teachers indicated that learner disciplinary problems, together with home circumstances not conducive to learning, contributed to low matriculation pass rates and that strict classroom rules would improve learner behaviour and learner academic progress. The teachers’ responses corresponded with the literature study in chapter 3 that undisciplined learners lost interest in their school work and neglected their studies (*Daily Dispatch* 11 September 2000:8).

5.3.3.4 Low staff morale

The teachers at all the schools reported that the “morale among staff members was very low” (teacher at school 4). They all stated that one of the main reasons for low staff morale was low levels of learner discipline at their schools and that they “found it very difficult to teach disruptive pupils” (teacher at school 2). Disruptive learners caused teachers to become very despondent and to “give up” (teacher at school 3) on teaching and, ultimately, decreased their involvement in their classroom management and academic

responsibilities. The teachers at schools 2, 3 and 4 indicated that they felt that the school principals did not distribute the academic and administrative workload at their schools evenly. According to the literature study in chapter 2, it is the responsibility of the school principal to delegate tasks evenly to persons who have the potential to successfully execute them.

The teachers at schools 1 and 4 expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the government's redeployment process and the adverse influence it has had on their morale.

This response corresponded with the literature review in chapter 3 that stated that the government teacher redeployment process had created insecurity among teachers, damaging their morale (Stear 1997:3; *Daily Dispatch* 19 April 1999:1; 8 January 2002:5).

The teachers at schools 1, 2 and 3 said that the poor educational conditions at the schools were not improving in any way, while those at schools 2 and 3 stated that this adversely affected their staff morale. All the teachers indicated that it was not a pleasure teaching under difficult conditions at school, especially where there was overcrowding and a shortage of textbooks and stationery. In addition, the teachers felt that there was an immediate need to lower the existing high learner:teacher ratios at their respective schools by introducing more qualified teachers as they (the teachers) were "overworked" (teacher at school 1). They said that low staff morale contributed to teacher illness and high absenteeism. These responses corresponded with the literature review in chapter 3 that teacher morale is low due to job dissatisfaction together with poor working environments at schools. Furthermore, it became evident to the researcher that the school principals did not provide the teachers with adequate guidance on efficient classroom management.

5.3.4 Group 3: Learners

The following patterns emerged from the data analysis of the learner interviews at schools

with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province. The learners

- expressed concern over poor physical conditions at schools
- remarked that school overcrowding adversely affected their academic progress
- were uninformed about school rules and regulations
- showed low learner academic motivation and academic involvement
- identified high levels of learner disciplinary problems
- indicated that a lack of active parent involvement in their academic progress existed
- reflected on a lack of home environments conducive to learning.

The researcher will discuss these aspects in detail below.

5.3.4.1 Poor physical school conditions

The learners from all four schools indicated that their school buildings and grounds were “not taken care of” (learner at school 4) and complained that the physical condition of the classrooms was very poor. The learners from schools 1 and 3 added that their schools mostly needed to be painted and needed “fixing up” (learner at school 3). According to the learners from schools 1 and 4, it was not their responsibility to clean up the school grounds, but the school principal should ensure that the general ground staff did so. The learners at schools 1, 2 and 3 indicated that because of their schools’ poor physical condition, the “school principal[s] and teachers did not care much about the school” (learner at school 2). The learner at school 4 was of the opinion that neither the teachers nor the school principal and the school governing body seemed to “care about the bad conditions of the school buildings, so why should we?” According to the learners at schools 1 and 3, an improvement in the physical condition of the schools would motivate them to do better in their schoolwork.

5.3.4.2 Overcrowded schools

The learners at all the schools were despondent about the “high number of pupils in their classes” (learner at school 3) and the absence of clearly formulated learner academic goals. They said that they did not get the necessary individual attention in classes nor were they often assessed, which could be beneficial to their academic progress. These learners added that overcrowding at their schools was further complicated by teachers who were under-qualified and clearly “did not have the answers to all their questions” (learner at school 1). The learners at schools 1, 3 and 4 felt that it was “unfair to share textbooks and desks” (learner at school 4) due to overcrowding. According to the learners at schools 1 and 3, it appeared that the school principals did not care about the adverse implications of school overcrowding and the fact that it hampered their academic achievement and added that “no one cares about us” (learner at school 1).

Due to the large number of learners in one class, the learners at schools 1, 2 and 4 indicated that a lack of individual attention made it “very difficult for teachers to inspire us” (learner at school 4) to become more academically involved in their learning processes during class time. Furthermore, these learners “missed active involvement during class activities” (learner at school 2) and showed dissatisfaction that the teachers did not monitor their academic progress regularly.

5.3.4.3 Uninformed about school rules and regulations

The learners at schools 1, 2 and 3 stated that they were not aware of the school rules, regulations and policies, especially those pertaining to learner academic achievement and goals. These learners indicated that they were “never informed by teachers” (learner at school 2) about them nor were they displayed in their schools.

The learners at all the schools mentioned that they were never requested to be part of setting any school goals, rules or regulations. They added that they were “not aware who set any of the school rules” (learner at school 3), but it was “surely the ... school principal” (learner at school 1). The latter response disagreed with the much needed participatory management by school principals described in the literature study in chapter 2, which emphasised that school principals should focus on a relationship-oriented management style where all the learners could be involved in decision making, especially the setting of school rules. The literature review also highlighted that school principals needed to move away from “traditional authoritarian models of decision-making towards more collegial views” (Steyn 2000:267) on role relations between principals and other school stakeholders. It became apparent to the researcher that this was not evident in the schools visited. Furthermore, all the learners agreed that learner academic progress should be a “main school goal” (learner at school 1) and that this, in particular, would encourage them to be “more aware of their own [academic] progress” (learner at school 2). According to the literature review in chapter 2, leadership by school principals should enable and assist learners to achieve planned school goals, especially learner academic goals (Whitaker 1995:74 - 133).

5.3.4.4 Low learner academic motivation and involvement

The learners at the four schools stated that the poor educational conditions under which they had to learn at their schools, especially the overcrowding and poor school infrastructure contributed to their low level of academic motivation and involvement. They indicated they did not receive any support from their school principals and teachers to achieve academically. In addition, the learners at schools 2 and 3 complained that they lacked academic motivation for their final examinations because they were not motivated or inspired by their families, teachers or school principals. The learners at schools 1 and 4 indicated that they had lost interest in class because the teachers did not make any

attempt to answer their subject-related questions and “classes were boring” (learner at school 4). All the learners indicated that they could be academically motivated if the teachers made a concerted effort to effectively “guide them through the syllabi” (learner at school 3) and give them more individual attention. The learner at school 1 stated that she was academically unmotivated because so many “Grade 12 pupils previously failed at my school” and that she also “had little chance of passing at the end of the year”. The learner at school 2 added that he did not receive any guidance from the school principal on improved study practices. From the learner responses, it was clear to the researcher that these school principals had not made adequate efforts to encourage learners to be academically motivated and involved in their schoolwork.

5.3.4.5 Low level of learner discipline

The learners at schools 2, 3 and 4 indicated that there was a very low level of learner discipline in their classes. They added that many Grade 12 learners were disrespectful to the teachers by doing other work or reading magazines during lesson time, or “bunking classes” (learner at school 4). The learners at schools 2, 3 and 4 added that the “teachers would reprimand the noisy pupils”, (learner at school 2) but the defaulters would take no notice of teachers’ requests for their attention and cooperation. The learners at schools 1, 2 and 3 said that teachers would revert to “shouting at the noisy matriculants” (learner at school 3), who would listen for a while, but soon continued disrupting the classes. They indicated that teachers continuously addressing disciplinary issues infringed on their academic time. All the learners agreed that the learner disciplinary problems experienced in their classes contributed to classroom atmospheres not conducive to teaching or learning. The learners at schools 1 and 4 said that more defined school rules would improve their behaviour and also their academic progress.

Due to continuous learner disruptions during class time, the learners at schools 1, 2 and

3 indicated that they felt that the “teachers had given up on them” (learner at school 1) and “did not make any effort to teach us well” or “even to make their lessons interesting ” (learner at school 3). Teachers were absent too often, which resulted in learners not being adequately prepared for the final examinations (learner at school 2). The learners at schools 1 and 3 said that they had complained to their school principals about the unacceptable behaviour of some of their fellow Grade 12 learners, but the school principals did not make any effort to rectify or improve the situation. The learners as a whole agreed that they would appreciate it if ill-disciplined learners could be “removed from all classes for good” (learner at school 1) to afford learners who wanted to learn the opportunity to do so. All the learners felt that disruptive learner behaviour should not be tolerated, but rather dealt with severely by the teachers, school principals and parents alike. They indicated that classroom rules to curb learner disciplinary problems would improve their academic progress. The literature study in chapter 3, especially Brown and McIntyre (1995:71) and Mabeba and Prinsloo (2000:34-36), emphasised the importance of discipline.

5.3.4.6 Low parent involvement

The learners at all the schools expressed concern over their parents' lack of interest in their academic progress. They also indicated that their parents did not participate in any school functions as their schools “did not have any parent meetings” (learner at school 4). They felt that they could improve academically if their parents were more actively involved and interested in their academic performance. The literature study in chapter 3 emphasised that active “parent involvement can make an important contribution to school effectiveness” (*ReadRight* 26 August 2001:6).

5.3.4.7 Poor home environment

The learners at schools 2 and 4 indicated that their parents did not provide a home environment suitable for studying. They said that they lived in very small homes together with their large families. These learners became very discouraged with their poor home circumstances and said that the lack of a home environment supportive of learning contributed to their poor academic performance. This corresponded with the literature study in chapter 3, especially the importance of the home environment (*ReadRight* 4 November 2001:8). From the learners' responses it was apparent that the school principals did not address this issue.

The learners' responses also made it clear to the researcher that they were not receiving adequate guidance and advice from their parents, school principals and teachers on improving their academic results. The researcher realised that the learners needed support, through efficient education management systems, from their parents, school principals and teachers regarding their academic progress.

5.3.5 Group 4: Parents

The following constituents emerged from the data analysis of the interviews with parents of Grade 12 learners at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province. The parents

- expressed concern that they did not know the schools' rules and regulations
- said that the schools' physical condition was very poor
- admitted that they were not actively involved in their children's academic progress
- indicated that they had almost no communication with the teachers or school principals
- agreed that their home environments were not supportive of learning.

5.3.5.1 Ignorance of school rules and regulations

All the parents interviewed indicated that they had no knowledge of any of the school rules and regulations, especially policies on their children's academic progress. They showed great concern over "not having knowledge about the school goals and policies" (parent of learner at school 2). They questioned how they could be "expected to assist our children" (parent of learner at school 4) to become more academically involved at school if they "did not have proper knowledge of the school rules" (parent of learner at school 3) and adequate academic support from the school principals. They insisted that the school principals should inform them of the school rules and regulations, and learner academic goals, which will result in improved matriculation pass rates. The parents at schools 2 and 3 mentioned that their children had complained about the lack of classroom rules and classroom disorder. They added that the teachers did not address poor learner behaviour in an efficient manner. The parents' responses corresponded with the literature study in chapter 2, especially the *Manual for School Management* (Eastern Cape Department of Education 2001:B-47 & B51 - B52), that emphasised the importance of effective communication channels between all stakeholders should school principals envisage improved learner academic achievement.

5.3.5.2 Poor physical condition of schools

The parents at schools 1, 2 and 3 indicated that the physical condition of the schools their children attended was neglected by the school principals and the Department of Education. These parents were of the opinion that poorly maintained schools reflected "poor school management and an uncaring Department of Education" (parent of learner at school 3). All the parents were convinced that their children would improve academically if they attend schools that were "in better condition" (parent of learner at school 4), especially a reduction

in overcrowding, and the appointment of fully qualified teachers (parents of learners at schools 3 and 4). All the parents were aware that the schools did not have sufficient funds to invest in the school buildings and grounds, but not one parent indicated that they were involved in the maintenance of the school buildings and grounds. The parents at schools 2 and 4 blamed the school principals for not addressing the “bad condition of the school” (parent of learner at school 4). The parents of learners at schools 3 and 4 added that school vandalism was a serious factor contributing to the poor physical condition of the schools.

5.3.5.3 Low parent involvement

The parents at schools 1, 2 and 3 repeatedly indicated that they “did not know how to be actively involved at the school” (parent of learner at school 3), and furthermore, that the school principals did not guide them in this matter. The parents at schools 2 and 3 said that they would be better informed about their children’s academic progress and behaviour if they were more actively involved in the school situation. The parents’ responses corresponded with the literature study in chapter 2, with special reference to the *Manual for School Management* (Eastern Cape Department of Education 2001:B-53).

The parents at schools 1 and 4 indicated that they lived far from their children’s schools and had no means of transport to the schools and that was the main reason for not attending school meetings or “not being in touch with my child’s progress” (parent of learner at school 1). The parents at schools 2 and 4 said that they did not have the time to become actively involved in their children’s schools. Although the parents at schools 1 and 2 indicated that their children had complained about poor discipline in the classroom, they still felt strongly that the teachers were being paid by the government to educate the children without their (the parents’) assistance. The parents at schools 1 and 3 indicated that they did not receive adequate academic follow-up reports from the schools, and queried how some

learners passed during the term but failed at the end of the academic year.

5.3.5.4 Poor communication channels

The parents at all the schools indicated that there was “hardly any communication” (parent of learner at school 2), in the form of letters or flyers, from the school principals or the teachers. They insisted that without effective communication channels, they remained “uninformed about my child’s [academic] progress” (parent of learner at school 4). The parents added that they only received a learner academic progress “report at the end of each term” (parent of learner at school 1), but felt that they needed to be informed about their children’s academic performance more often. It is clearly stated in the literature study in chapter 2, especially the *Manual for School Management* (Eastern Cape Department of Education 2001:B-51), that school principals should strive to maintain regular and sound communication through general correspondence so that parents can be informed about school matters, important events and dates by means of circulars or newsletters. Furthermore, school principals need to communicate with parents on their children’s academic progress (see chapter 2). In chapter 3 it is highlighted that “parents should encourage their children to achieve academically” (*ReadRight* 4 November 2001:8). From the parents’ responses, it became evident to the researcher that the school principals lacked the necessary managerial and leadership skills to maintain communication channels between the school and the parents.

5.3.5.5 Inadequate academic home environments

The parents at schools 2 and 4 indicated that their “home[s were] very small” (parent of learner at school 2) and that there were “many siblings and other family members living together” (parent of learner at school 4) in one house. For this reason, their children had to share the available study space. The parents at schools 1 and 4 indicated that their

children mostly studied at the dining room or the kitchen table as there was no place to study in their homes. The parents at schools 1, 2 and 3 added that there was often a high level of noise in their homes which might adversely “affect [their children’s] pattern of study” (parent of learner at school 3).

The researcher found that the parents were not interested in their children’s academic progress and were not actively involved in the improvement of their children’s academic results (see the literature study in chapter 3). Similarly, the researcher established that the school principals did not do follow-up work and showed no interest in the academic progress of the learners at their respective schools. Moreover, the school principals had not shown an interest in their learners’ home backgrounds or attempted to positively influence it through informing the parents of the importance of a supportive home. This had culminated in increased learner behavioural problems as both the school principals and the parents had not attended to this problem. With reference to Levacic (1995:19) and the literature study in chapter 2, the researcher has to agree that the school principals at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province lacked efficiency or effectiveness.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The qualitative data analysis and interpretation revealed a series of recurring, emergent patterns within Group 1, the school principals, Group 2, the Grade 12 teachers, Group 3, the Grade 12 learners, and Group 4, the parents of Grade 12 learners. This study questions whether school principals who lack effective managerial and leadership skills are partly responsible for the continuous low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province. The tone of the recurring patterns emerging from the four groups underlined the urgent need for education management by the school principals at schools with low

matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province.

It became evident to the researcher that the school principals did not empower the staff, learners or parents to participate in decision-making processes at their schools, especially learner school rules. All the school principals employed a “closed door” style of management. In the light of this study, the researcher also observed that all the schools visited were in a poor physical condition, had very high learner:teacher ratios, had a shortage of educational resources, and were institutions where disciplinary problems were rife.

The researcher concluded that the school principals visited in the Eastern Cape Province schools did not comply with the regulations of the South African Department of Education (1999:12) and the *Manual for School Management* (Eastern Cape Department of Education 2001:B-37), which require them to have “a School Journal containing a record of all important events connected with the school”. Therefore, the researcher found a gap in school artefacts, which could not be perused. This was especially evident in the lack of school rules and regulations, minutes of meetings, and other school-related records or Departmental Circulars. Referring to the similarities and differences between the qualitative research results and the literature study in chapters 2 and 3 (regarding quality management and leadership of school principals), the researcher concluded that at the schools visited, the school principals lacked the managerial and leadership skills to initiate and maintain strategies to improve the low matriculation pass rates.

Chapter 6, the final chapter of this study, summarises and discusses the main conclusions and makes recommendations for future research. A flow model that could be implemented in practice to improve the current poor situation at schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province will be presented and discussed in detail.

