Chapter 6
Conclusion, research findings and recommendations

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 of this study outlined the background to the problem, the formulation of the problem statement, the specific and general aims, and the empirical methodology to be used. Chapter 2 provided a background literature study on the management of schools by school principals with specific reference to the Eastern Cape Province. The adverse effects of a lack of school atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning were investigated. In chapter 3, the literature study focused on how teachers, learners, and parents may influence matriculation pass rates at Eastern Cape Province schools. Chapter 4 described the research design and qualitative methodology employed by the researcher and chapter 5 dealt with the data analysis and interpretation.

This chapter will focus on the results of the research undertaken at four schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province. Recommendations will be made in the light of the problem statement of this study on how to address the low matriculation pass rates in the province. The recommendations will focus specifically on how school principals should manage more efficiently and lead more effectively. From the literature study in chapters 2 and 3, it is evident that the communities concerned are calling for solutions to address the adverse influences of the school principals, teachers, learners, and parents on the matriculation pass rates. Recommendations will be made in this regard. The researcher will postulate a flow model to alleviate the problem of the low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province. This flow model will focus particularly on how school principals at schools with low matriculation pass rates can improve their managerial and leadership skills.
6.2 THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The following constituents or patterns emerged from the interviews with Groups 1 to 4, namely the school principals, teachers, learners, and parents of Grade 12 learners at four schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province. Emergent patterns were arranged according to the groups. The findings from the patterns are presented below.

The patterns indicated that

the school principals

- did not address the poor physical condition of classes
- allowed Grade 12 classes to be overcrowded
- showed poor managerial skills and leadership skills

the teachers

- did not emphasise learner academic goals in their classrooms
- taught in classroom atmospheres not conducive to teaching and learning
- had low expectations for learner academic achievement
- were under-qualified to teach Grade 12 classes
- expressed low teacher morale towards their profession
- lacked classroom management skills
- did not monitor learner academic progress regularly

the Grade 12 learners

- were ill-disciplined
• showed low levels of academic motivation
• were not adequately prepared for the Grade 12 examinations

the parents of Grade 12 learners
• did not provide home environments conducive to learning
• were not actively involved in the learners academic progress

These patterns were analysed and are presented in detail. The researcher has grouped the emergent patterns according to their relevancy to the school principals, the teachers, the learners and, finally, the parents of Grade 12 learners. Regarding these patterns, the researcher acknowledges the complexities involved and that these groups will require support to respond adequately.

6.2.1 Emergent patterns pertaining to school principals

6.2.1.1 School principals did not address the poor physical condition of classes.

All the research respondents (groups 1, 2, 3 and 4) agreed that their schools’ buildings were in poor physical condition. It was reported that these schools were not regarded as inviting institutions where quality education is offered to all learners. They complained about the poor overall condition of school buildings and that this adversely affected learner motivation to achieve academically. All the groups indicated that the poor condition of the schools was a reflection of the lack of interest that the Department of Education and the school principals showed in their schools. They stressed that the poor condition of the schools could be one of the main reasons why the learners showed negative attitudes towards their schooling and were not academically interested in or involved with the academic subject matter. The groups indicated that Grade 12 learners would, in all probability, be more academically motivated if the conditions under which they had to study were improved. The school principals and teachers (groups 1 and 2) indicated that the
lack of electricity, running water and adequate sanitation had contributed to most learners being despondent and negative towards the learning process. The teachers, learners and parents (groups 2, 3, 4) blamed the lack of managerial and leadership skills of their respective school principals for the poor physical condition of the school buildings. The teacher at school 4 stated that his school principal’s managerial skills “are almost non-existent”. Only the school principal of school 1 claimed that he had “reported this matter to the Department of Education” who had not as yet responded to his correspondence.

The school principals and parents (groups 1 and 4) reiterated that school vandalism contributed to the poor physical condition of their schools. They expressed their concern that vandalism caused a tremendous amount of damage to the physical condition of schools but had “no obvious solution” (school principal of school 3) to address this problem. They expected the Department of Education to provide reasonable solutions to the problem. There was a strong suggestion amongst all the school principals (group 1) that the Department of Education should set aside a budget for the improvement of the schools’ poor physical conditions. It was evident from the school principals, teachers and parents’ responses (groups 1, 2, 4) that the schools could not financially afford to undertake repairs and maintenance from their own school budgets. They indicated that neither could they post security guards at the school gates to protect the school property against vandalism.

6.2.1.2 School principals allowed Grade 12 classes to be overcrowded.

All the respondents (groups 1, 2, 3 and 4) indicated that their schools were overcrowded and that this adversely affected learner academic progress. The school principals and teachers (groups 1 and 2) complained that the classrooms were too small for the large number of Grade 12 learners per teacher at their schools. The school principal of school
2 indicated that “the Department of Education was not interested in [his] complaints about Grade 12 classes that were overfull due to a shortage of teachers”. It was evident from the responses that overcrowding in classrooms resulted in a lack of individual attention being given to learners. The school principals and teachers (groups 1 and 2) stressed that there was a dire need for an increase in the number of qualified teachers at their schools to address the low teacher:learner ratio. These respondents also felt that a reduction in learner:teacher ratios would benefit each Grade 12 learner and offer the learners the opportunity to interact with the teachers on a one-on-one basis. The school principals, teachers and learners (groups 1, 2, 3 and 4) expressed the opinion that the latter would benefit matriculation pass rates.

Furthermore, the school principals, teachers and learners (groups 1, 2 and 3) complained about a shortage of textbooks and stationery at their schools. It became apparent from the teachers and learners’ responses (groups 2 and 3) that learners were upset that they did not have the necessary textbooks and stationery and that some learners had to share books with their classmates. They said that this situation caused a negative attitude towards schooling among learners and that their “school principal[s were] not pressurising the Department of Education” (teacher at school 3) to act. The Grade 12 learner from school 4 indicated that it “was unfair that they had a shortage of desks while other learners at other schools had enough desks”. The school principals and teachers (groups 1 and 2) added that the overcrowded circumstances at their schools resulted in learners being dishonest during the writing of tests, especially when learners had to mark fellow learners’ class work. They said that this was unacceptable as it had a direct influence on their CASS marks. The teachers (group 2) reported that it was not always possible for them to mark all the work of the learners due to the high learner:teacher ratio.

All the respondents (groups 1, 2, 3 and 4) stressed that the overcrowded classrooms resulted in poor learner academic achievement and impacted negatively on their
motivation to achieve academically. It was clear from their responses that the school principals were not addressing overcrowding in a serious manner.

6.2.1.3 School principals showed poor managerial and leadership skills.

It became evident from responses from all the groups that the school principals showed poor management skills. The teachers and parents (groups 2 and 4) openly admitted that their principals did not manage the schools efficiently. The teacher from school 2 indicated that her school principal “clearly lacks proper management and leadership skills as the school was in a state of chaos”. The learner from school 4 said that “our school principal is not involved with our schoolwork”.

The teachers, learners and parents (groups 2, 3 and 4) blamed the school principals for a lack of guidance given to them. The teachers and parents (groups 2 and 4) indicated that the school principals did not organise regular, or any, parent meetings. The parents (group 4) indicated that they were not informed by the school principals how they could have a positive impact on their children’s academic achievement. The parent from school 3 said that her school “principal does not inform parents about the importance of involvement at school”. Furthermore, the teachers (group 2) indicated that the school principals did not organise staff development programmes where they could offer guidance to teachers on the improvement of classroom management or provide effective measures for the teachers to deal with learner disciplinary problems. The teachers and parents (groups 2 and 4) indicated that the school “principal did not mention or emphasise school policies” (parent at school 4) that could reduce poor learner behaviour and improve learner academic achievement. More importantly, the school principals did not ensure that the school budgets catered for educational practices that would improve learner academic achievement. Regarding the latter, the teacher at school 2 was adamant that “it is the principal’s job”. School principals did not provide for managerial skills that would
contribute to a school atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning.

The teachers, learners and parents stated that the school principals did not emphasise the development of school programmes beneficial to learner academic progress. It was evident from the teachers, learners and parents’ responses (groups 2, 3, and 4) that the school principals did not initiate learner academic goals that could guide learners to improved academic achievement. The teachers, learners and parents emphasised that the school principals did not take the lead in creating school atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning.

6.2.2 Emergent patterns pertaining to teachers

6.2.2.1 Teachers did not emphasise learner academic goals in their classrooms.

Learner academic goals need to include the improvement of their academic knowledge and intellectual skills. These goals should be based on the belief that all learners are worthy of being taught under the best possible educational conditions (see chapters 2 and 3). The role of the school principal as manager and leader of the school should be to set attainable learner academic goals together with all the school stakeholders. It is the responsibility of school principals to ensure that all learners know what the school academic goals are. The researcher found that the school principals did not take the initiative to develop these learner academic goals. Where school goals existed (school 1), learner academic achievement was not emphasised. Although this was the case at this school, the learner at school 2 added that the school principal “once said that pupils need to study or they will fail”.

All the groups reported that there was a lack of clearly formulated learner academic goals at their schools that emphasise learner academic achievement. The researcher reiterates
that nowhere in the four schools visited was there any emphasis of any learner academic goals. From the responses of all the groups, it became apparent that the learners were not informed, verbally or in writing, about attainable academic goals. The school principals did not remind the teachers and parents (groups 2 and 3) about the importance of informing learners about attainable academic goals that could improve the matriculation pass rates. The teacher at school 4 indicated that “it is not my responsibility to develop these goals, but the school principal’s responsibility”. Furthermore, the parents (group 4) were upset that their children were not given any clear academic goals to strive towards and blamed the current poor matriculation pass rates on the lack of learner motivation and academic goals. The teachers and parents (groups 2 and 4) indicated that they needed to be aware of these learner academic goals so that they could support their children in their academic endeavours and in this way contribute to improved learner academic achievement.

6.2.2.2 Teachers taught in classroom atmospheres that were not conducive to teaching and learning.

The school principals, teachers and learners (groups 1, 2 and 3) emphasised that there was a lack of school and classroom atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning. The school principals (group 1) complained that at their schools the Grade 12 teachers appeared to have no urge to teach and the learners showed hardly any interest in learning. The school principals, teachers and learners (groups 1, 2 and 3) indicated that this was evident in the current poor matriculation pass rates of these schools. The teacher at school 2 stated that her Grade 12 “pupils were not interested in the subject matter and this makes it very difficult to teach”.

The school principals and teachers (groups 1 and 2) made it clear that too high learner:teacher ratios in the Grade 12 classes, poor physical school infrastructure, high levels of learner disciplinary problems, low teacher morale, teacher under-qualification, the
lack of efficient classroom management by teachers, and a lack of learner academic interest and motivation contributed to atmospheres not conducive to teaching and learning. The teachers and parents (groups 2 and 4) added that the school principals’ poor managerial and leadership skills were to blame for school atmospheres not conducive to teaching and learning. All the groups agreed, without hesitation, that classroom atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning would improve learner academic achievement. The teachers at schools 2 and 3 stated that this was a goal they did not know how to achieve.

6.2.2.3 Teachers had low expectations for learner academic achievement.

From the school principals, teachers and parents’ responses (groups 1, 2 and 4), it was evident that they did not expect the Grade 12 learners to perform academically because the learners were not interested in their schoolwork and made too little effort to perform academically. The school principals and teachers (groups 1 and 2) emphasised that learners did not actively participate in classes, were often absent from school, did not do their homework consistently, continuously had high levels of disciplinary problems, and their preparation for tests or examinations was not satisfactory. This could lead to low matriculation pass rates. The teachers, learners and parents (groups 2, 3 and 4) indicated that there was a lack of learner academic support by the school principals.

6.2.2.4 Teachers were under-qualified to teach Grade 12 classes.

The school principals, learners and parents (groups 1, 2 and 4) expressed concern that some of the Grade 12 teachers were not adequately qualified to teach Grade 12 subjects. The learner from school 4 complained that “one of my teachers doesn’t know what the subject is all about and she should not be allowed to teach it”. The school principals and learners (groups 1 and 3) stated that these under-qualified teachers could not prepare the
matriculants adequately for the Senior Certificate Examination. All the groups stated that the Department of Education needed to provide schools with adequately trained teachers to provide quality teaching and to reduce the high pupil:teacher ratio. The school principals (group 1) stressed that the school budgets could not make provision for the employment of teachers to be paid by the school governing body.

6.2.2.5 Teachers expressed low teacher morale towards their profession.

From all four the teachers’ responses (group 2) it became evident that the teachers’ morale was very low, mainly due to the poor conditions in which they had to teach and continuous, poor learner discipline. The teacher at school 3 mentioned that she was “fed-up with teaching because of the pupils’ poor behaviour during teaching time”.

The school principals and teachers (groups 1 and 2) concluded that the teacher morale was low at their schools and that this had caused teachers to lose interest in their job descriptions and the academic progress of the learners. According to these respondents, the teachers became unmotivated and adopted a “don’t care attitude” (teacher at school 4) towards school-related matters.

From the school principals and teachers’ (groups 1 and 2) replies, it was often noted that the poor conditions under which teachers had to work, as well as learner disciplinary problems greatly contributed to their low morale. They emphasised that Grade 12 learners would achieve better academic outcomes if teacher morale improved at their schools. Moreover, the low teacher morale impacted negatively on their schools’ atmospheres and contributed to learners’ developing negative attitudes towards these schools. This was expected to have detrimental consequences for learner academic achievement. All the respondents (groups 1, 2, 3 and 4) maintained that the much-needed improved teacher morale would impact positively on learner academic progress. The school principal of
school 1 indicated that they “needed to have staff development programmes at schools where low teacher morale was evident”. The teachers at schools 1 and 3 added that an improved salary scale would encourage them to change their attitude towards the existing education system as it would “make me feel more worthy as an educator” (teacher at school 3).

6.2.2.6 Teachers lacked classroom management skills.

The school principals (group 1) were adamant that the Grade 12 teachers did not manage their classes efficiently. They maintained that because of this the learners developed a negative attitude towards their schoolwork. All the school principals added that, due to overcrowding, the teachers showed “no care about individual learner [academic] progress” (school principal of school 2), yet the teachers indicated that the school principals made no attempt to address poor teacher management through supportive classroom management workshops. A lack of classroom management by many Grade 12 teachers caused the school principals and learners (groups 1 and 3) to describe these classes as disorganised and ineffective. According to all the school principals and the teachers at schools 2, 3 and 4, a lack of classroom management contributed to a classroom atmosphere not conducive to teaching or learning.

The school principals and parents (groups 1 and 4) pointed out that they often had complaints from the Grade 12 learners about the poor quality of classroom management by their respective teachers. The school principals and teachers (groups 1 and 2) felt strongly that many Grade 12 teachers were unaware of the appropriate classroom management procedures and regulations that would support learner academic progress. The school principals and Grade 12 learners (groups 1 and 3) complained that the teachers made no effort to provide the learners with classroom guidelines or rules. These respondents felt strongly that the lack of classroom management by the teachers caused
a decline in Grade 12 learner academic progress. The school principals, the teachers at schools 3 and 4, and the learners at schools 1 and 4 admitted that the implementation of efficient classroom rules for the Grade 12 learners would improve the existing poor learner behaviour as well as learner academic progress in tests and examinations.

The school principals and teachers (groups 1 and 2) agreed that the teachers clearly lacked fundamental classroom management skills and that the teachers needed specific classroom management advice from their school principals if the matriculation pass rates were to improve. The teacher at school 2 mentioned that “it is very difficult to work with today’s children and I need guidelines from the school principal to manage them in the classroom ... then we will follow these guidelines”.

6.2.2.7 Teachers did not monitor learner academic progress regularly.

The school principals, learners and parents (groups 1, 3 and 4) agreed that the teachers did not monitor learner academic progress often enough. All the school principals and the teachers at school 2, 3 and 4 indicated that the reason for this was the high learner:teacher ratios and, therefore, the increased teacher academic workload. The learners and parents (groups 3 and 4) were of the opinion that the teachers did the bare minimum regarding the monitoring of learner academic progress. The parent at school 4 said that “teachers need to do more for our children to pass matric”.

The school principals and learners (groups 1 and 3) indicated that the teachers often delegated the responsibility of teacher assessment to the learners. According to the responses, this caused inaccurate evaluations of learner academic progress as well as increased opportunities for learners to cheat during the marking of assessments. According to the parents (group 4), due to a lack of teacher evaluation of learner progress, they were not regularly informed of their children’s academic progress. They added that
the teachers reported poor learner academic progress too late, consequently the parents could not take corrective academic measures in time.

6.2.3 Emergent patterns pertaining to Grade 12 learners

6.2.3.1 Grade 12 learners were ill-disciplined.

All the respondents (groups 1, 2, 3 and 4) indicated that poor learner discipline was the order of the day at their schools. The school principals, teachers and learners (groups 1, 2 and 3) made it known that there was undoubtedly a lack of learner discipline policies at their schools while the teachers, learners and parents (group 2, 3 and 4) stated that it was the responsibility of the school principal to initiate these “policies which our school needs desperately” (teacher at school 3). The teachers (group 2) stated further that there was a need for these policies as disruptive learner behaviour was adversely affecting learner academic progress, especially where classes were overcrowded. These respondents added that learner disciplinary problems had a negative influence on the atmosphere of teaching and learning, and that this issue “needed to be addressed by all [school stakeholders] as soon as possible, should our school envisage improved matriculation pass rates” (teacher at school 1).

According to the school principals and teachers (groups 1 and 2), learner disciplinary problems that occurred during class time interfered with the manner in which the Grade 12 teachers presented their classes because “pupils would often deliberately disrupt the classes” (teacher at school 3). This created a situation where teachers could not teach and the Grade 12 learners who wanted to learn could not learn because of the disruptive classroom atmosphere. All the respondents (groups 1, 2, 3 and 4) were very despondent about the high degree of learner disciplinary problems at their schools and realised that a lack of corrective measures was to blame. The learners and parents (groups 3 and 4)
indicated that the inadequate manner in which both the school principals and the teachers
dealt with learner disciplinary problems ultimately contributed to the vast extent of learner
disciplinary problems. The learners (group 4) added that the way that the school principals
and teachers dealt with learner disciplinary problems led to a great deal of academic time
being lost as teachers often left their classes unattended.

All the respondents (groups 1, 2, 3 and 4) agreed that the implementation of policies to
prevent disruptive learner behaviour would improve the possibilities for learners to achieve
better academic results.

6.2.3.2 Grade 12 learners showed low levels of academic motivation.

The school principals and teachers (groups 1 and 2) indicated that there were many issues
at schools that contributed to the low levels of Grade 12 learner academic motivation.
According to them, these included the poor physical conditions of schools, overcrowding,
textbook and stationery shortages, as well as learner home circumstances not conducive
to learning. These respondents agreed that the low level of learner academic motivation,
in turn, brought about low learner academic achievement and, ultimately, low matriculation
pass rates. The parents (group 4) added that the school principals needed to ensure that
classroom circumstances were conducive to teaching and “where their children would be
motivated enough to want to study harder” (parent at school 1).

6.2.3.3 Grade 12 learners were not adequately prepared for the Grade 12 examinations.

The school principals, teachers and learners (groups 1, 2 and 3) reiterated that the low
matriculation pass rates were due to the fact that Grade 12 learners were not adequately
prepared for the Senior Certificate examination. The parents (group 4) agreed with the
other groups, adding that the learners were “very lazy when it comes to schoolwork” (parent at school 4). The parents (group 4) also blamed the teachers for not adequately preparing learners for “their most important exams” (parent at school 2).

The learners (group 3) felt that they would do better in their final examinations if their teachers were absent less and “better prepared for the classes” (learner at school 3). The school principals (group 1) stated that learners would be better prepared for the Senior Certificate Examinations if the teachers show improved classroom management practices that emphasised learner academic progress. They added that the teachers were not to blame alone for learners who were not prepared for the examinations, but learners needed to be more responsible towards their academic work and do their homework and be absent less from school. The teachers (group 2) blamed the ill-discipline of the learners for the fact that the learners were poorly prepared for their final examination.

6.2.4 Emergent patterns pertaining to parents of Grade 12 learners

6.2.4.1 Parents did not provide home environments conducive to learning.

The learners and parents (groups 3 and 4) reported that the home circumstances to which many Grade 12 learners were exposed were not conducive to learning. This became apparent through the fact that “the home environment did not encourage me to do homework” (learner at school 2) or study for tests and examinations. These respondents indicated that this situation contributed to low learner academic interest and motivation and, ultimately, low matriculation pass rates.

The school principals and learners (groups 1 and 3) indicated that the parents needed to be informed of ways to improve their existing home circumstances to enhance learning and preparation for examinations. The school principals indicated that the low financial income
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(poverty) of many families contributed to the current poor home situations. All the groups agreed that if the Grade 12 learners were exposed to improved home environments that they would achieve better academic results and the matriculation pass rates would improve.

6.2.4.2 Parents were not actively involved in learner academic progress.

The school principals and teachers (groups 1 and 2) expressed their concern that the parents were not adequately interested and actively involved in their children’s academic progress. They emphasised that the parents did not show an interest in their children’s academic achievement, which was apparent from the parents’ absence from “the few parent meetings we had” (teacher at school 1). It was evident from the school principals and parents’ responses (groups 1 and 4) that the parents did not know how to become more actively involved in their children’s academic progress. The teachers and parents (groups 2 and 4) blamed the school principals for not making it clear to parents how they (the parents) could become more aware of ways to be more actively involved in their children’s academic progress. The parent at school 1 said that “no one tells us [parents] how to become involved at our children’s schools”.

6.3 LOW MATRICULATION PASS RATES: ISSUES AND OBSERVATIONS

The ethnographic interviews revealed many of the issues discussed in the literature study in chapters 2 and 3, which adversely affect learner academic achievement, namely:
• a lack of classroom atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning

It became apparent from the respondents’ responses that the school principals and teachers neglected classroom atmospheres. The classroom atmospheres were characterised by disorganisation, poor learner involvement, and poor learner discipline.

• a lack of school principal managerial and educational leadership skills

The schools principals lacked the managerial and leadership skills required to ensure that the school atmospheres were conducive to teaching and learning. It was evident to the researcher that the school principals did not adequately address the teachers' classroom management difficulties, especially the control of unruly Grade 12 learners. Furthermore, they did not make an adequate educational effort to encourage the learners to achieve good academic results required to improve the current low matriculation pass rates. More importantly, the school principals failed to actively involve the parents in their children’s learning progress.

• a lack of the emphasis on learner academic goals

The learners need attainable learning academic goals to be outlined and emphasised if they are to fulfil their academic potential. This emphasis was absent at the schools visited.

• inadequate channels of communication between all school stakeholders

To ensure active parental involvement in the academic progress of learners, continuous communication is required between the school stakeholders. School principals are required to communicate to the teachers, learners and parents the importance of learner
academic progress if improved matriculation pass rates are envisaged for these schools. From the responses, it became evident to the researcher that the school principals did not communicate regularly to the school stakeholders, expressing their concern over the prevailing problems.

- **poor physical condition of the schools**

The researcher found that the physical conditions were poor at the schools visited. These poor conditions included buildings in need of paint and repair, a lack of toilet facilities, electricity and water, and small classrooms not suitable for teaching.

- **overcrowded schools**

All the schools visited by the researcher had learner:teacher ratios greater than 35:1 in most Grade 12 subject classes. Learners shared desks and textbooks and there was a shortage of teacher and learner resource material, and a lack of interaction.

- **lack of learner discipline**

The respondents reported that learner disciplinary problems were rife at their schools. The lack of learner discipline contributed to classroom atmospheres not conducive to teaching and learning.

- **low learner academic participation and motivation**

Classroom overcrowding and low levels of learner discipline deprived the learners of the opportunity to participate in the classroom activities and interact with the teachers. Lower learner academic participation and classes disturbed by ill-disciplined learners lowered
learner academic motivation and interest.

- **poor teacher classroom management**

  The lack of teacher efficiency in the classroom reported by the school principals and learners was mainly reflected in their poor classroom management skills. This was especially evident in the lack of positive teacher influence on continuous poor learner behaviour. Furthermore, the classroom disorder and resultant poor learner academic achievement were due to poor teacher classroom management. The researcher found that this aspect, in particular, adversely affected the matriculation pass rates at the schools visited.

- **poor teacher working environment**

  The working environments for the teachers proved to be very poor. Most teachers had to teach Grade 12 learners in cramped classrooms where there were shortages of desks and textbooks, and where teacher and learner support material were almost nonexistent. This led the teachers to lose interest in teaching and contributed to the low teacher morale towards the teaching profession.

- **a lack of active parental involvement in learner academic progress**

  From the responses, it became evident that the parents were not actively involved in their children’s academic progress. The Grade 12 parents did not show an active interest in any school activities and many did not attend Grade 12 parent meetings. Very few parents had contact with the school principals and the teachers and therefore were seldom informed about their children’s academic progress.
• a lack of home environments conducive to learning

Most of the learners and parents’ responses indicated that the Grade 12 learners’ home environments were not conducive to learning and that this inhibited learner academic progress.

Considering the above observations regarding this research study, the researcher makes the following recommendations to improve Grade 12 learner academic progress and, ultimately, the low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province. These recommendations incorporate all the school stakeholders, and one recommendation is not seen as superior to another. In the researcher’s view, these recommendations as a whole will serve to improve the matriculation pass rates.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the research results, schools with low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province do not provide the Grade 12 learners with quality education and atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning. Furthermore, the following recommendations aim at the improvement of matriculation pass rates at schools in the Eastern Cape Province where school principals, who lack effective managerial and leadership skills, are partly responsible for the continuous low matriculation pass rates.

6.4.1 It is recommended that the Department of Education alleviate classroom overcrowding and all the adverse issues related to it.

It is recommended that the Department of Education alleviate classroom overcrowding by providing adequate, qualified staff members. This should lower the existing high
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learner:teacher ratios and, at the same time, increase the individual learner attention given by the teachers. The Department of Education, with the assistance of the school principals, needs to address overcrowding and its related issues, such as the lack of laboratories, libraries, scientific apparatus, and textbooks; in other words, all the facilities considered rudimentary in this study. This should bring about higher learner academic motivation, which should lead to greater opportunities for active learner participation in class. Learners should ultimately be afforded the opportunity to increase their academic achievement, which should result in higher matriculation pass rates.

6.4.2 It is recommended that the Department of Education improve the existing poor school infrastructure.

With an improved school infrastructure, the schools should offer improved academic facilities and increased academic opportunities to all learners. This should also ensure improved working environments for the teachers, which should boost staff morale. With improved school infrastructures, the learners can be afforded improved learning atmospheres. This should improve learner academic interest and motivation, which should result in improved learner academic achievement and, ultimately, improved matriculation pass rates.

6.4.3 It is recommended that the Department of Education provide adequate school security to prevent further vandalism of school property.

The loss of functional school items will decrease with a decrease in school vandalism. Therefore, the financial needs of vandalised schools require urgent attention as learners are more proud of schools whose physical conditions have been improved. This will create more inviting schools where learner and teacher absenteeism can be reduced. If learner and teacher absenteeism are reduced, learners can be afforded greater learning
opportunities. Learners should show greater academic interest in their schoolwork, which may lead to greater academic achievement and, ultimately, improved matriculation pass rates.

6.4.4 It is recommended that effective communication channels be put in place between all the school stakeholders.

Improved communication channels between all the school stakeholders, especially the parents, will allow them to feel part of the education of all the learners. Parents will be allowed to communicate more frequently regarding issues that inhibit or facilitate learner academic progress, especially if they become more actively involved in school-related matters. Effective communication channels between all the stakeholders should ensure that parents are aware of their children’s academic progress.

Furthermore, open communication channels would allow all stakeholders to suggest and administer corrective measures should learner academic progress be lacking. The Grade 12 learners should also be more academically motivated when they realise that all the school stakeholders show an interest in their academic progress. Through open communication channels, a greater opportunity for learner academic progress would be created and learners could strive to achieve improved academic results. This should develop into improved matriculation pass rates.

6.4.5 It is recommended that learner academic achievement be emphasised by all the education stakeholders.

All the school stakeholders, especially the school principals, need to emphasise attainable learner academic goals. The learners need to be motivated by the school principals, teachers, and parents to attain the learner academic goals of their particular schools. The
goals and their attainment should create a sense of pride in the learners and give them a sense of academic direction. Higher learner academic achievement should result in higher matriculation pass rates.

In particular, the school governing bodies need to promote effective learner codes of conduct to enhance school atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning. To contribute to such an atmosphere, the school governing bodies, together with all school stakeholders, need to design and emphasise learner academic goals. To further support school atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning and, simultaneously, improved matriculation pass rates, the school governing bodies should ensure that all the school stakeholders focus on Grade 12 learner academic progress. Furthermore, they need to encourage active parental support for learner academic progress and stress to parents the importance of home environments conducive to teaching and learning if the schools envisage improved matriculation pass rates.

The school governing bodies together with the school stakeholders need to prepare a budget each year and be accountable to the parents for expenditure incurred. To ensure improved learner academic achievement, the school governing bodies need to appoint only fully qualified staff for Grade 12 subjects. These measures should contribute to improved learner academic results and matriculation pass rates.

6.4.6 It is recommended that the school principals’ managerial skills be improved.

There is a need for the school principals to be both responsible and accountable for the professional management of all school-related tasks, through administering democratic-participatory management styles. They need to co-ordinate regular meetings with the staff management teams, all the teachers, learners and parents. To fulfil these duties, the school principals need to have exemplary time management skills.
Through efficient managerial skills, the school principals will be able to encourage parents to become more actively involved in their children’s academic progress and, in this manner, support learner academic progress. In order to improve the latter, the school principals, together with all the school stakeholders, need to compile a school code of conduct for learners and educators that should contribute to a school atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning where all conflict situations can be addressed. Furthermore, the school principals need the necessary managerial skills to set school academic goals, together with all the school stakeholders, and emphasise these goals to ensure the maximum learner academic participation and achievement.

Hence, the school principals need to display and exercise organisational, monitoring, control, delegation and evaluation skills, which should lead to school efficiency where there is evidence of an even distribution of the school workload and responsibilities between all staff members. The school principals need to emphasise both staff and learner academic development together with new academic challenges to ensure learner academic progress. Where there is a need for teacher academic development, the school principals should exhibit the necessary managerial skills to provide staff members with ample opportunities for in-service training. The school principals are encouraged to do more class visitation and provide thorough follow-ups and guidance on efficient teacher classroom management if they want to further develop their managerial skills.

The school principals need to take control over the academic planning and initiate the much needed school academic policies. They need to familiarise themselves with the relevant national and provincial policies and circulars to ensure the efficient co-ordination of curriculum-related matters and the smooth running of the school. Furthermore, efficient school principals, together with their supportive school governing bodies, need to ensure that the school finances are in order and the school property is maintained and kept safe.
from vandalism. Hence, they need to develop a role through which they can efficiently manage all the school assets and resources. Through more efficient management, the school principals can positively influence the matriculation pass rate. Through more effective educational managerial skills, they can positively influence the matriculation pass rate.

6.4.7 It is recommended that the school principals’ leadership skills be improved.

The school principals need to exhibit positive and dynamic leadership skills, especially when implementing school policies and learner rules and regulations, in order to facilitate learner academic achievement. They need to acquire effective educational leadership that is focused on the school academic goals, and characterised by continuous, open communication between all the school stakeholders. In-service training by the Department of Education, is recommended. The school principals need to lead with high academic expectations for all learners and, through effective communication, to encourage active parent participation in learner academic matters. Furthermore, should conflict and learner academic problems occur, effective leadership styles should be used to resolve them.

As effective leaders, the school principals need to focus on the overall effectiveness of the schools through responsible empowerment of the school stakeholders with the emphasis on teacher accountability to school stakeholders. As effective leaders, they should be required to encourage the teachers to expand their professional knowledge, hence, they should be knowledgeable about the curricula and effective teaching methodologies. The school principals need to show analytical abilities together with responsible administrative abilities whereby educational school resources, to which the school has access, can be effectively allocated to the teachers and learners.

6.4.8 It is recommended that learner codes of conduct be put in place by the
school principals to remedy learner disciplinary problems.

All the stakeholders should be involved in the preparation of learner codes of conduct. The school principals need to emphasise these codes and they should be displayed in the schools to remind the learners of its importance. The successful implementation of learner codes of conduct should enhance good learner behaviour, which, then, should translate into the school principals and teachers spending less time and energy on resolving learner disciplinary problems. School atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning should result from the aforementioned. Such classroom atmospheres will support learner academic achievement and, ultimately, improved matriculation pass rates.

6.4.9 It is recommended that the school principals direct immediate attention to upgrading the lack in the Grade 12 teachers’ academic qualifications through in-service training.

The Department of Education is required to identify teachers who are under-qualified to teach Grade 12 learners. The Department of Education need to offer in-service training, which is relevant to the Grade 12 syllabi and should academically uplift the under-qualified teachers. Attendance should be compulsory for under-qualified Grade 12 teachers. Therefore, it is recommended that the Department of Education offer its service at the District level to make it possible for all under-qualified teachers to attend. A register should be kept at these in-service training meetings for the Department of Education to do a follow-up on under-qualified teachers who did not attend and also to monitor learner academic improvement in the classes of the teachers who did attend. The Department of Education should assess whether the long-term in-service training offered to Grade 12 teachers is, in fact, successful.

6.4.10 It is recommended that the overall classroom atmospheres conducive to
teaching and learning be initiated by the school principals and maintained by the teachers and learners.

There is an urgent need in Eastern Cape Province schools with low matriculation pass rates for positive, interactive school atmospheres where all learners should have a sense of belonging and are encouraged to actively participate in all classroom activities. There is a need for learning backlogs to be eliminated in academically stimulating classroom atmospheres characterised by mutual respect and trust among all the teachers and learners. The foregoing should lead to more intrinsically motivated learners who are more interested in their academic work and should, ultimately, have a greater desire for academic progress.

During all classroom activities the teachers need to attend to the learners’ individual, distinctive academic-related problems. The learners need to be informed that well accepted learner behaviour would encourage the teachers to teach more effectively, which should enhance the creation of classroom atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning. The successful creation of classroom atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning should encourage learners to assume ownership for their behaviour as well as their learning. As a result, learners will strive to improve their academic achievement and, therefore, improved matriculation pass rates should follow.

6.4.11 It is recommended that the learners’ academic progress be monitored by the school principals, teachers and parents.

The school principals, teachers and parents need to be aware of the learners’ academic progress or regress. Should learners not perform academically as expected, the teachers and the parents should identify remedial actions in time. To academically encourage learners and to create a sense of academic urgency to perform according to their
academic potential, learners should be informed that the teachers and the parents are monitoring their academic progress. An improved learner academic awareness should result in a higher learner academic achievement and, ultimately, improved matriculation pass rates.

6.4.12 It is recommended that the parents be advised by the school principals to provide home environments supportive of learning.

The learners need to be afforded greater learning opportunities at home, therefore, parents should create learning environments supportive of learning, characterised by the elimination (or at least the minimisation) of factors that interfere with their learning patterns. The learners should be able to spend more time on their academic work, which should create opportunities for greater learner academic achievement. The foregoing should allow the learners to be better prepared for their final matriculation examination, and result in improved matriculation pass rates.

6.5 A PROPOSED FLOW MODEL TO ADDRESS THE LOW MATRICULATION PASS RATES IN THE EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE

The researcher proposes the flow model below (see figure 1) to deal with and improve the low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province. The model focuses on how the role of the school principal and his/her effective managerial and leadership skills will facilitate improved matriculation pass rates. The model shows further how the Department of Education, the teachers, the learners and the parents can positively influence the existing low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province. The model incorporates all the foregoing components, which cannot function separately from one another. This model is not intended for any specific school in the Republic of South Africa.
The discussion of this model addresses the main factors that impact negatively on the matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province and is based on the results of the empirical research undertaken in this study. The aims of this model are to

- envisage more desirable educational conditions at schools where learners may become more academically involved during classroom activities
- provide guidelines for improved teacher classroom management to enhance learner academic progress
- provide guidelines for creating classroom atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning
- provide a better quality education to all learners
- suggest ways to ensure active parent involvement in their children's academic progress.

As a specific aim, this model envisages the improvement of learner academic achievement and covers aspects such as

- improved school principal managerial and leadership skills
- adequate teacher in-service training, and
- home environments supportive of learning.

It is hoped that the implementation of this model will ensure the improvement of the matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province schools.
Addressing low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province: an education management perspective

Chapter 6

Results of the research, recommendations, and guidelines for further research

FIGURE 1 A MODEL TO ADDRESS THE LOW MATRICULATION PASS RATES IN THE EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department of Education should:</th>
<th>School principals should:</th>
<th>Teachers should:</th>
<th>Learners should:</th>
<th>Parents should:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>provide enough teacher and learner support material</td>
<td>provide Grade 12 classroom activities regularly</td>
<td>implement learner academic policies</td>
<td>improve classroom management practices</td>
<td>eliminate disruptive behaviour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Addressing low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province: an education management perspective

Chapter 6

Results of the research, recommendations, and guidelines for further research

To improve the practice by achieving:

- school atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning,
- improved quality of education offered to all learners,
- improved learner academic outcomes, and, finally,
- improved matriculation pass rates.

6.5.1 A brief overview of the model

To attain the aims of this model, the researcher stresses, yet again, that the various components, namely, the Department of Education, the school principals, teachers, learners and parents cannot function separately from one another. The model emphasises the prominence of continuous co-operation and communication between all components throughout.

- The Department of Education
The model shows that the appointment by the government of more qualified Grade 12 teachers, where shortages occur, will reduce the existing high learner:teacher ratios in overcrowded classes. This will alleviate the adverse issues of overcrowding and, more importantly, result in increased teacher-learner interaction. The desired outcome of this model, namely, improved matriculation pass rates, will further greatly depend on the Department of Education’s providing the teachers and learners with the required educational support material, textbooks and stationery. Here it is the responsibility of the school principals to inform the Department of Education of such shortages. By implication, the timely provision of the support teacher and learner material will allow the learners to become more involved with the subject matter, and contribute to greater learning opportunities.

Lower learner:teacher ratios and adequate learning materials will contribute to a situation where the learners will develop a sense of belonging and be motivated to become more actively involved in classroom activities. Improved quality of education for all the learners will be made possible. Hence, this model emphasises the instructional management role of the school principal as the one responsible for initiating and maintaining school atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning. The learners will be better prepared for their Senior Certificate Examinations.

- **The school principals**

The role of the school principals in improving teaching and learning conditions at the schools depends on their abilities to identify and monitor issues that adversely affect learner academic achievement and teacher classroom management. This, therefore, requires the school principals to conduct frequent class visits and implement learner academic policies and teacher classroom management practices with the assistance of the teachers.
It is imperative that the school principals continuously check on Grade 12 learner academic progress throughout the year. The school principals, therefore, need to make the learners aware of the learner academic goals for their schools and encourage them to achieve these goals. According to the model, the school principals will need to provide guidance to teachers on improving teacher classroom management skills that will capture learner academic interest and participation, as well as reduce learner disciplinary problems. This will afford all the learners the opportunity to actively participate in the classroom activities.

- **The teachers**

  The teachers can facilitate the learning process in class through the implementation of effective classroom management. This, in turn, will provide effective teaching opportunities and improve the quality of classroom activities. Hence, this model reiterate that the school principals should provide in-service training in effective classroom management, visit the Grade 12 classes more frequently and provide follow-up sessions for the school principals and the teachers can address issues that inhibit effective teaching and learning together. This model will not succeed if the school principals do not acquire the managerial and leadership skills referred to in this study (see chapter 2), which will enable them to provide academic guidance and support, where needed, to the learners and teachers. In this regard, in-service training by the Department of Education is reiterated. The school principals and teachers need to realise that learners who are interested in their work will become more disciplined and this will allow for greater opportunities for teaching and learning. This will enhance the achievement of the goals of this model.

- **The learners**

  This model stipulates that proper learner behaviour will impact positively on their academic
progress. Therefore, all the school stakeholders need to encourage the learners to adopt a positive attitude towards their schoolwork and have a mental picture of their academic progress. This model reiterates that the school principals at schools with low matriculation pass rates should design and implement learner academic policies that will eliminate any learner or teacher behaviour that does not support classroom atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning. Learners who are afforded greater opportunities to actively participate in class activities and develop an interest in the learning material will achieve improved academic results. Hence, this model confirms that increased learner academic interest will result in increased learner motivation and the attainment of their academic goals.

- **The parents**

This model reinforces the notion that active parent involvement in their children’s academic progress will support learner academic achievement. It is important to note that this model prescribes that school principals take the initiative to call parents’ meetings and educate parents on how to become actively involved in their children’s academic progress. The school principals need to introduce supportive measures that will encourage the Grade 12 learners to make every effort to prepare for their final examinations at home. For this reason, the parents need to provide environments conducive to learning.

The model also shows the parents’ responsibility to warn their children against the negative effects of undisciplined behaviour at home and in the classroom and how such behaviour will adversely affect learner academic progress. Furthermore, it places the onus on the parents to advise their children to obey classroom rules and regulations in order to allow the teachers to facilitate teaching and learning. The school principals need to communicate these issues to parents.
The model implies that, in dealing with issues that could adversely affect the matriculation pass rates, the school principals need to maintain open communication channels with the school governing bodies and the Department of Education through continuous reports and requests. It infers that effective communication by the school principals and co-operation between all school stakeholders will address the issue of low Grade 12 academic achievement. The most effective situation for improving the matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province will be through school principals who are prepared to make every effort to facilitate learner academic progress.

Finally, the model clearly encapsulates the roles of all the school stakeholders in ensuring improved learner academic performance and the ultimate attainment of improved matriculation pass rates.

6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The researcher recommends that further qualitative or quantitative research be undertaken in the following areas with the aim of improving the matriculation pass rates:

- research on a broader spectrum regarding the contentious issue of the low matriculation pass rates at schools in the Eastern Cape Province
- the influence of low matriculation pass rates in Eastern Cape Province schools on the communities
• verification of the results of this study on a larger scale, not only in the Eastern Cape Province, but in South Africa as a whole

• a similar qualitative study at Eastern Cape Province schools with a high matriculation pass rate in order to establish why these schools are successful.

6.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Chapter 4 outlined various limitations of this study. Although the qualitative research was conducted on a very limited scale, the seriousness of the impact of the Department of Education, school principals, teachers, learners and parents on the matriculation pass rate should not be underestimated.

This study was undertaken on a limited scale in the Eastern Cape Province as the four groups of respondents were small, namely four school principals, four Grade 12 teachers, four Grade 12 learners, and four parents of Grade 12 learners (N=16).

The goal of the study was not generalisation, but to probe the life-world of the respondents as they experienced factors contributing to the low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province.

This study does not mean to suggest that all the factors contributing to the low matriculation pass rates in schools in the Eastern Cape Province mentioned are necessarily experienced in every school with a low matriculation pass rate in the Republic of South Africa.

Despite these limitations, however, the findings provide a useful overview of the present situation regarding the low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province, which
could be beneficial to future related research.

6.8 CONCLUSION

Should the improvement of the current low matriculation pass rates in the Eastern Cape Province be the main aim of schools, then the school principals and all the school stakeholders mentioned in this study need to strive together for its attainment. Once the matriculation pass rates are improved, the Eastern Cape Province society as a whole will reap the benefits of school-leavers who are well prepared to serve and contribute to our economy. Therefore, there is an urgent need for school principals to provide efficient managerial and effective leadership roles focused on commitment to improved learner academic achievement. This means that all the participants in the schools should be regarded as potential power sources in the process of improving learner academic achievement. Hence, all the school principals of Eastern Cape Province schools with low matriculation pass rates need to provide quality management and leadership in school atmospheres conducive to teaching and learning. It is only the latter that will enable both colleagues and learners to accept and exercise responsibility for the improvement of matriculation pass rates.