

**A STUDY OF SYSTEMIC PROCESSES INFLUENCING EDUCATIONAL  
CHANGE IN A SAMPLE OF ISIZULU MEDIUM SCHOOLS**

BY

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

in the

**School of Psychology**

at the

**UNIVERSITY OF NATAL, PIETERMARITZBURG**

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SEPTEMBER 2003

## ABSTRACT

The Department of Education and Culture (DoEC) has since 1994, after the democratic elections in South Africa, introduced radical changes to the system of education. This systemic change has required a fundamental shift in attitudes of educators and other school constituents in African schools in particular, which were in the past education dispensation marginalized and poorly resourced due to the Bantu education system.

One of the main problems in IsiZulu medium schools has always been the seeming reluctance to change from apartheid era practices. The officials of the DoEC have often given what have appeared to be simplistic and platitudinous reasons for the apparent resistance to change and perennial poor academic performance in most IsiZulu medium schools. These reasons were used on a paucity of in-depth study into the underlying causes of the apparent reluctance to change. There was therefore a need to investigate some of the systemic processes which influence change in IsiZulu medium schools. This study therefore sought to identify and describe the processes which are associated with difficulties and inertia in order to try to improve the quality of education in a sample of IsiZulu medium schools.

Systems theories, theories of change forces and strategies of educational change formed the conceptual framework of this study. A multi-layered systemic approach provided the basis for understanding the interactive processes within the school, and the interaction between the school and its environment (including the DoEC). The data was collected from a sample of three IsiZulu medium case study schools, utilising focus group methodology. In each school, focus groups of Educators, School Management Team (SMTs), School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and Representative Council of Learners (RCLs) were conducted to collect data through interviews and discussions.

The data collection was at the same time intended to be an intervention process. This was done through utilising action research cycles that involved a self-reflective spiral of planning, observing, reflecting and replanning. The action research cycle process helped

the researcher to observe how school constituents engaged with change processes. A three-stage process of data analysis was used. The outcome was the generation of categories which eventually emerged into patterns. These patterns were used to theorise about some of the underlying causes of apparent inertia to change in these schools.

The study has found that many of the apartheid legacies such as quality of educational training, passivity and dependency syndrome caused by the DoEC's instructional top down approach in education management, still exist. Educators are frustrated by the disempowering management approach of the Department. Consequently they operate in a non-productive vicious circle, with little energy for problem solving and lack of authority and influence over parents and learners.

The study has also found that there is a mismatch between job requirements and personal qualities of educators. Educators, parents and learners seemed to lack knowledge, strategies and skills to apply in specific problem areas of their schools.

Clashes of ideological and cultural beliefs, lack of support from parents and communication between the school and parents, make it very hard for educators to cope with the new order of educational change.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am greatly indebted to the following people for their invaluable support and assistance without whom my research would have not succeeded.

The School Management Teams (SMTs) in my three case study schools were very cooperative. Even though I disturbed their lunch breaks, they warmly welcome and gave me the information and support I required.

Mr J.Pillay, the Deputy Chief Education Specialist, from Education Management and Information System, greatly assisted in producing some of the complicated drawings. Without his computer skills some parts of the thesis would have not been done.

I am grateful to the National Research Foundation which financed the last two years of the study. The bursary helped to pay university fees and buy books and some material resources.

Without the professional expert guidance and support of my supervisor, Dr J.Akhurst, I would have not come thus far. There were moments when I was on the verge of giving up due to the frustration of not seeing results of my intervention in three case study schools. Her supervision motivated and spurred me on to the end.

I thank my wife and children who allowed me to concentrate on my studies to their neglect. I was inspired by their ceaseless support.

**M.J.Ngesi**  
**September 2003**

## DECLARATION

Unless specifically stated to the contrary in the text, this thesis is the original work of the undersigned.



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M.J. Ngesi

17/11/2003

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Date

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

#### 1.1. Introduction

Educational change is a common process internationally. Many countries such as the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia and Canada are engaged in the processes of restructuring their schools (Popkewitz, 1991). Harber and Davies (1997) add to this list of changing systems some African states, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America. In all these countries, schools seem to be in a constant state of reorganization with the dismantling of centralized authorities and bureaucracies, that include support services and standard operational procedures and processes (Telford, 1996).

Dimmock and O'Donoghue (1997) have noted that the process of change has taken different forms in different contexts. In the United Kingdom change aimed at introducing a core national curriculum which provided the central government with control over the subject-matter content of education (Lawton, 1983). In Australia change involved a shift to a decentralized school-based management, where the focus of change was on the whole school level, primarily affecting governance, management, administration, introduction of more flexible, responsive and student-oriented service delivery targeting change in work organization, pedagogical practices and learning process (Dimmock and O'Donoghue, 1997). Kanpol and McLaren (1995) have reported that in American education reform was aimed at being explicitly linked to the transformation of the social and cultural reality in which people live.

In apartheid South Africa, school systems were characterized by hierarchical and authoritarian structures as a result of the dominant culture of the time. This cultural ethos resulted in a system of education that produced a poor quality of education for the majority of the South African population. In post apartheid South Africa change or restructuring of the whole education system has consequently become imperative.

This study focuses on the existing educational system in a sample of traditionally IsiZulu schools that in the apartheid era were exclusively for IsiZulu learners. This term describes the language and culture of the majority of the constituencies. Such schools create a unique opportunity to study educational change in the rapidly changing social and political context. The traditional culture of AmaZulu, coupled with the bureaucratic and authoritarian approach of the apartheid education of the past has produced a unique system of power relations in South Africa which made the educational context difficult to access by all African children. The education system of AmaZulu and all other ethnic groups tended to be paternalistic, power-coercive, prescriptive and top-down in instituting change (Ngesi, 1984). The present interface of AmaZulu traditional leadership styles and more democratic practices of western models appear to be problematic and fraught with tensions.

In other parts of the world, which were not affected by the political dominance of one culture over another, change seems to have been motivated by different factors. Popkewitz (1991) refers to some of these such as social regulation, economic revival, cultural transformation and national solidarity. The same author further adds that change could also relate to historically formed patterns of social epistemology, power relations and institutions.

In South Africa however, it is imperative for the whole education system has to be overhauled, due to the inequalities of the past, and the African section of the population is likely to be the most affected by the radical educational reform.

The schools, particularly IsiZulu medium schools that were previously disadvantaged, are in crisis. Mncwabe (1993) maintains that this demands urgent and critical appraisal of the whole enterprise of education in South Africa. The crisis would seem to centre on the apparent resistance to change in these schools, where there has for many decades, been a concern with the poor quality of education. It was, and it is still maintained that many of these schools seem to be unwilling to improve their teaching and learning, as the fundamental aim of education. Such schools, according to Smetherham (1982) and Van

der Westhuizen (1997), appear to be unwilling to seek solutions to problems they have, but rather seek to remain unchanged, and seem to resist change.

The apparent reluctance to change in IsiZulu medium schools should be seen against the backdrop of historical and contextual factors, especially during the first half of the 1950, which informed educational development in South Africa (Ngesi, 1984).

The education of Blacks in South Africa was based on a political system that aimed to arrest their total development. According to Akhurst (2001) apartheid emerged in South Africa as the over-arching policy of the Nationalist government after their 1948 election to power by a whites- only electorate. There was a vision in South Africa for prosperity and dignity for the Afrikaner, and since the group was a minority, black South Africans were seen as a potentially great threat to their aspirations

The Afrikaner government decided to use apartheid based education to control the blacks. Apartheid policies developed into a system of white power based on beliefs in racial superiority, with such developments as differential policies regarding land ownership, differing rights of access to certain areas, job reservation, separate development, Christian National Education for white learners and Bantu Education for Black learners, all policed by a vigilant and often brutal police force (Akhurst, 2001).

The ideology of the National Government was firmly expressed in the school systems which developed between 1948 and 1994 in South Africa (Akhurst, 2001). In order to perpetuate the system, teachers who were trained before 1948, especially the university graduates were regarded as highly dangerous for the education system that was being introduced. Consequently these teachers had to be replaced by a “special creature, a Bantu-ized teacher was necessary to Bantu education” (Tabata, 1959, in Ngesi, 1984:78).

The ‘Bantu-ized teacher’ would be an under-privileged, low-status and partly trained teacher who could not realize his professional responsibility. To be thus meant that he was frequently humiliated and hedged around with obnoxious regulations (Ngesi, 1984).

As early 1936, a committee argued that “the education of the white could prepare him for life in a dominant society and the education of the black child for a subordinate society”(Dovey and Mason, 1984 in Akhurst, 2001).

The architects of Bantu education so planned it that it became a highly controlled type of education preparing Africans for subordinate positions in the workplace, equipping them with limited skills and inculcating such values as obedience and compliance. (No critical thinking was encouraged) and unquestioned authority of the teaching staff and the words of the textbooks (Akhurst, 2001).

Mungazi and Walker (1997) emphasised historical factors as the essential influence in crippling the developing education. Its influence can be manifested in its retardation of the course of reform so that education fails to promote its basic objective. The history of education has had a negative impact on the cognitive development and the whole social life of Africans in South Africa.

I support Hartshorne’s (1992) view that Black education suffered discriminatory hierarchy of financing, resources, facilities, quality and outcomes, with the White systems faring far better. Most of IsiZulu medium schools are similar to the schools in developing countries, bleakly described as experiencing wholesale systemic decay:

Classrooms are overcrowded, teachers are overworked and underpaid, .... it is not uncommon .. in the rural African schools to see a single textbook for a given subject shared by a whole class and the school and the school equipment and buildings are in such a state of neglect, due to lack of funds for maintenance and repairs. For long periods of time students and teachers have to go without the most rudimentary of classroom learning tools such as paper, pencil and chalk, let alone such equipment as stencil, duplicating machines, and not to mention photocopiers and personal computers that have now become part of the standard equipment for schools in the western

industrialized nations. That any kind of learning is taking place in such circumstances is a miracle in itself (Harber and Davies, 1997:14).

The imposition of a discriminatory education system, which created the above-mentioned conditions in most African schools, resulted in unrest, chaos and resistance to authority by both learners and educators (Hartshorne, 1986). Since then the aforementioned variables have continued to plague the IsiZulu medium schools.

Modiba (1996) maintains that the thinking of Black educators in the past was conditioned by both colonial and apartheid ideologies to operate in self-defeatist modes which obstructed their holistic self-development.

## **1.2. Background to the study**

The impetus for the study arose out of concern about the repeated failure in school for many learners, which according to Mdluli (1980), became evident as early as 1975 in the former KwaZulu government schools. This was also reflected in other problems such as high drop-out rates, and the decline in performance of grade 12 learners. Gumede (1989) noted that during a period of nine years in this region, there was a sharp decline in the percentage of grade 12 passes from above 70 percent before 1982 to below 40 percent after 1983. There was a gradual and steady improvement after 1985, which began to decline again after 1996. In the following years, 1997, 1998 and 1999 the KZN province obtained 54 %, 50,3 % and 51.3 % pass rate respectively (Examination Document, 1999).

Most IsiZulu schools have not changed much from the days of colonial and apartheid rule. Dimmock and O'Donoghue (1997) describe such schools' classrooms as still dull, perfunctory and disconnected from the reality of life. Educators ignore those learners who fail to cope. The curriculum appears to be organized in regimented ways for fixed periods of time, unrelated to individual learners' needs. Learners still move in lock-step to the next grade, irrespective of their scholastic performance.

Gaynor (1998) asserts that such schools are still essentially examination driven. The focus of the whole school, parents, teachers and learners, is fixed on the distant exit point of grade 12, and not on life skills for survival. The schools seem not to take cognisance of the function of the school which is, among others, to prepare children for life and the world of work.

Dimmock and O'Donoghue (1997) warn that the changing relationship of schooling and long-term adjustment in society demands a strong career-centred education that will produce learners who are productive and can contribute to the economy. The fast political, social, economic and educational changes demand that schools radically change and improve the way they are educating children.

### **1.2.1. Historical background**

The history of discriminatory education in South Africa dates back to the early colonial rule in 1658, long before the Nationalist government took over in 1948. African education was built on the foundation laid by previous pre-apartheid colonial and segregationist educational policies. Plant (Hartley, 1992:37) gave the following warning that encapsulated the underpinning philosophy of African education in the past:

There was a danger of teaching the Native industries without making him industrious. Intelligent manual labourers were wanted, not educated Native mechanics, and it was dangerous to open too suddenly the paths to comparative wealth. More money would mean more cattle, and therefore more wives, with increasing sloth in the men.

It seems therefore that the Africans' perceived genetic and psychological nature determined their curricular objective, content, methods and evaluation. Hartley (1992) supports the view above that the organization of the curriculum for Zulu children was based on their perceived inferior genetic and psychological nature. He further states that as early as 1894 in Natal, the exercise of political power resulted in policies that aimed at excluding the Zulus from White education because they were different. It was assumed

that there was a significant genetic difference between the two races which made the two cultures opposites in many cardinal points.

According to Hartley (1992) one race was assumed to have a large frontal region of the brain, the other a large posterior region; the one was therefore a great reasoner, the other eminently emotional, the one domineering but having great self-control, the other meek and submissive, but violent and lacking in self-control when provoked. The consequence of this perception of the Zulus in Natal appears to have led to the emasculation of education to disenable them to compete confidently with people of the dominant culture. Their education was mainly industrial in nature, with emphasis on practical work and not cognitive development. The mayor of Durban as reported by Hartley (1992) stated that the strategy of educating the Africans was not to develop their cognitive potential and intellectual acuity. The projected role of Africans, according to Samuelson as recorded in NAC (1906 – 1907), (Hartley, 1992), was that of industrial training of the Africans so far as it was to be supplied by the Government, would be limited to fitting them for ordinary industrial service in the dominant culture's employment and among themselves.

The Eiselen Commission of 1951 as reported by Fleisch (1998), was a blue print for education of Africans as a separate race. "It became a monstrously elaborate social planning that dominated every facet of African education" (Fleisch, 1998:50). The education policies in the 1950's were above all an attempt to respond to the crisis of reproduction of the labour force, and especially its urban components. The Commission demonstrated through examination scores that African schools had the following problems:

- Ten percent of children could not reach grade 8
- The failure rate was high
- Dropping out was common
- Classes were overcrowded
- Teachers were unqualified
- Textbooks were insufficient
- Poor attendance made progress very difficult (Fleisch, 1998:55)

The Eiselen Commission criticized the education system of the missionaries on the grounds that no social planning was involved in its development. This inefficiency justified bureaucratic education reforms; hence the state took central control of education. In Collins and Christie's view (Fleisch, 1998), central control was to be the springboard for educational policies to contribute toward the reproduction of black labour in a stable form. The Education Act of 1953 entrenched the oppressive elements that had been in place for many centuries which widened the gap between the education of Whites and that of Blacks. Principals had to carry out instructions from the centre and to manage their institutions along autocratic and bureaucratic lines (Harber and Davies, 1997).

The power relations which were manifested through the bureaucratic organization of the state and educational organs of the era deprived AmaZulu of participation in political and educational processes. Power-coercive strategies were used in the socialization and paternalization of AmaZulu in order to create a dependency syndrome and to institutionalise certain cultural and traditional ways of performance (Ngesi, 1984).

Hartshorne (1992) maintains that the social theory of determinism which is deeply embedded in and reflects the unequal economic, social and political structures of its society, explains the principles of education in the past. Ashley (1989) argues that the state offered education which aimed, among other things, at conferring a better social status on the certificated Africans, who were granted certain special rights, denied other Africans, such as the right to liquor and exemption from pass laws – in order to alienate Africans from one another. Obviously such measures distorted the education of Africans.

Ashley (1989) further contends that the aim of education was to fixate the African child in the station which was determined for him by the dominant culture. His perceived inferior culture, language, values and deviant and parochial interests dictated the curriculum content and method.

Horrel (1964) concurs with Ashley (1989) on the curriculum when he states that the system of education was designed to train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life, according to the sphere in which they live. Maree (Horrel, 1964) stressed the retention of the child within his own national community. It was to keep him an ever-African child, growing in a subordinate position, without desiring freedom of thought and initiative. Remaining essentially primitive was an underpinning principle.

The education of African children was to be based on their psychological, sociological and cultural knowledge in order to mould their self-esteem. They were viewed as psychologically and culturally different, or at least naïve to the nuances of western ways, and as such constituted a potential threat to the well-ordered design of western living. It could be stated therefore that the education of the past was founded on the fear of the overpowering of the dominant culture by a submissive and dangerous culture.

The education of AmaZulu, like that of all Blacks in South Africa, is a history of neglect, inferiority, inequality and discrimination, which consequently resulted in frustration and wastage of human lives. Mathonsi (1988) and Ngesi (1984) concur in their argument that an effective bureaucratic machine with an overall aim of systematically destroying the self-esteem of Africans was introduced in order to induce Africans to accept an inferior station in life; and this was apparently internalised by Africans.

### **1.2.2. The pedagogy of African learners**

Hartshorne (1992) strongly maintains that the quality of education is in the first place dependent upon the quality of the teacher, and his qualifications, experience, competence in the classroom, professional confidence and commitment.

It seems evident that teachers' thinking was conditioned to perceive their role as custodians of the cultural values of the dominant culture. I concur with Modiba (1996) that at the level of ideology of the system teachers would wittingly or unwittingly promote the values which they had been made to perceive as superior and worthwhile in

their time. The educators' opinions during the apartheid era seem to support the view that the pedagogy of the Africans was geared to stifle creativity and produce instead a dependency syndrome. The whole teaching and learning process was externally controlled by the heads of department, the deputy principal and the principal who dictated what teachers had to do, and compelled them to obey without questioning. The conditions of their work procedures were so laid down that when they questioned these, authorities would perceive them as insubordinate.

We are just sent textbooks without prior consultation. The principals simply say: the department requires you to use this. Teaching is not treated like a profession because of all the controls and administrators on teachers' backs – to know every little they do, .... We teachers generally agree to occupy subordinate position from which we cannot influence anything within the system. It's been always like this. I don't really plan things for myself. Subject advisors do the basic planning for every subject. We are not expected to deviate from these plans. Principals and their departmental heads check on us to find out whether lesson preparations and our teaching correspond with what the work programmes require. It is not fair. As teachers we have to be allowed to think out things ourselves ... but with us it is the education we offer ... that makes everything to be imposed on us (Modiba, 1996:123).

The power relations as determined by the dominant culture created an environment which disempowered teachers. It did not encourage teachers to take initiative and play a meaningful role in matters relating to their teaching. The defeatist attitude and the backcloth of submission were encouraged by what had been consciously developed in order to cope with the hierarchical system of control and the rewards it offered for compliance. Teachers then assimilated a bureaucratic approach from their super ordinates and they in turn socialized children they taught in this culture:

It is a classroom where the pupils follow the rules of the school. Everything is done according to rules here. I teach and prepare my lessons the way the principal wants, pupils must also behave the way I expect them if they want to succeed in the system. What is important in my work is that children must

be prepared to listen and stop questioning what we teach them as they do these days. .... Being critical in this system always results in sadness...”(Modiba, 1996:128).

IsiZulu medium schools seemed to exist to transmit the dominant culture in South Africa and to preserve social control. According to Soudien (1995) schooling was deployed as one of the state’s most effective propagandistic instruments. The central effect of the educational experience was that it stifled IsiZulu-speaking teachers’ abilities to encourage debate, discussion and critical thinking in the classroom. This view is supported by Reilly (1995) who reports in his study that the education of Africans in South Africa has always been criticized for failing to develop the African child to be an independent thinker, since the days of the colonial era. He further states that it has failed to bring about a holistic development of the African child.

The educational processes of the past with their dominant culture that imposed its values, coupled with the African traditional culture, positivistic thinking and the ideology of Christian nationalism of the past government shaped and produced a submissive and dependent culture.

Soudien (1995) argues that positivism and Fundamental Pedagogics stifled the capacity of educators to engender in their learners an active critical consciousness. Fundamental Pedagogics successfully bent educators to the will of the oppressive colonial state by installing rigid and intolerant curricula and practices into the educational system. Embedded in the curricula were prescriptions that teachers and learners in South Africa were expected to have strong Christian beliefs, and the child had to be taught to believe that he was inferior (Soudien, 1995). Implicit in the ideology was the concept of a chosen dominant culture which was called to develop the other submissive dependent cultures. The top-down approach was consistent with the ideological purpose of the dominant culture.

Top-down approaches and paternalism created a fundamental syndrome of dependency which is called the education for domestication (Christie, 1990). Additional layers of bureaucracy and traditional authoritarianism exacerbated the syndrome. According to Hartshorne (1992) the traditional authoritarianism aimed at moulding an African to fulfil a function assigned to him by the state. It can be argued therefore that the significant others perceived the traditional authoritarianism and adherence to what they called rigid tribal custom and the possession of the concept of self and problem-solving as being confined only within the tribal group, which caused the difficulty in separating the self from the environment, and gaining an individualized self-consciousness (Hartshorne, 1992).

The African teacher was said to lack the cultural capital and the conceptual skills and was always under siege and fighting for his survival. The deficiency of conceptual skills resulted in teachers' low morale, inexperience and under qualification. They dealt with overcrowded classrooms, their classroom style was one of survival, characterized by dependence upon textbook, disinclination to allow pupils to question and discuss, and discipline which was rigid and authoritarian. It was a period marked by an increase in corporal punishment, most often caused by insecurity and inability to cope with an increasingly difficult and unsettled school situation.

### **1.2.3. Socio-cultural perspectives**

The school is the main agent of socialization, after the home. School education in the past caused conditions for creating inequality and sorted people into the dominant and superior Whites and the subordinate and inferior Blacks positions. The process of socialization helped to legitimise inequality and justified in people's mind the system of racial differentiation. Schools were adversely affected by the social engineering. AmaZulu and all other Blacks became reconciled to their inferior status in society. According to Harber and Davies (1997) the coexistence of the western values, beliefs and behaviours with the traditional cultures polarized these communities. Blacks saw education as offering everyone the opportunity to pursue unequal power and reward. The

different levels of educational achievement were seen as legitimate. Those in the lower streams or subordinate groups personalize their failure. The AmaZulu did this by regarding their subordinate position as the inevitable outcome of their individual limitations – lack of ability and laziness (McKay, 1995).

The dominant culture of the past influenced the process of education for social engineering in order to create a submissive and subservient community. The inherent socio-cultural beliefs and values of respect and compliance in AmaZulu communities were institutionalised to benefit the dominant culture. The resultant behaviour of the children was determined by culturally conditioned rules which manifested themselves in certain communal norms and school routines (Brunsson and Olsen, 1993).

#### **1.2.4. Declining school results**

It is against this background that the majority of African schools continued to languish with poor results since the last half of the 1970's. The 1976 and early eighties' unrest made education in South Africa as a whole, a time bomb. Deep concerns were expressed at the magnitude of the education crisis in the poor black grade 12 results. Some former KwaZulu schools were, and are still characterised by low standards of school performance. The sharp decline in teaching and learning in some IsiZulu medium schools started as early as 1977. The educational status in these schools is reported in the Annual Reports of 1977 to 1985 of the former KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture.

In former KwaZulu the phenomenal drop in grade 12 performance began immediately after 1976, when from 1977 it plummeted from 84% to 36.48% in 1985. Since then the performance in most of the grades has continued to decline. The Annual Reports of KwaZulu have always attributed, the grade twelve failures to the poor quality of instruction, teacher-learner ratio, leakage of examination question papers, and irregularities during examinations as a result of unpreparedness of learners to face the examinations.

The variables of learner characteristics and the school environment were cited by Gumede (1989) as factors which cause poor quality of education delivery in these schools. Among the causes of poor scholastic performance suggested in these Annual Reports are the poor quality of instruction and high enrolment (Gumede, 1989). The culture and climate that prevails in these schools is appallingly uncondusive to teaching and learning. The unfavourable educational conditions prevailing in IsiZulu medium schools have often resulted in a high dropout rate in most of the school phases. The dropout rate in the Port Shepstone region alone was 16.2% in 1998 (Ngesi, 1998). The standard of grade 12 learners started to fall in 1978. The percentage of pupils passing grade 12 had dropped from 76 % to 48 % and the percentage gaining matric exemption from 33 % to 10 %.

The poor standards in African schools were ascribed, among other factors, to inequality of financial provision between whites and blacks. The financial inequality between the two races revealed that there were more than five times as many black pupils as white, but the budget for whites was nearly twice that for blacks (Hartshorne, 1992:17). Evidence of this is clear in the table below.

Table 1.1: Education indicators (Hartshorne, 1992:17)

	<b>Total number of Pupils</b>	<b>Unit Costs (R)</b>	<b>Teacher-pupil ratio</b>
White	98276 (1983)	1211	1:17
Indian	229289 (1983)	711	1:23
Coloured	766179 (1982)	498	1:26
African	5223292 (1982)	134	1:44

The teacher – pupil ratio of 1:17 was not conducive to delivering quality education to African pupils compared to White, Indian and Coloured pupils. Mattock (1982) also cited another variable, which he regarded as having contributed to poor scholastic performance in IsiZulu medium schools. He identified the lack of motivation on the part of the teachers more than the qualifications of the teachers the principals complained about. The

phenomenal dropout and learner repetition in IsiZulu medium schools is seemingly an indication of a dysfunctional education system (Mdluli, 1980). Until the introduction of the educational reform of continuous assessment and Outcomes Based Education, it was common in IsiZulu medium schools for learners to repeat a grade for more than three times without any remedial intervention by the grade teacher or the principal. Learner dropout and repetition appeared to have been passively and tacitly accepted by educators because these phenomena had been experienced for such a long time that they became institutionalised (Mdluli, 1980). In Mdluli's (1980) study principals gave the following reasons as the causes for the incidence of learner repetition:

Table 1.2: Causes of learner repetition from Mdluli's study (1980)

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Total Rank Order</b>	<b>Rank Position</b>
Understaffing/high pupil-teacher ratio	3,9	1
Insufficient textbooks	5,5	2
Inadequate accommodation	6,7	3
Irregular attendance of pupils	6,7	3
Inadequate teaching aids	6,8	5
Under or unqualified teachers	7,0	6
Poor study facilities at home	7,5	7
Automatic promotion in L.P. schools	8,5	8
Under nourishment of pupils	8,6	9
Co-operation between parents and teachers	8,7	10
Fatigue due to long distances to school	8,9	11
Lack of pre-school education	10,2	12
Syllabus too long	10,2	12
Lack of teachers' motivation and dedication	10,4	14
Mental retardation	11,4	15
Medium of instruction	11,8	16
Syllabus too difficult	12,6	17

Many schools are still operating under the education system that is still shaped by the ethos, systems and procedures inherited from the apartheid era (Godden and Buckland, 1996). In view of the above, the United Party, an opposition to the Nationalist party, correctly stated that: "The laws of the land were so weighted against the development of the blacks, that very few of them could ever break through the handicap" (Tabata, 1959).

The ushering in of the era of rule by a democratic government in South Africa has necessitated transformation which involves every sector, particularly education as a change agent of the society. Education is currently faced with the challenge to counteract the ethos, systems and procedures enacted by the past colonial and apartheid education department among the African section of the society.

### **1.3. Motivation for the study**

Pressures for reform compelled the Nationalist party government in 1980 to appoint a commission led by De Lange to look into the education of Blacks. This De Lange commission made proposal to the Nationalist party government for educational reform as early as 1981. But few attempts were made to reform education, until the 1994 election, when the new ANC led government was voted into power.

This study therefore, coincides with many of the new South African Government's initiatives to redress the imbalances of the past decades. Change appears to be central to the present government's approach to educational provision. The purpose of this change is to improve the quality of teaching and learning, especially in the previously disadvantaged schools. Attempts to bring about educational innovation in these schools date back to the era of the former KwaZulu department of education and culture. In the past most of the schools were notorious for their apparent inertia and reluctance to change. The educators, parents and learners in those schools which were resistant to change, were contented with old paradigms of the past, and resisted new paradigms

(Spady, 1997). Change interventions in those schools appeared to be occasioned by inherent inertia (Tyson and Jackson, 1992).

The transformation initiated by the government is aimed at addressing the systemic deficits, and to create a culture that is conducive to teaching and learning in schools. Black schools' problems in general are fundamentally structural and systemically related, and require a radical shift from a linear to holistic approach in addressing the deficits inherited from the past. They require seeing learning problems not as deficiencies in the child, but as a mismatch between the school system, the methods it employs, the values it propagates and the child (Sharratt, 1995).

The government is presently promoting a range of initiatives, which are aimed at enabling conditions to change. Several enabling legislations such as the Labour Relations Act of 1995, the South African Schools Act of 1996, the National Education Policy Act of 1996 and the Employment of Educators Act of 1998, all attempt to transform the education sector (Developmental Appraisal of Educators document, 1997). Programmes, such as the Culture of Learning, Teaching and Services Campaign, the new Outcomes Based Education and Curriculum 2005 are all informed by the understanding that in order to facilitate change in education one needs to deal with systemic variables such as governance levels, management levels, teachers, learners, curriculum, pedagogy, school community relations, as well as resources and facilities in order to enact a sustainable educational change (Developmental Appraisal of Educators Document, 1998).

The last three decades have seen many innovative processes being introduced in Schools. Some of these were life skills programs, such as Sexuality and HIV/AIDS education. In 1994 the then Minister of Education, Dr V.T. Zulu allocated R4 million to Macmillan Boleswa for the HIV/AIDS programme in KwaZulu/Natal. Macmillan Boleswa's guiding philosophy was to change educators and learners' attitudes and behaviour about AIDS. This company trained about 500 English subject teachers and later 300 guidance teachers to implement the programme. The evaluation of this programme revealed that there were

no attempts made to implement this programme at those IsiZulu medium schools whose educators were trained in this sexuality, HIV/AIDS education programme.

The innovative initiatives by the department of education which aimed to improve the education of IsiZulu medium schools, indicated that there appeared to be an inertia and resistance to change in many educational settings. Intervention and developmental programs such as curriculum 2005, developmental appraisal, matric intervention, culture of learning and teaching services, career and guidance education all appear to have been unsuccessfully implemented. Therefore to prevent further wastage of time, human and material resources by the department of education, and frustrations of parents and learners in these schools, it is essential that the processes of educational change, resistance and inertia to change, be investigated.

### **1.3.1. Transformation programmes**

Many initiatives were introduced immediately after 1994, aimed at radically shifting the direction and vision of the education system. A series of policy initiatives and legislation were introduced such as the provisions of Department of Education White Papers One and Two, the report of the Review Committee on School Organisation, Governance and Funding (the Hunter Committee Report), the new national legislation (the National Education Policy Act and the South African Schools Act), as well as provincial legislation and policy documents.

The initiatives above were imperatives during the post apartheid era to transform education. In the light of this need, and against the background of the recommendations of the Hunter Committee Report and other national policy documents, the national Minister of education appointed a Task Team of Education Management Development (EMD) in February 1996, with a brief to investigate ways of institutionalising strategies of changing management in order to manage educational change (Report of the Task Team, 1996).

Built into this EMD was a whole school development approach in which principals were trained. After this training all schools were expected to have a School Development Committee for school development planning, and a mission statement. They had to identify problem areas and prioritise areas of improvement and write up action plans.

The Outcomes Based Education and the Education Management Development are some of the attempts to change the education system in South Africa. These initiatives were implemented in the Port Shepstone region as early as 1997. In February and March 1999, a formative evaluation was done in order to monitor and check the progress of the implementation of these educational innovations. A seemingly resistant attitude to educational change in IsiZulu medium schools in particular, was observed.

Education Management Development was implemented in February 1998; principals of schools were trained for a week. In February 1999, I conducted a formative evaluation of the implementation of EMD. On a dichotomous scale, I asked if principals had developed and understood the mission statement, the School Development Plan, and its Committee and the Action Plan as they were taught. Their responses as shown in table 3, indicated that 54.3 percent of the schools had the mission statement, and 52.1 percent understood what it meant to them. However this response could not be tested in terms of the degree to which the mission statement influenced the life and ethos of the school. Only 30.4 percent drew up School Development Plans, 36.9 percent had their School Development Committees and only 20.6 percent had developed Action Plans.

Table 1.3: Results of EMD evaluation

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>Yes %</b>
1. Mission statement	92	50	42	51.3
2. Understanding of mission statement	92	48	44	52.1
3. School Development Plan	92	28	64	30.4
4. School Development Committee	92	34	58	36.9
5. Written Action Plan	92	19	73	20.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>194.3</b>

I was interested in the implementable items of the questionnaires such as numbers 4 and 5. Evidently very few schools had started School Development Plans, School Development Committees and written action plans. The initiatives, which are aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning, require strategies, which focus on change at classroom levels (Godden and Buckland, 1996:13). The implementation of the strategy depends on the transformation of management in education institutions. The department of education argues that managers must be changed from passivity to independence of thinking. The pace of change, and the need to be adaptable to and responsive to local circumstance requires that managers develop new skills and styles of working. The most significant change is that management systems have to be built from the school up. The formative evaluation indicated that EMD had very little impact in changing the management of most of schools.

### **1.3.2. Matric Intervention**

In 1997 and 1998 the KZN provincial grade 12 performances were 51.6 percent and 49.0 percent respectively. The Port Shepstone region during the same years obtained 58.45 and 49.53 percent respectively. One hundred and eleven schools had written grade 12 examinations. Fifty one percent obtained less than a fifty percent pass rate. Forty six

percent (46) obtained less than forty percent, and 12% obtained less than 20 percent. Consequently concerns, which were raised by the Minister of Education, led to the investigation of the underlying causes and designation of intervention programmes by the Superintendents of Education Management (SEM), subject advisors and school psychologists. The SEM's programme consisted of constant visits to the schools to give guidance and identify and discuss problems with the schools. Subject advisors conducted a series of workshops to empower subject teachers. Scarce resources and time constraints led the school psychologist personnel to identify six of the schools, which obtained less than 40% pass rate, for intervention programme case studies. The SEM's and subject advisors targeted all 111 schools with their intervention programmes. The Psychological Guidance and Special Education Services personnel introduced a Grade 12 Motivation Programme, based on the Academic Aptitude Test prediction and career search and guidance. The motivation program was introduced and discussed with principals and all grade 12 educators. The problems hindering the success of academic performance were identified, strategic and action plans were designed, and educators were left to implement these intervention programs.

The results after all the interventions did not show any improvement, instead some of the schools did worse than the predicted potential of learners. Also, all case study schools, except one, did worse than in the previous year 1997 when there were no concerted intervention programmes.

The problems stated above motivated me to want to know what impact the DoEC's intervention programme, which attempted to redress the imbalances of past, has had on the education of the IsiZulu medium schools. The initiatives the DoEC introduced between 1994 and 1998 seemed to have been unsuccessful, according to the aforementioned evaluation reports and matric intervention programme. I was interested to know what the underlying causes were behind the seeming resistance. I wanted to study and observe how school constituents responded to the processes of educational changes and the role each stakeholder played in these processes.

#### **1.4. Purpose of the study**

The Department of Education has since 1994 engaged in the process of radically shifting the direction and vision of the education system in South Africa. "The task of transformation is greater than reconstructing the system and structures which sustain any society. It requires a fundamental shift in attitudes, in the way people relate to each other and their environment, and in the way resources are deployed to achieve society's goals" (Godden and Buckland, 1996:11).

The mammoth task of educational transformation requires empirically proven theoretical guidelines to enable the department in its change processes to design and use cost-effective models to address educational problems. One of the main problems in education, especially in IsiZulu medium schools, has always been the inertia and lethargy to educational innovations. No in-depth study has ever been done to unravel the underlying causes of this apparent reluctance to change.

There is a need to investigate some of the systemic variables which underlie this apparent inertia to change in IsiZulu medium schools. Politicians, educationists and officials of the department have often given simplistic causes of resistance to change and poor academic performance in most of IsiZulu medium schools. There has been no in-depth study as far as I know, which has attempted to investigate the processes of educational change, and answered pertinent questions addressed to it.

This study therefore seeks to identify and describe the processes, which are associated with difficulties and inertia to change and improve the quality of education in a sample of IsiZulu medium schools. The results of the study will add to the body of knowledge, and assist academics, educationalists and especially education policy-makers, planners and specialists to understand the processes of educational transformation and shed light on the formulation of new policies and implementation of education policy changes in schools, particularly those which were, and are still disadvantaged.

The study aims to generate theory on educational change, especially in IsiZulu medium schools. It will also help in the broadening of understanding of these schools' difficulties. More clarity about the often stated superficial and simplistic causes of failure to change in IsiZulu medium schools will be obtained.

It is also intended to increase the amount of qualitative research data available and raise interest in this type of research amongst educationalists and education specialists.

## **1.5. Definitions of key terms**

### **1.5.1. Systems**

“A system is a set of objects together with relationships between the objects and between their attributes” (French and Bell, 1990:52). Von Bertalanffy(1975:10) refers to a system as a set of” elements standing in interaction. Kast and Rosenzweig (1985, in French et al., 1990:52) define a system as an organised unitary whole composed, or more interdependent parts, components, or subsystems, and delineated by identifiable boundaries from its environmental suprasystem.” It can therefore be stated from the above definitions that a system is an organisation of parts which are interdependent and interact with one another.

The point of departure is that an organization is a social system. The systems approach invariably includes questions regarding the parts of a system, the link between these parts and the objective. In the systems approach the emphasis shifts from the individual and the group to the organization as a whole. The organization is then seen as a system consisting of interdependent parts in which the functioning of each part is mutually influenced (van der Westhuizen, 1997).

Jones (1987) sheds a better light on the concept of the system when he states that an organization as a system acts and behaves. It may happen that the school as a system becomes stronger than the principal, and the latter becomes influenced and managed by

the system. Jones (1987) further clarifies that individuals in an organization can be considered as subsystems that are either open or closed subsystems.

In this study the whole system will be observed in order to see how management attempts to bring about the smooth functioning of the parts of the system by determining the functioning of each part. The definition of an organization and the school as an organization will be described below in order to facilitate understanding of the system.

### **1.5.2. The School as an Organization**

An organisation consists of “ a number of significant interacting variables that cut across or are common to all subunits. These variables have to do with goals, tasks, technology, human-social organisation, structure, and external interface relationships subsystem” (French and Bell, 1990:53). Tyson and Jackson (1992) are of the opinion that organisations should be seen as systems that possess the qualities of a biological organism. The analogy with organisms results in a belief that organisations “ behave rather as people and animals act.” (Tyson and Jackson, 1992:140). According to van der Westhuizen (1997) the school forms the systematic and ordered structure in which people are grouped together in interests of educative teaching. In this light the school as an organization also shares the characteristics of universality, and individuality and compliance with subjectivity which has been set up for this purpose. It can be concluded on the basis of the above that the most important dimensions of the school as an organization are the structure and people in it. The formal structure is of cardinal importance in management actions and the determination of the structure of authority and eventually the success of educative teaching.

Getzels (van der Westhuizen, (1997) calls the structure and people, nomothetic and idiographic dimensions respectively. The nomothetic or sociological dimensions include institutions, roles and expectations institutionally defined. Getzel’s social systems model sheds light on the interactive process between the nomothetic and idiographic dimensions which produces an organizational behaviour. This is systems theory conceptualisation,

which is mathematically expressed as  $B = f(R \times P)$ , which in short means that social behaviour is a result of interaction between role (R) and the person (P) (Van der Westhuizen 1997).

The model above can also be interpreted according to Getzel (Van der Westhuizen, 1997) to mean that an observable behaviour is a function of the interaction between role expectations and personal expectations. The psychological and sociological dimensions result in a parallel alignment of individual personalities and institutionally defined roles. Each behavioural act stems simultaneously from the nomothetic and idiographic dimensions. In a social organization such as the school, a person is influenced by role expectations and personal expectations, and when needs and roles are incongruent, conflicts arise.

### **1.5.3. Educational Change**

Change has been defined by several terms by different authors. Gross, Asiacquinta and Bernstein (1971) use change and innovation interchangeably. In the United States of America reform and change are also used interchangeably. But for analytic purposes the two words can be distinguished. Popkewitz (1991) states that reform is a word concerned with the mobilization of public and with power relations in defining public space. The same author maintains that change has a less normative and more scientific outlook. The study of change therefore represents an effort to understand how tradition and transformation interact through the processes of social production and reproduction. School reform is viewed as a mechanism to achieve transformation (Popkewitz, 1991)

Dimmock and O'Donoghue (1997) use restructuring and effectiveness in referring to the change process. In Telford's (1996) view it is a constant of reorganization and dismantling of the status quo, or according to Schwabn and Spady (1998), doing something habitual in a different way.

Senge (1990) encapsulates an appropriate and relevant concept with a deeper meaning in his usage of a Greek word *metanoia* for change. In his view the word *metanoia* means a fundamental shift of mind or change or more literally, transcendence. It is the deeper meaning of learning because learning involves a fundamental shift or movement of mind. The concept conveys the import of a school continually expanding its capacity to create its future, and through learning extending its capacity to create and be part of the generative process of life.

I concur with Spady's (1997) use of systemic paradigm shift as the all embracing concept of describing change. The author maintains that systemic paradigm shifts change the way major systems work, the goals they pursue and the structures they create. On the basis of this seemingly holistic conceptualisation of change, it can be stated that a paradigm transformation is fundamentally redefining, redirecting, restructuring and re-engineering the school.

Change is a colossal process that involves redefining and reshaping entire institutions and the belief systems and cultures surrounding them. It requires continuous attention to changing the perceptions and beliefs of a critical mass of potential implementers and their constituents about what is possible and desirable (Spady, 1997:92).

My view of educational processes of change in the context of this study is based on the systemic conceptualisation of change. The systemic thinking about change is contrary to the past approaches to change where reforms dealt with individual issues one at a time. Systemic change is an approach which involves players from throughout the system considering all parts of an organization. It is closely linked to the concept of continuous improvement in which people work in a specific process to keep improving their results. Also linked to this view is remaining effective in the rapidly changing context.

Kolb, Rubin and McIntyre (1979) maintain that schools must be ready to change, and this readiness to change can be expressed mathematically as  $C = (abd) > x$ , where  $C$  = change,  $a$  = a level of dissatisfaction with the status quo,  $b$  = clear or understood desired

state,  $d$  = practical first steps toward a desired state,  $x$  = “cost” of changing. For change to take place and for commitment to occur there has to be enough dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs to mobilize energy toward change. The authors above strongly maintain that a desired state needs to be consistent with the values and priorities of the client system.

Perez, Milstein, Wood and Jacquez (1999:71) have correctly summarized the above conceptualisation in stating that systemic change may be regarded as comprehensive change efforts which are initiated by the people themselves who need change because “...solutions to problems invariably exist in the same group that is experiencing a problematic situation. Those who are caught up in the dissatisfying state (i.e. they are part of the problem) also have the potential ability to resolve it.”

#### **1.5.4. IsiZulu Medium Schools**

These schools are traditionally called IsiZulu medium schools as the creation of the past apartheid era. Historically, schools were divided according to language. IsiZulu describes the language and culture of the majority of school members. The bulk of these schools is found mainly in the rural areas, and is still disadvantaged in terms of resources and provision. In the past the majority of their educators were either professionally unqualified or under-qualified. The consequence of this was perennial low learner achievement in all grades.

#### **1.6. Overview of thesis structure**

This thesis is divided into ten chapters. Chapter one describes and gives the historical background to the education of the population under study with an emphasis on the process of educational change in the past. This chapter also describes the motivation and purpose of the study and the definitions of the key terms.

Chapter two delineates the theoretical framework, which helps to understand what is involved in the educational processes, theories, and findings that informed the whole study. The chapter also describes relevant literature, preliminary research and the personal experience I drew on.

Chapter three deals with the research design of the study, methodologies, procedures, techniques and instruments I used in the study. It is also about the implementation of the research design. It gives the guidelines of how data were collected, recorded, written up and transcribed for analysis.

Chapters four, five, and six cover the data analysis of the three case study schools. The analysis, interpretation and the comparison of the three schools' findings are done at the end of the three chapters.

Chapter seven generates the patterns based on chapters four, five, and six. Patterns are derived from categories from these chapters. Essentially this chapter begins the theorizing based on the findings.

Chapter eight considers findings in the light of the theories. Theories are generated and /or supported on the basis of the findings. Recommendations with regard to educational change are also suggested. The limitations of the research are also discussed in this chapter.

The last chapter, nine, draws conclusions in the light of the findings based on the conceptual framework and research questions. The conclusion also suggests theories for educational change in a sample of IsiZulu medium schools.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Individual's behaviour in organizations is determined by the nature of the organizational structures, cultures and climate individuals create (Jones, 1987). An organization can be seen as a system with different parts that must coherently function to achieve desired goals. A system is an overarching process, which involves all participants, and processes in an organization (Whitaker, 1993). It is an approach, which involves all players throughout the system. Therefore, changing management to manage change as the South African guiding principle in education management development is an attempt to encapsulate this broad concept of change.

Systems theory was chosen as the conceptual framework for the study because of its broad inclusivity. I chose von Bertalanffy (1975) and Bronfenbrenner's (1989) systems theories as a conceptual framework for this study. I also decided that within the framework of these two theories I should discuss two theories of change forces and strategies of educational change. The first is the constrained theory of change forces, which invariably utilize empirical-rational, and power-coercive strategies to change an organization. The second is the unconstrained theory of change forces, which utilizes normative re-educative strategies, consistent and congruent with the systems approach. Change can be broadly understood to mean a systemic paradigm shift as the all-embracing concept (Spady, 1997).

It can be further stated that the systems approach includes key concepts currently in operation in schools in countries that are engaged in the process of change. Schools are being developed to become self-reliant and to run through school-based, collaborative, collegial and transformational leadership and management systems.

## **2.1. Systems theories**

A systems theory is a unifying theory which helps to study objects and people in relationship with one another (Becvar and Becvar, 1982). Such theories therefore consider parts of a system and their interrelationships, working together to form a whole. According to Senge (1990) systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes and the structure that underlie complex situations, and for discerning high from low leverage change. Senge (1990) further maintains that systems thinking offers a language that begins by restructuring how we think, and is concerned with a shift of mind from seeing parts to seeing wholes. It is therefore a cornerstone of how learning organizations think about their worlds. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than considering static snapshots.

System thinking is a sensibility for the subtle interconnectedness that gives living systems their unique character (Becvar and Becvar, 1982). Katz and Kahn (1978) state that the pattern of activities of the energy exchange in a system has a cyclic character. Therefore in following this approach of thinking I propose to examine two main systems theories, namely by von Bertalanffy (1956) and Bronfenbrenner (1989, 1993), as frameworks of this study.

### **2.1.1. von Bertalanffy's Systems theory**

Von Bertalanffy (1975) was a scientist man who believed that general system theory is a perspective or paradigm that can play a key role in the development of exact scientific theory. The original concept of general system theory was the German 'Allgemeine systemtheorie'

Von Bertalanffy (1975) created a new paradigm for the development of theories. These system theories deal with systemic phenomena, organisms, populations, ecologies, groups and societies. Von Bertalanffy (1975) produced a new paradigm, for trans-disciplinary synthesis; given the fact that many intellectual and almost all practical

problems have to do with systematic phenomena such as system design, system management and system development. Therefore according to von Bertalanffy, system theory should be looked upon as a way of promoting new research initiatives.

Von Bertalanffy's main field of work was in biophysics which gave rise to the theory of the organism as an open system with connected work in cellular and comparative physiology, known as von Bertalanffy growth equations. These concepts found practical applications to urgent problems in medicine such as cytodiagnosis.

von Bertalanffy (1975) stated that because the fundamental character of the living thing is its organization, the customary investigation of the single parts and processes couldn't provide a complete explanation of the vital phenomena. He further stated that such investigation gives no information about the coordination of the parts and processes. Thus the chief task of biology must be to discover the laws of biological system (at all levels of organization). He maintained that the attempt to find a foundation for theoretical biology points at a fundamental change in the world. This view, considered as a method of investigation, he called organismic geology and, as an attempt at an explanation of the system theory of the organism.

Von Bertalanffy first formulated the notion of general system theory in the 1930's and in various publications. As a practicing biologist, von Bertalanffy was particularly interested in developing the theory of open system. Therefore according to von Bertalanffy (1975:159), a system may be defined as "a set of elements standing in interrelation among themselves and with the environment." Von Bertalanffy's theory was applied to science mathematics, technology, philosophy and epistemology. Von Bertalanffy's (1975) theoretical model has led to the general systems approach to the study of organizational change and development.

Von Bertalanffy aptly promulgated the model of an input-output system that has been taken from the open system theory of the problems of relationships, of structure, and interdependence (Katz and Kahn, 1978). It is maintained, in terms of this theory, that

living systems are acutely dependent on their external environment and are therefore conceived of as open systems. They maintain themselves through constant and continuous inflow and outflow of energy through permeable boundaries.

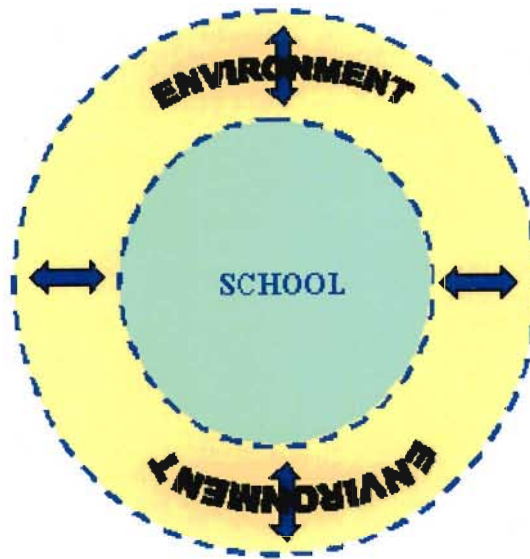


Figure 2.1: Diagrammatic representation of von Bertalanffy's (1975) theory

Von Bertalanffy's general systems theory means that the school as a system must always strive to maintain a balance of inflow and outflow of information and energy through the boundaries of itself and its environment. The survival of the school and its continued existence as an educating agency depends on its responding to the outside pressure to change while at the same time maintaining its stability and homeostatic equilibrium.

Becvar and Becvar (1982) affirm that all living systems have boundaries, which are the passage for information to and from the system. They understand a boundary as that part of the system through which inputs and outputs must pass, during which exchanges with the system in an environment reflect the interactive process. The boundary describes the possibility of energy or information transfer, in either direction, between all systems that interface in reasonable proximity with one another. Katz and Kahn (1978) add that there is an energetic input-output system in which the energetic return from the output reactivates

the system. They further state that social organizations are open systems in that the input of energies and the conversion of output into further energy input consist of transactions between the organization and its environment.

In order to facilitate an understanding of the transaction between the system and its environment, Becvar and Becvar (1982) discuss the concepts of homeostasis, morphostasis and morphogenesis. Homeostasis according to the two authors is the construct that describes a systems' tendency toward stability, or steady-state. This state of dynamic equilibrium or homeostatic balance refers to the system's capacity to be stable. A system seeks stability, but to continue to be healthy, it must also be able to change, hence morphogenesis and morphostasis are both necessary for a healthy growth and survival of a system (Becvar and Becvar, 1982). Therefore morphogenesis is desirable, but too frequent and great change threatens the stability of the system. The "extreme of the morphogenesis – morphostasis continuum would probably be dysfunctional. Therefore too much change hinders change. The art of progress is to preserve order amid change and preserve change amid order" (Becvar and Becvar, 1982: 16). Change must be controlled because an excess of it destabilizes, and stability should also not mean stagnation, there must be a balance between the two.

Becvar and Becvar (1982) therefore propose a balance between open and closed systems, depending on the idiosyncrasies of the system. The more input from other systems, the more it is an open system, and conversely the less input, the more closed. Input from within a system and from other systems represents pressure to change. If little change occurs, a system is said to be closed. A system can be dysfunctional by being either too open or too closed. If it is too open, it loses its identity as a system distinct from other systems. Katz and Kahn (1978) concur when they say that the concept of open system implies openness to the environment; while at the same time it implies system properties, stable patterns of relationships and behaviour within boundaries. Complete openness means a loss of those properties, and of differentiation from the environment and cessation of existence as a distinct system.

If a system is too closed, it exists totally outside the sphere of other systems, and this is tantamount to resistance to change. Becvar and Becvar (1982) argue that in a healthy system, neither openness nor closedness is good per se. In a hostile environment, maintaining a closed system may be the way to assure continuation of that system. If a system changes too fast or not enough, it can be problematic. Ideally, argue the two writers, the governing rules of a system should allow for accommodation to gradual development, growth and pressure. Katz and Kahn (1978) support this view when they state that the organization lives only by being open to input, but selectively. Its continuing existence requires both the property of openness and of selectivity.

The ideal pace of change in a system is probably idiosyncratic to that system, as tempered by input from outside, which in turn is a response to output from the system. Just as its environment influences any organization, so does its environment impact the school as a system. Without changing an environment surrounding the school as a system, it is unlikely that attempts will succeed to change the school as a system.

Becvar and Becvar (1982) also describe the process of feedback as the feedback responsive to forces that are disturbing to the system. In classical general system's terminology, negative feedback is a message that the output by another has reached some predetermined maximum level and is an indication to reduce or cut off the input. Positive feedback means that the output is less than some maximum, and the feedback loop signals to allow more input. Feedback seeks to maintain near steady state functioning, tempering external variation that would otherwise cause fluctuation. Feedback therefore serves to increase the probability of the survival of the system.

The following theory by Bronfenbrenner will show the structure and constituents of a system, and indicate how the interaction between the systems impact on the learners and the outcome of teaching and learning.

### **2.1.2. Bronfenbrenner's Systems theory**

Bronfenbrenner was an American psychologist who developed ecological systems which view the child as developing within a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment. Bronfenbrenner (1977) characterized his perspective as a bioecological model, because the child or learner's biological dispositions join with environmental forces to mould development and growth- his bioecological system.

Bronfenbrenner's theory developed out of the realisation that in the past educational psychology was taught as if theories derived in Britain and the USA had " equal relevance for all people under all social conditions" (Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana, 1997, in Pettigrew and Akhurst, 2001:1) During this time the child was viewed in isolation from his environment. Bronfenbrenner (1977:513) stated "contemporary development psychology is the science of the strange behaviour of children in strange situations with strange adults for the briefest possible periods of time.

Bronfenbrenner was influenced by the fact that theorists had become interested in the systems with which the individual interacts, and systems was evolving both as a means of analysing the multiple influences upon the individual (and the reciprocal influences of individuals on systems). Also, that ecological theories were also developing, leading to ideas of the equal importance of all parts of systems and ideas about ways in which life cycles worked (Pettigrew and Akhurst, 2001). These factors above led Bronfenbrenner to develop Ecological Systems Theory, now often abridged as Ecosystemic Theory.

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory consists of five ecological systems constituting a multi-layered social environment (Steuer, 1994). Bronfenbrenner (1977:9) conceived this environment as a "series of nested structures that includes but extends beyond home, school and neighbourhood settings in which children spend their everyday

lives. Each layer of the environment is viewed as having a powerful impact on a person's development.”

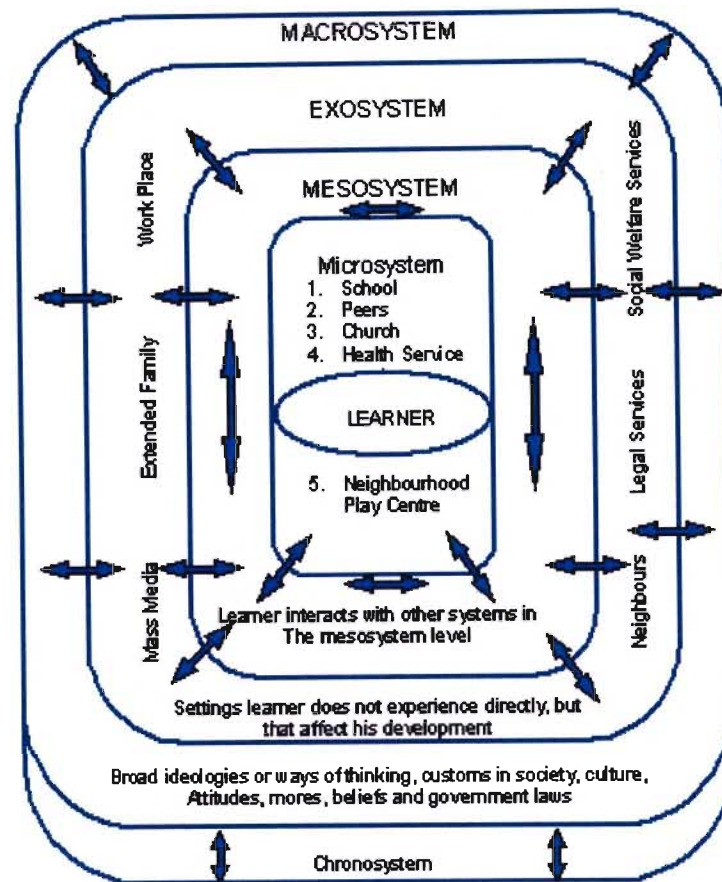


Figure 2.2: Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems adapted from Schickedanz and Schickedanz, and Forsyth and Forsyth (2001:27)

#### 2.1.2.1. The microsystem

The Microsystem is the innermost level of the environment which involves the activities and interaction patterns in the learners' immediate surroundings. Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasized that understanding the learner's development and growth, which includes learning at the micro system's level, requires an understanding that all relationships of learners and the environment are bi-directional and reciprocal. Stated in the context of

the school environment, it means that adults or educators' behaviour affect learners' responses, but biologically and socially determined characteristics in learners such as physical attributes, personalities and capacities, also influence the behaviour of educators. It can be further extrapolated from this view that cooperative learners who comply with educators' instructions are likely to evoke positive patient reactions from educators, whereas uncooperative behaviour could be responded to with restriction and punishment (Steuer, 1994).

It can be further stated, according to Steuer (1994), that within the microsystem interaction between two individuals, educator and learner, is influenced by the presence of third parties as stakeholders such as SMT and SGB. If the two constituents are cooperative and supportive the quality of relationships will be enhanced. However, if conflicts between stakeholders of the schools such as parents and educators exist, learners will be negatively affected.

#### 2.1.2.2. The Mesosystem

The mesosystem encompasses connections and interactions among microsystems, made up of interrelations among two or more settings in which the child participates (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The school must be in constant relationship with the home of learners, that is, their parents, and with the community and all stakeholders that foster children and learners' development.

The most influential mesosystem's interrelationship is usually the one between home and school. In order to function effectively, there should be frequent positive interactions between parents and educators at school. The academic process and success of learners at school depend to a very considerable extent on the involvement of parents and /or the SGB in the school life and the degree in which academic learning is carried over into the home (Steuer, 1994). To this end the active involvement of school constituents such as SMT, SGB, RCL and the district and circuit officials is always an important factor in achieving change and improvement of the academic performance of learners. The

relationship among these constituents is pivotal and critical in the process of school improvement. An absence of connections between microsystems, and the presence of conflicts in their values, presents risk to the child in any mesosystems (Schickedanz and Schickedanz, 2001).

#### 2.1.2.3. The exosystem

“The exosystem refers to social settings that do not contain children but nevertheless affect their experiences in the immediate settings” (Steuer 1994). It includes those organizations in the community in which learners, educators and parents are involved and have indirect influence on the learners’ life and learning. Educators could also include district and circuit office officials who play a pivotal role in teacher development and empowerment. It can also be argued that social settings may include social clubs, and political parties to which parents and the educators belong in the community. The exosystem also includes parents’ work and the indirect influence of this on children. All these settings have significant impact on parents’ child-rearing roles and, indirectly foster development. Also educators who teach learners are influenced positively and /or negatively by these settings.

Though the learner does not participate in this third layer, the exosystem, but an element or person in the learner’s microsystem does interact with the setting and indirectly affects the learner. Educators are influenced by the behaviour of district managers and circuit superintendents. The regional officials in turn shape these officials’ ideas and thinking.

Furthermore, a stressful workplace of the parent, which makes him unresponsive to the needs of his child, increases the risks to the learner’s development and learning. Also an educator’s family has an indirect influence on the learner (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

#### 2.1.2.4. Macrosystem

The macrosystem is the outermost level of Bronfenbrenner's model. This layer encompasses the values, laws customs, beliefs, ideologies, resources of a particular culture and accepted behavioural practices of the subcultures and general cultures to which learners belong (Steuer, 1994). Macrosystems are manifested by the way in which relationships and institutions are differently structured from one culture to the next. For instance Bronfenbrenner (1979) drew a comparison between the differences between classrooms in France and United States and stated that cultural differences may influence development, and invariably learning processes in school. The same comparison could be drawn between classrooms in IsiZulu and English medium schools. In the former schools classes are set up with desks facing the front with little or no activities, whereas in the latter, there is group work and more active involvement of learners.

Culture is essential because it is "the shared philosophies, ideologies, values, assumptions, beliefs, expectations, attitudes, and norms that knit a community together" (Owens, 1995:83). Political ideologies such as democracy which includes the constitution of this country, human rights that brings about equity, redress and equal distribution of resources, traditions of racism, sexism, violence, totalitarianism or cutthroat competitiveness, communicated throughout the culture or subculture, will have obvious effects, particularly for vulnerable children – children already at risk due to difficulties they encounter at the microsystem and mesosystems levels. Democratic rights have immensely affected the culture of teaching and learning in schools, especially discipline of both educators and learners. The emphasis equality and human rights has affected power relations between educators and the Superintendents of education and subject advisors.

The macrosystem has also had an economic impact due to globalisation which has brought about competition leading to elevated unemployment levels. Furthermore,

international trade has impacted on agricultural import and exports, further exacerbating an unemployment level. The unemployment has further been compounded by government's labour laws which has reduced employment opportunities.

#### 2.1.2.5. The chronosystem

According to Bronfenbrenner (1986), in developmental science, the passage of time has been treated as synonymous with chronological age as a frame of reference for studying psychological changes within individuals as they grow older. Bronfenbrenner (1986) has proposed the term chronosystem for designating a research model that makes possible examining the influence on the person's development of changes (and continuities) over time in the environments in which the person is living.

The impact of a single life transition on family processes and the development of the child can be illustrated by tracing the progressive impact of divorce on the mother-child relationship and the child's behaviour at school. The study by Hetherington (1978), in Bronfenbrenner (1986), showed that the disruptive effects of divorce were exacerbated in those instances in which the separation was accompanied by the mother's entry into the work force. Also, Moorehouse's (1986) study (in Bronfenbrenner, 1986) indicated that the children who experience the greatest difficulty in adapting to school were those whose mother was working full time. In most rural areas such mothers leave their children with relatives, and are away from their children for months interspersed with occasional visits. Poverty and unemployment has compounded this problem of separation between mother and child. Some mothers go away for a year, working in distant towns or cities, or in search of employment. Such a family situation impacts very negatively on the education of children.

A longitudinal study carried out in Hawaii (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) of children designated as "vulnerable but invincible" revealed that these children were adolescents and youth who, over the course of their lives had been exposed to poverty, biological risks, and

family instability, and reared by parents with little education or serious mental health problems. It was also inferred from this study that parents most likely to employ physical discipline were those who occupied a lower socio-economic status or who themselves had experienced an unhappy childhood (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) saw development as taking place through processes of reciprocal interaction between the child and his or her environment, which become progressively more complex over long periods of time. The chronosystem consists of patterns of stability and change over time at all system levels (Schickedanz and Schickedanz, Forsyth, and Forsyth, 2001). Bronfenbrenner (1993) referred to the temporal dimension of this model as the chronosystem.

### **2.1.3. Intervention**

Steuer (1994) emphasizes that change in life events can be imposed externally, and that alternatively they can arise from within the organism, since learners select, modify create many of their settings and experiences. Steuer (1994) further argues that how learners (select, modify) construct their own settings, depends on their physical, intellectual, and personality characteristics and the environmental opportunities available to them. The author concludes that according to the ecological systems theory; the development is neither controlled by environmental circumstances nor driven by inner dispositions. Instead, learners are both products and producers of their environment both of which form a network of interdependent effect.

The ecological systems theory is of tremendous significance because it suggests that interventions, or lack of these, at any level of the system can have an impact on learners. Bronfenbrenner (1989, 1993) believed that change at the level of the macrosystem is particularly important because the macrosystem affects all other environmental levels. The beliefs, ideologies cultural values, laws, customs and cultural capital or resources of a particular culture influence constituents' behaviour, especially in interaction and

relationships with one another. It does seem therefore that change must begin at the macrosystem level.

Bronfenbrenner (1993) proposed examining the effects of the activities of others such as parents and teachers, in a given microsystem. He also defined as developmentally instigative, those characteristic qualities of learners which affect others to set in motion repeated reciprocal interpersonal interactions that influence the course of that learner's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1989, 1993). These characteristics include physical attractiveness, temperament, and activity level, which are thought to be determined largely by biology, as well as environment. He proposed that children influenced their own subsequent environment, as well as their own subsequent biology (Schickedanz, et. al., 2001). The constitutional tendencies evoke counteractions from others which accentuate these initial dispositions. The child's biological endowment shapes not only his behaviour but that of his parents and subsequently his educators as well. Through his own behavioural disposition then, the child elicits a series of parental behaviours which reinforce his initial pattern.

#### **2.1.4. Implications of systems theories**

The implication of von Bertalanffy's theory for a school is that it is a system that directly interfaces with its environment, where there has to be a regulation of energetic input.– output process in order to maintain the homeostasis - morphogenesis continuum. In order to adapt to its environment, the school may cope with external forces by incorporating them, resisting them or acquiring control over them. In terms of von Bertalanffy's (1975) theory a school may either be an open or closed system depending on its idiosyncrasies, to maintain its stability. Wherever the school is too open to its environment it loses its features as a school and when it is too closed it resists change.

I am of the opinion that Bronfenbrenner's theory complements that of von Bertalanffy because all Bronfenbrenner's multi-layers are found within the environment of a school. According to this theory there are factors in the system that enhance or interfere with the

child's development, for example parents who don't support a school and their children.

The mesosystemic level and its processes of interaction are critical for educational change and improvement of learners' learning. This process and level can create a culture of conducive relationships necessary for a school's growth and development. The exosystemic level indirectly impacts on the learner, negatively or positively, depending on the systems with which parents interact. The macrosystem is underpinned by cultural norms, values, beliefs and ideologies. The interactive processes between these systems impact on the child's growth and development at different levels over time.

In terms of both theories, the school as a system should interact with other systems in order to be influenced and influence them to change. The advantage of adopting the systems theory approach in this study is that it is congruent with the proposal for school based management, which is a formal inclusionary process whereby all school constituents participate in the decisions, and promote the concept of empowering schools, decentralizing, debureaucratizing and democratising school control, thereby opening schools up to involve groups previously excluded in the school governance (Murphy and Beck, 1995). The empowerment of school stakeholders puts the processes of change in the control of the stakeholders, and minimizes preoccupation with processes outside their control. This view supports the process of mesosystemic interactions to produce a dynamic equilibrium. Gaynor (1998) states that stakeholder empowerment inspires them to take responsibility and ownership for their actions.

The chronosystemic model provides insight into how the environment over time can shape the behaviour of children. Learners who are without parents or who do not have support systems at home tend to experience learning and behavioural problems. Such learners tend to experience frustration and consequently become aggressive. The effects of the past negative life experiences manifest themselves in counter transference to educators.

It can be stated, in concluding this section, that, systemic change is an approach which involves players from throughout the system in considering all parts of an organization. It shows how change in one part of the system might affect other systems, and how to coordinate change in a system so that it furthers the shared goals and visions. It is closely linked to the concept of continuous improvement, in which people work in a specific process to keep improving their results and remain effective in the rapidly changing context of education.

Further, systemic change offers an opportunity to enact change while moving beyond thinking about individuals and individual groups, single problems and single solutions. Most importantly, systemic change in the context of schools is not so much a detailed prescription for improving education, as a philosophy advocating reflecting, rethinking, and restructuring.

## **2.2. Theories of change forces**

There are two main theories of change forces, which I consider pertinent in education change processes. These theories also subsume strategies of change, which have been observed to be frequently used with a particular theory. Both theories and strategies are, in my opinion, consistent with the systems approach framework. Sergiovanni (1998) has written extensively about two theories of change. He states that different change forces are based on different views on change theories. The constrained change forces are embodied in the bureaucratic, market and personal change forces operating within the school as a microsystem. The following section will explore constrained and unconstrained change forces.

### **2.2.1. Constrained Change Forces**

Bureaucratic forces rely on the application of rational choice theory linked to penalties for non-compliance to motivate teachers to implement change (Sergiovanni, 1998). Some writers suggest that bureaucracy is an almost inevitable consequence of increasing size

and complexity. It was further argued by Weber (Bush, 1995) that in formal organizations, bureaucracy is the most efficient form of management.

In the past writers in organizations maintained that purely bureaucratic type of administrative organization is from a technical point of view, capable of efficiency and is in this sense formally the most rational means of carrying out imperative control over human beings. It is superior to any other form in precision, in stability, in the stringency of its discipline, and in its reliability.

Langa (Bush 1995) supports Weber's view that bureaucracy is an efficient system for successful change. After acknowledging the sceptical views about the weaknesses of bureaucracy, he concludes that the bureaucratic model remains valid and appropriate for education. His view is that there is a formidable tradition that views bureaucracy in pejorative terms, nevertheless insists that bureaucracy as described by Weber is still the most appropriate form of organization to facilitate the attainment of educational change. Musgrave (Harber and Davies, 1997) concurs with and supports Weber's view of bureaucracy in stating that the defence of bureaucracy has rested on the grounds that it has promoted rationality, orderliness and consistency and therefore efficiency and technical expertise.

Bureaucratic forces require that formal systems be promulgated to propose, manage and monitor the trading of change on a daily basis. Material rewards are coupled with penalties to induce change. In this sense the superiors in an organization mandate change.

Personal forces, as part of bureaucratic change forces, rely on the utilization of rational choice theory, which is linked to psychological rewards for compliance to motivate teachers to implement change. Sergiovanni (1998) emphasizes that personal forces depend on formal and intensive leadership interventions to propose, manage and monitor educational change. Psychic rewards appear to be frequently used to reinforce change implementation. In supporting the theory, West (1998) regards leadership as the key element in determining the school's successful change.

It may be argued that personal change forces are usually used as the best method of manipulating employees, using their needs. It tends to hinge on bureaucratic change forces in the sense that employers use the carrot and stick approach to force employees to comply with the demand for change. This is a typical example of an outside pressure leading to change within a system.

Miles (1998) and Sergiovanni's (1998) two theories of change forces are supported by McQuillan and House's (1998) technological and political perspectives in change processes. The technological perspective puts emphasis on how to do the job, with the primary concern being to do the job efficiently. The political perspective's key concepts are power and authority, and the primary concern is the legitimacy of the authority systems. The power relations and the technological dimensions of change are seemingly major concerns of the bureaucratic change forces.

Bureaucratic change forces and micro-political structures in the school create tension. Blasé (1998) concurs when he states that power and politics dramatically affect and even drive all key dimensions of change and innovation in organizations. They typically reflect the strong advocacy of some, and the strong opposition of others. The self-interest of both groups is at stake and every trick and resource will be called into service to bring about or successfully oppose the change under consideration. Blasé (1998) further supports the view that bureaucratic change forces are used in traditional organizations where change is often a top-down (hierarchical) political imposition.

Fullan's (1993) contention is that you cannot make people change. You cannot force them to think differently or compel them to develop new skills. Further he states that change requires skills, capacity, commitment, motivation, beliefs and insights and discretionary judgement on the site. In terms of Fullan's conceptualisation, change in a school is essentially a political process by which a powerful and dominant group imposes their values on the school and plans are articulated in the light of the compromises that emerge from the political debate. Telford's (1996) view is that the political elements in

bureaucratic change forces are used to reach agreement through coercion in order to cause teachers to change.

Governments tend to use empirical-rational and power-coercive change strategies in bringing about change because these strategies expedite change. The two change strategies above support the bureaucratic change forces because they tend to dictate and mandate change. Contexts have usually dictated change strategies in different countries- though these strategies also depend on the change agent's perception of the consumer and beliefs and paradigms.

In support of the contextual influence in making a choice of strategy, Kolb, Rubin and McIntyre (1992) are of the view that when a change effort is initiated, the client and / or the consultant, or some other part of the system has determined that there is some need for change. Kolb et al. (1992) support the general systems morphogenesis and homeostasis balance.

Research, Development and Diffusion (R, D and D) is one of the models for implementing KPU. Van der Westhuizen et al. (1997) state that the R,D and D model conceives of change as an orderly, planned sequence, which begins with the identification of the problem. According to Owens (1995) someone begins to conduct research in order to find solutions. It is maintained that successful change in some organizations appears to be a consequence of the introduction of an outside change agent at the managerial level. It was also observed that prestige and experts are more likely to be successful in obtaining change. Uhlfelder and Werner (Tyson and Jackson, 1992) support the use of the expert to facilitate a successful change. However, their definition of change is different in that it conceptualises experts as the employees who do the work. Cowling (Tyson and Jackson, 1992) found little evidence that could support the view that the employees themselves have the expertise that could lead to a successful initiation of change. He sees their role as essentially advisory to top management.

The research stage is followed by the development of useful products from the research. The final stage is the marketing and diffusion of the new knowledge and solutions. Included in this stage of diffusion is the adoption of the innovation through the three-stage process of trial, installation and institutionalisation.

A study conducted by Carbon (Gross et al., 1971) revealed that the mere adoption of an innovation by the school officials does not necessarily lead to the desired change at the school; which is the first weakness of the model. The strategy is that the consumer is involved only during the last stage. Consequently the adopter cannot own the innovation. This reduces the chances of commitment in implementing the new knowledge. The other disadvantage of the model is that little attention is given to helping the user to implement the innovation once it has been delivered. Owens (1995) correctly argues that in spite of numerous models aimed at bridging the gap between theory and practice, the non-involvement of the adopter at the first stage does not legitimise the process of introducing change through this model.

The power-coercive change strategy uses sanctions in order to obtain compliance from adopters. From the power-coercive point of view, rationality, reason, and human relations are all secondary to the ability to effect changes directly through the wielding of power (Owens, 1995). It is usually used during the diffusion phase of change and innovation. The strategy employs legislation, financial sanctions, judicial decisions and government regulations with sanctions for non-compliance. The force used by this model invariably causes frustrations, resentments and anger in the adopters. It is mostly used by hierarchical structures of government to expedite the process of change through mandates.

The advantage of such approaches to change is the speed with which innovation is implemented without a long and tedious process of consultation with stakeholders. However, the repercussions are usually the resistance to change in spite of apparent implementation of the new knowledge.

Research, Development and Diffusion and Power-Coercive strategies share two assumptions. Firstly, that good ideas are best developed from outside of the organization, and secondly, that the organization is the target of external forces of change. Implicit in these strategies is that when organizations are left to their devices they generally emphasize stability over change and generally resist change. Consequently force is necessary to make them change. However, where force is used, implementation and change may be transitory.

According to Sergiovanni (1998) change brought about through bureaucratic change forces is usually short-lived. When bureaucratic change forces are successfully used, teachers change just enough to get rewards. But change stops when rewards are no longer forthcoming. When personal change forces are successfully used teachers just change enough to get incentives, and change stops when incentives are no longer available or no longer valued.

### **2.2.2. Unconstrained Change forces**

Unconstrained change forces embody the professional, cultural and democratic forces which according to Sergiovanni (1998) are based on the unconstrained liberal view of human nature. This approach is meant to encourage free flow of communication and interactive process among all microsystems.

Some writers and researchers in organizations tend to use different terms for professional development, such as human resource elements in change, staff development and support. It is apparently because professional change forces rely on professional training, development, standards of practice and norms for behaviour that, once internalised, they are thought to compel change. Sergiovanni (1998) calls this behaviour a motivation by professional virtue, that is a commitment to practice teaching in an exemplary way by staying abreast of new developments, researching one's own practice, trying out new approaches and otherwise accepting responsibility for one's own development.

Sergiovanni's views are suggestive of the importance of learning in bringing about change in organizations.

Watkins and Marsick (Perez, Milstein, Wood and Jacquez, 1999:8) define a learning organization as, "one that learns continuously and transforms itself. Learning takes place in individuals, teams, the organization, and even the communities in which the organization interacts." Perez, Milstein, Wood and Jacquez (1999) agree on an essential process of professional development, which is an integral part of a systems perspective and systemic change efforts. Further, these authors maintain that professional development plays a key role in school change. In Telford's (1996) terms, professional development is a human resource element in change, which means staff development through cooperative sharing of their collective experience. It assumes that leaders foster an environment of mutual support, professional acceptance and continuous learning.

The current buzzwords in the education sector include 'capacity building' and 'ensuring support' in terms of Schwabn and Spady's (1998) theory. These two researchers maintain that people in organizations cannot change unless there are orientations, abilities to stimulate employees to grow and develop as people and to establish ever-higher expectations and standards concerning product and service quality. To ensure support the school should be structured and aligned to achieve its declared purpose and vision. The manager or principal ensures the creation of conditions, procedures, incentives, and structures that enable genuine change to happen.

Organizational change has little chance of succeeding unless those entrusted to implement the change have the opportunity to do so without encountering organizational obstacles including procedures, misallocation of resources, poor communication and coordination, inadequate technologies, disorganization, rivalries, and a host of other liabilities (Schwabn and Spady, 1998:105).

These two authors further emphasize that effective organizational functioning requires constant addressing and alignment of policies, decisions, resources, and procedures that

make it possible for employees and constituents to achieve and sustain the changes in their stated purpose and vision. This support is demonstrated by the organization's willingness and ability to put itself and its resources squarely behind its declared purpose and vision and the people it counts on to make them happen.

Watkins and Marsick (Perez et al., 1998) identified an institution's ability to act as a learning organization as vital to its ability to respond to the changing nature of work, changes in workforce, and changes in how people learn. By their nature, learning organizations seek transformational change, which is key to expanding organizational capacity. Therefore, one desirable outcome of school reform is for a school to become a learning organization. One way of thinking of becoming a learning organization is through professional development.

#### 2.2.2.1. Fullan's theory of change

I am of the view that Fullan's (1993) theory of educator change is very important in transforming teaching in schools. Its four core capacities corresponding to their institutional counterparts, are required as a generative foundation for building a greater change capacity. Educators should have the four core capacities to enable them to implement change effectively.

Firstly, according to Fullan (1993), each and every educator must strive to be an effective change agent. Personal vision for each educator is the starting point for change. Its intrinsic nature gives meaning to work, and exists independently of any particular school on educator happens to be in. When personal purpose is present in numbers it provides the power for deeper change because:

Culture gets changed in a thousand small ways, not dramatic announcements from the boardroom. If we wait until top management gives leadership to the change we want to see, we miss the point. For us to have any hope that our own preferred future will come to pass, we provide the leadership (Fullan, 1993:14).

The second capacity for change as inquiry of personal purpose is a perennial inquest. “The essential activity for keeping our paradigm current is persistent questioning” (Fullan, 1993:15). Inquiry means internalising norms, habits and techniques for continuous learning. The process of inquiry involves experimentation, reflective practice, personal journals and action research. The relationship between personal vision and inquiry creates dynamic reaction that becomes the genesis for change.

Fullan (1993) accurately states that “people must behave their way into new ideas and skills not just think their way into them” (Fullan, 1993:15). The third capacity of mastery and competence are obviously means for achieving deeper understanding. This is interrelated with vision and inquiry. Senge (1990) supports this view when he says that personal mastery goes beyond competence and skills, though it is grounded in competence and skills.

Fullan (1993) further states that mastery is a learning habit that permeates everything we do. It enables us to know where ideas fit in. In stressing the importance and meaning of mastery, Senge (1990:1142) further stays that:

people with a high level of personal mastery live in a continual learning mode  
 ..... personal mastery is not something you possess. It is a process. It is a life long discipline. People with a level of personal mastery are acutely aware of their ignorance, their incompetence, their growth areas and they are deeply confident. Paradoxically only those who do not see that the journey is the reward.

The final capacity is that people need one another to learn and accomplish things. Personal mastery and group mastery feed on each other in learning organizations. Small-scale collaboration involves the attitude and capacity to form protective mentoring and peer relationships, team building and the like. Without collaborative skills and relationships it is not possible to learn and to continue to learn as much as one needs to be an agent for school change.

I support Fullan's view that it is difficult and impossible to force educators to change and think differently or compel them to develop new skills in their teaching.

When those who have the power to manipulate changes act as if they have to explain, and when their explanations are not at once accepted, shrug off opposition as ignorance or prejudice they express a profound contempt for the meaning of lives other than their own. For the reformers have already assimilated these changes to their purpose, and worked out a reformulation which makes sense to them, perhaps through months or years of analysing and debate (Fullan, 1993:23).

The proposed alternative for bringing about change is creating conditions that enable and press people to consider personal and shared visions and skills development through practice over time. "Productive educational change roams somewhere between over control and chaos" (Fullan, 1993:19). Therefore it is maintaining this balance of giving freedom to professional and independent thought, while at the same time checking that freedom with close supervision.

#### 2.2.2.2. Cultural Change Forces

Also included in the unconstrained change forces are cultural change forces which rely on psychosocial characteristics (Owens, 1995) or community norms, values and ideas that when internalised speak to everyone in a moral voice (Sergiovanni, 1998). All constituents of the community are motivated by felt obligations of the community and norms that define the school as a conventional community. Research into organizational culture as reported by Owens (1995) supports the importance of culture. Telford (1996) refers to these psychosocial characteristics as symbolic elements, which are pervasive in the school, bringing about norms of interaction and collaboration in change process.

The psychosocial characteristics are shown by deep-seated, unspoken, shared beliefs, values and attitudes that bring about norms of interaction, friendly, informal staff

relations and persuasive comradeship. Collaborative leaders value diversity, acceptance of differences, interpersonal openness and atmosphere of genuine care. Concern for colleagues, personally and professionally is the norm.

Schwabn and Spady (1998) view cultural leadership and ownership as inextricable processes. They argue cogently that it is critical to have an organizational culture that strongly influences people's sense of esteem and belonging. Schwabn and Spady (1998) further maintain that cultural leadership in a productive change process is to orchestrate and shape the organization's ownership developing process. According to these authors, the critical pillar of change is the feeling within organizational members and clients that they can identify with and are a part of what is going on. It is this feeling of belonging, being connected, participating, and contributing which is the motivational fuel of productive change. Various aspects of that psychological investment are called ownership, buy-in, commitment, motivation, involvement, and engagement. (Schwabn and Spady, 1998)

Whitaker's (1993) view is that a key factor in the successful leadership of change is the capacity to give deliberate attention to the building and development of an organizational culture conducive to collaboration, participation and change, and the ability to manage this process. The school principal is central in this process.

Angus and Londen (1998) concur in suggesting that re-culturing schools can lead to change. Perez et al (1999) maintain that systemic change is about changing the culture of the school which is manifested in an equivalent mindset that permeates an organization and results in dominant patterns of member behaviour. Instilling ownership of the process of change by all stakeholders actualises psychosocial characteristics.

Hopkins (1998) notes the distinction between structure and culture, which are interdependent, and note that the relationship between them is dialectical. According to McLagan and Nel (Hopkins, 1998) structure is important because it creates the framework for values and relationships. It creates the pathways for the formal flow of

information, and it guides people's assumptions about the actions that the institution considers legitimate. Gultig, Ndlovu and Bertram (1999) maintain that structures create the framework for values and relationships in an organization.

On the other hand organizational culture, according to Owens (1995:306) is,

The norms that inform people what is acceptable and what is not, the dominant values that the organization cherishes above others, the basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of the organization, the rules of the game that must be observed if one is to get along and be accepted as a member, the philosophy that guides the organization in dealing with its employees and its clients.

Owen (1995) further states that the culture of the educational organization shapes and moulds assumptions and perceptions that are basic to understanding what it means to be a teacher.

It can be extrapolated from the aforementioned, that the structure and the culture are mutually reinforcing. Gultig, Ndlovu and Bertam (1999) point out that structure influences culture and vice versa. They further add that structures are regarded as profound, in that they generate cultures, which not only allow the structures to work, but also legitimate them. On the other hand changes in cultures can change underlying structures. It is easier to change structure and get the appearance of change. But it is rare to sustain changes in culture without concomitant change in structure to support. Therefore Gultig et al. (1999) emphasize that equal attention should be directed to both structure and culture.

#### 2.2.2.3. Democratic Change Forces

The third component of the unconstrained change forces is democratic change forces. According to Sergiovanni (1998) democratic change forces rely on commitment to democratic social contracts that function as the source for values to guide school

decision-making and as the source for patterns of obligations and duties that compel change. Telford (1996) refers to the democratic change force as the political elements of the leadership behaviour which centre on reaching agreement through discussion, negotiation and compromise in a climate of openness. Disagreements and discord are incorporated as part of everyday life, facilitating the attainment of shared goals and advancing the educational agenda. It is consequently argued that the strategy invariably transforms the school constituents and makes them willing to sacrifice their self-interests for the common shared good of the school.

Research has shown that in a democratic process, participation in decision-making is related positively to the educators' attitudes about work. Smylie and Perry (1998) maintain that participation is related positively to school improvement and change. These authors also report a study which found that schools with the most democratic governance processes were mostly likely to engage in systemic approaches to educational innovation. It was also found that schools with participatory decision-making were more likely to enhance instructional programmes and support services. Schools that had the most developed mechanisms for educator participation in school governance made significant changes. Smylie and Perry (1998) maintain that such schools invested heavily in team process training, instructional staff development and more effective systems for sharing information with all their constituents.

It has been argued by some researchers that democratic processes thrive in specific structural organizations. The structural elements refer to the way in which leaders structure decision-making processes to allow appropriate staff, students and parents' participation such that a shared vision and agreed upon ways of implementing the direction, policies and programmes of the school can occur. These elements are characterised by a flat hierarchy, open communication, listening, respecting and valuing people and empowerment.

There is disagreement among organizational researchers regarding structure and culture and their impact on change. It is maintained by some of them that if the structure is

changed the behaviour of individuals will change *pari passui*. Smetherham (1982) rejects this view and holds the notion that the structure is fundamentally only behaviour viewed statistically and is very difficult to change behaviour by relabelling slots in the organization or changing the structure or membership of a committee or group. It is however maintained by Gultig et al.(1999) that a flattened rather than a hierarchical structure facilitates change. Katz and Kahn (1978) support the authors above when they state that direct systemic change begins by changing the situation in which members of the organization work. This includes authority or the required response to authority, the size or nature of the task itself, the access to information, the meetings to which invitations are given and the decisions on which votes are taken. Katz and Kahn (1978) then conclude that the hypothesized sequence leads from structural changes to changes in the behaviour of the people who experience them and thus to ramifying changes in the state and output of the organization, and in the long run to enduring changes in the individuals themselves.

Telford (1996) states that schools are able to structure the decision-making processes to allow appropriate stakeholders' participation such that a shared vision and agreed-upon ways of implementing the direction, policies and programs of the school can occur.

Smylie and Perry (1998) report a longitudinal study of teacher-dominated decision-making in schools where it was found that change and improvement were greatest in schools with the most collaborative and inclusive participative process. Only actively involving all members of the school in implementation of the mission can generate the kind of commitment necessary to foster change (Gultig et Al. 1999).

The study by Smylie and Perry (1998) further reveals that classroom change occurs when participation promotes self-determinism and collective accountability among educators. Slavin (1998) speaks of 'Seeds schools' to refer to those where educators are involved in decisions. In order to entrench a democratic process these schools were found to utilize a school based management because it entrenched ownership of the process.

### **2.3. Summary and conclusion**

I decided to use systems approach, with two general systems theories by Bertalanffy and Bronfenbrenner to form a conceptual framework in order to understand and analyse change in schools. I chose these theories because schools as organizations can be better conceptualised systemically. A systems approach involves all players throughout the system, considering all parts of the school in a cyclical process. It is particularly relevant to schools because it is closely linked to the concept of continuous improvement in which people work in a specific process to keep on improving their results.

The operational concepts in systems theory and change as applied in this study are integrative, collaborative, empowerment, consultation school-based and transformational leadership and management, which result in commitment to and ownership of the change process. Collaboration and transformational leadership engender commitment by all constituents of the school and result in the institutionalisation of the shared vision of the school.

The constrained change theories subsume bureaucratic, market and personal change forces. These theories essentially impose and force change on the recipients. Bureaucracy is considered to be the most efficient form of management. Such approaches to change characterised the apartheid system of education, but seem inappropriate in a new democratic society.

Government departments have tended to use empirical-rational and power-coercive strategies to initiate and manage change in schools. The national or provincial department consults with consultants who deliver already researched and packaged innovation, which is ready for dissemination. Power-coercion is used to ensure the dissemination of the innovation, and the department uses its power to cause educators to comply with the process of implementation.

In terms of the unconstrained change forces, change can only take place if professional development and capacity building support it. Schools will only change where principals ensure that allocation of resources, procedures, policies and technology are in alignment with the vision of change. The principal is central in building and developing an organizational culture that is conducive to collaboration and change. Successful leadership is seen to be a key factor, which is dependent on a principal with a vision.

Cultural change forces rely on psychosocial characteristics that when internalised permeate the whole school bringing about norms of interaction and collaboration in change processes. The critical pillar of change in terms of cultural change forces is the feeling of the organizational members that they can identify with what is happening.

Instilling ownership of the process of change by stakeholders actualises psychosocial characteristics. Ownership is instilled through following a democratic process of change. Participation in decision-making by all stakeholders of the school, especially educators, contributes positively to change.

The structure of the school needs to be conducive to participation and decision-making processes. It is therefore maintained that a flattened structure facilitates change, and that structural changes lead to changes in the behaviour of people who experience them and ramify in the whole school.

Participation operates in a school-based management approach, which involves all constituents in the affairs of the school. The involvement of constituents in decision-making is an important factor in successful change because it has the potential to improve the quality of decisions and enhance motivation, and thus lead to internalised commitment to the outcomes of these decisions.

The involvement of all schools constituents in order to own the process of change is understood as a transformational leadership. What is important about transformational leadership is that the constituents of the school pursue shared beliefs through combined

efforts, overriding their individual interests in the quest for common goals. A transformational leader believes that his or her team can function independently and successfully within a framework of expectation and accountability.

Transformational leadership is driven by the development of vision that energizes school staff toward meaningful and valued actions. The vision development is facilitated by a collaborative function with the whole community. The collaborative environment makes it possible for school educators to work unselfconsciously together as a team with parents and learners, despite their differences, sharing a common goal to be collectively responsible for its attainment and to help each other towards it.

Team building and collaboration in democratic change forces are underpinned by a problem-solving approach, which gives power to the innovation users to define what changes and improvements they want. The non-directive approach of normative re-educative change strategy leads to the creation of skills among staff members which enable them to diagnose their problems and systematically work out solutions.

It can therefore be concluded that in the constrained theories of bureaucratic change forces, users of an innovation are not involved in the initial stages of the innovation. They are consulted only during the stage of diffusion, and implementation. This approach mandates and expedites changes. However, change brought about through this strategy is said to be short lived and superficial because users do not own the process of change.

In unconstrained theories such as professional development, the psychosocial characteristics of users are important, consequently they are consulted in the initial stage to make decisions with regard to what and how they want to be assisted. Though this change takes a snail's pace, users own it, and hence it is said to last.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is an exploratory research because there is very little work done in South Africa about change processes, particularly, at IsiZulu medium schools. A systemic framework was used because it has the advantage of examining the research phenomenon in a natural setting and seeing it as a whole (Gross, Giacquinta and Berstein, 1971). The methods within the design aimed at answering research questions.

#### 3.1. Aims of the study

The study seeks to identify and describe the processes associated with the difficulties and inertia hindering efforts to improve the quality of education in a sample of IsiZulu medium schools. From this analysis, an understanding of educational change in such contexts will be generated and used to plan the empowerment of both the officials of the department and educators.

The study also hopes to contribute to the formulation of new policies and to the implementation of educational innovation in such contexts. These policies should aim to enable schools to develop the capacity to manage themselves and to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

#### 3.1.2. Research questions

The study will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What factors have contributed to officials and parents' perception of resistance to change and inertia in AmaZulu schools?
2. What contributes to educators and principals' attitudes to initiating and implementing of change?

3. What approaches to leadership are exercised by school principals?
4. What roles do parents and other stakeholders play in school, and how may these be improved?
5. What is the relationship between the schools and circuit/district officials?

In order to gather information and answer the questions above I considered the following design and methodology to be appropriate.

### **3.2. Choice of design and methodology**

#### **3.2.1. Multiple case studies**

A case study is defined “solely in terms of its concentration on the specific case, in its context” (Robson, 1993:149). According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993) the case study focuses on the phenomenon in order to understand it in depth. The multiple case study is concerned with analytic generalisation. The first case study will help to provide evidence which supports theory and complements what is going on in the first study. The theory and its possible support or disconfirmation, guides the choice of subsequent cases in a multiple case study. Findings and patterns of data from these case studies which provide this kind of support, particularly if they simultaneously provide evidence which does not fit in with alternative theories, are the basis for generalisation (Robson, 1993).

In this study three case study schools were used, because as an exploratory study, more feelings and information was needed in order to understand these schools in depth. There was no information previously gathered in this area. It was thus designed with a purpose to enable other researchers to conduct further inquiry. Also, I felt that three case studies could better provide a detailed description and analysis of processes of educational change in the three schools (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993). The multiple case study approach provided a strategic way to explore the complex problem related to change, which led to an in-depth observation of the whole process of change in these schools.

Insight gained through the case may also lead to the development of hypothesis that can be tested using other methods (Cozby, 1993:56). The three case studies could enable me to get the feelings and opinions from more participants about what was going on in their school situation. It was also an explanatory case studies to provide an explanation of what was happening in those cases (Robson, 1993)

The three case study schools were purposefully sampled information-rich cases because they would probably give relevant information to the purpose of the study. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993:378), “The power and logic of purposeful sampling is that a few cases studied in depth yield many insights about the topic.” I thought that four constituents from each school would provide in depth information.

### 3.2.2. Action research

The data collection through the focus group was, at the same time, an intervention process. The process of intervention will be supported by an action research paradigm.

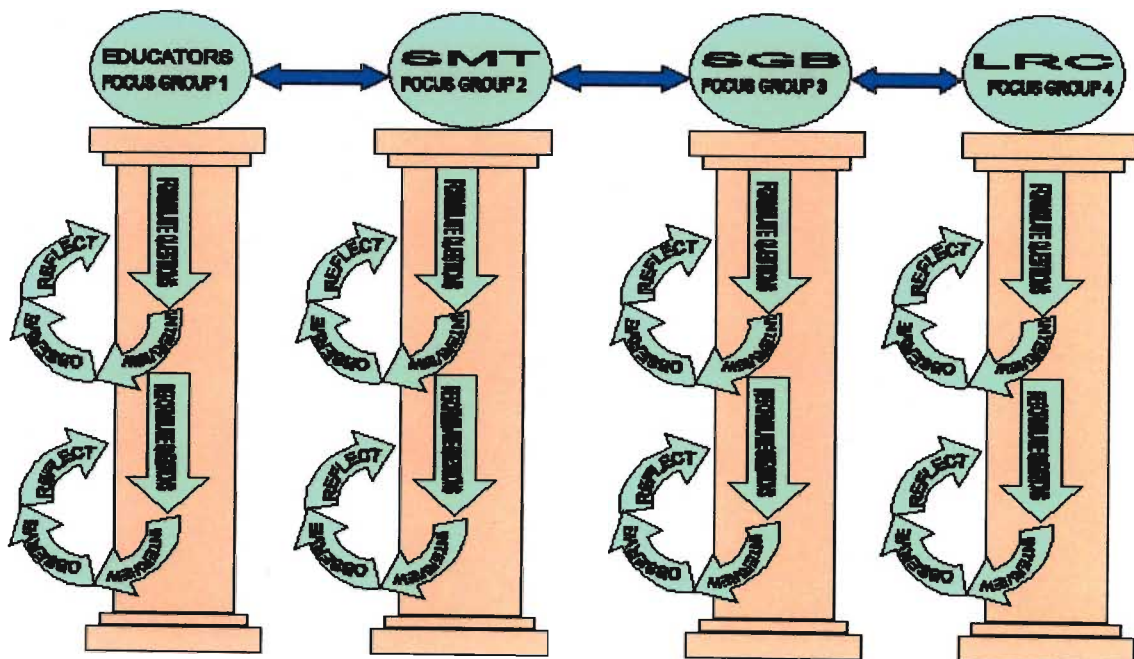


Figure 3.1: Action research cycle

McNiff (1988:7) states the following about the action research:

The method of action research is elegant. It involves a self-reflective spiral of planning, observing, reflecting and replanning. It requires teachers to be acutely aware of a sense of process, and to refine their perceptions to account for that process. Far from being ad hoc woolly, action research raises to a conscious level much of what is already being done by good teachers on an intuitive level. It enables teachers to identify and to come to grips with their practice in a humane way, which is at once supportive and critical.

Keeves (1988) maintains that what distinguishes action research is its method, rather than research techniques. The method is based on the notion of a spiral of self-reflection. It is essentially participatory in the sense that it involves participants in reflection on practices. Davidoff and van den Berg (1990) add clarity on reflection when they state reflection involves looking back critically at what has happened in your classroom activity to see what it can teach you about future action. It means trying to understand what has taken place in the light of what you had planned.

The purpose of the action research was to assist educators to learn how to plan, act, observe and reflect on their practice. Following Egan (1994), I used communication skills to challenge educators to:

- own their problems and opportunities
- state their problems as solvable
- move beyond faulty interpretations
- see their evasions and distortions
- explore the consequences of their behaviour

In this study I led the focus groups to identify their problems which caused the school to fail to improve the learners' achievement. After the identification of the problems, they were led to generate solutions and act upon them. This also led to the creation of times of observation and reflection on the whole process.

This process, at the same time, engaged them in the process of change in which through focus groups, they observed their change and gave an account of why they shifted their paradigms and where this had occurred.

Kellmayer (1995) succinctly summarizes action research as an empowering strategy for teachers because it attempts to solve real problems that confront them in the classroom. The intervention was based upon the teachers' careful analysis of behaviour and performance. In this study focus groups were used for both research and intervention purposes.

### **3.2.3. Focus groups**

Focus groups were utilized during the data collection stage. Dawson, Manderson and Tallo (1997) conceptualise focus group as people from similar backgrounds or experiences who are used to gather data on a specific topic of interest to the researcher. According to Barbour and Kitzinger (1999) focus groups are ideal for exploring how and why points of view are construed and expressed. In light of the above, this study was both exploratory and explanatory.

As a participant observer, through the permission of the principal and his or her School Management Team, I attended some of the staff and School Governing Body meetings to observe how they engaged in processes of change. During these visits, private and public documents of the schools were examined with particular attention to the existence of the development and improvement plans, and the presence and implementation of their vision and mission.

A contact summary sheet was drawn up which was filled out as soon as written up field notes were reviewed. Reflective remarks as well as hypotheses development and questions to be asked during the next contact were included in the summary sheet. The summary sheet was used to:

- guide planning for the next contact

- re-orient oneself to the contact when returning to the write-up
- help with further data analysis

Group dynamics, especially focus groups in change models are widely used to identify and modify behaviour in organizations. The popularity of focus groups, especially as an intervention strategy may be seen from Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister's declaration that "there is no one more powerful than a member of a focus group" (Barbour and Kitzinger 1999: 1). Krueger (1994) supports this view in stating that focus groups in change models are widely used to identify and modify behaviour in organizations. He further maintains that focus group discussions have the power to change participants' views after they have listened to new evidence presented by a participant or different logic that was considered convincing. Morgan (1997) and Gross et al. (1971) concur that in some focus groups, participants are influenced by the forcefulness of another person in the group.

Focus groups are research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. In essence the researcher's interests provide the focus, whereas the data itself come from the group interaction (Morgan, 1997).

The main advantage of focus groups was the opportunity to observe a large amount of interaction on a topic in a limited period of time based on the researcher's ability to assemble and direct the focus group session. As a self-contained research method and a technique for collecting data, focus groups were used in this research to answer research questions.

I also paid particular interest to the focus groups' attitudes and opinions on the topic of change and learnt about their experiences and perspectives on change.

Catterall and Maclaran (1997) also support Morgan (1997) and Gross et al. (1971) that focus groups have the potential of changing the group-think. According to these authors, interaction between participants in focus groups and the interplay and modification of

opinion that occurs may, in fact, provide data that is more ecologically valid than methods that assess individuals' opinions in relatively asocial settings.

The primary benefits of focus groups, according to Catterall and Maclaran (1997) are that they provide valuable information on how people talk about a topic and how they respond in a situation where they are exposed to the views and experiences of others:

- Participants change their views and opinions in the course of the discussion once they have had an opportunity to hear and reflect on other opinions, through introspection and retrospection. It is consequently not unusual for participants to think these changes through out loud.
- Participants expand later on experiences recounted earlier; adding new information, giving the experience a new and sometimes different interpretation or simply placing this experience in the context of another participant's experience.

An analysis of the interaction in focus groups can reveal:

- The shared language on the topic, what was taken for granted and what other participants asked for clarification on.
- The beliefs and myths about the topic that are taken for granted, and which ones are challenged.
- The arguments which participants call upon when their views are challenged.
- The sources of information people call upon to justify their views and experiences and how others respond to these.
- The arguments, sources and types of information that stimulate changes of opinion or reinterpretation of experiences.
- The tone of voice, body language, and degree of emotional engagement is involved when participants talk to each other about the topic.

Krueger (1994) maintains that the analyst's task is first to identify that change has taken place, then to determine if the participant agrees that she/he has changed and finally to determine what prompted the change.

### **3.3. Entering the field**

I visited the schools to inform educators that I would be involved at their schools in order to investigate obstacles to change, and work with and through them to address any such obstacles. Educators were also told that my role would be that of support and facilitating the discussions, and that the intervention approach would be problem solving, rather than a top-down expert approach.

I did not expect to encounter any problems regarding my position as an official from the department of education because the school psychologists had always been taken as supporters and allies of the school, rather than inspectors of schools who were perceived as judges. However, one could not rule out the fact that AmaZulu have a culture of fear and respect for a departmental official, sometimes to an extent of unquestioned submission. I was then very cautious about being taken as an external expert change agent. I resolved to be very non-directive in my approach, relying on communication skills to elicit information and help them map out their way for change.

#### **3.3.1. Selecting the schools**

This study was done in three selected case study schools. The schools were selected according to grade 12 learners' achievement and their performance as a measure of and responsiveness to change. The officials of the department of education believe that grade 12 academic performance is a measure of success and change in schools. The selected schools were statistical outliers that performed worse than average in terms of learners' academic performance, with particular reference to grade 12 annual scholastic results as a reflection of the whole process of education and change in the entire school.

The three schools were purposefully selected on the basis of the criteria mentioned above. I am of the opinion that the power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Because some of these schools had done worse than others

on the basis of the selected criteria, and others had done better, more information of central importance was gleaned from these schools. The strategies that were used for purposefully selecting these schools were guided by extreme or deviant cases, that is, cases of outstanding failure in terms of the criteria (Patton, 1987).

### **3.3.2. Entry into the schools**

For collection of data I selected three case study schools from the examination results bulletin. This selection was done in consultation with the Superintendents of Education Management (SEM) of the three circuits where these case study schools are situated, the Regional Matric Intervention Team, the Education Management Development component, and the subject advisers. All these sectors had been tasked by the Province to select schools which had obtained a pass rate of less than 40 % in grade 12 in the year 2000, to implement what they called a Matric Intervention Programme (MIP), and to support and monitor the development of a school improvement model to enable their schools to perform better than in 2001. The component of Psychological Guidance and Special Education Services (PGSES), of which I am part, was specifically requested to give psychological support to both educators and learners in the selected MIP schools.

I enthusiastically seized this opportunity to select three of those schools as my case study schools. I was fortunate in that I did not carry the historical stigma of being an “inspector of schools” who was perceived to be a judge visiting a school to find out what was wrong and give a lashing to educators. The PGSES was always seen as the education component that was offering psychological support to educators and learners. Educators and learners did not therefore fear PGSES staff as faultfinders in schools. They were, however respected as officials of the department whose opinions sometimes were regarded as authoritative and hence accepted without question. Therefore even though I belonged to the section of the department that was respected, I had to be very cautious in my dealings with educators.

### **3.3.3. Preparation**

I attended a meeting of all the stakeholders who were tasked to help schools implement MIP. Each sector was asked to be as creative as possible in its approach and there were no prescriptions. After that meeting I set dates to visit all three case study schools to re-introduce myself, though I was well known to them. I informed the schools that I was going to work with them for the rest of the year in response to the instruction from the department of education to support all schools that obtained a pass rate of less than 40% in the implementation of MIP. Some of the schools already knew the programme because the EMD sector had already invited them for a meeting where they were informed that they had been selected as MIP pilot schools. One of my case study schools was one of those which were fortunate to be allocated a budget of R100 000 each for improving the culture of teaching and learning in their schools. The Department had also threatened to close down those schools that continued to produce dismal results. Hence we were working under pressure. The MIP schools were told that education officials would visit them to give support. Those MIP schools which were allocated budgets were asked to decide on the equipment and resources they were going to buy. I explained my whole programme to the MIP schools that I was going to work with them, and that the purpose of the programme was to help them identify the problems and find solutions. All three case study schools appreciated the role I was going to play and the MIP programme because they believed that they were going to benefit from it. The schools consequently accorded me a warm welcome.

I explained to schools that we (researcher and schools) were going to identify those factors that were preventing improvement of the culture of teaching and learning in the schools, and at the same to develop intervention strategies to change and improve the situation. I further informed them that I was going to visit them frequently throughout the year and the number of visits would be determined by the progress made by the school in identifying problems and developing strategies toward changing the school. Schools were informed that the identification of problems and the development of intervention

programme were going to be done by them in focus groups. All stakeholders at the school were divided into focus groups of educators, School Management Team (SMT), School Governing Body (SGB), and Learners Representative Council (LRC).

I consulted with the principals to decide on suitable dates and times of visits which would least disturb the process of teaching and learning at the school. In one school-educators and SMT focus groups were seen during their teaching periods because there was no other time and the principal felt this was an important intervention for the school. In two schools educators and SMT groups were seen during a flexi-time (OBE free period) while learners were allowed to study and write assignments. Initial dates for meetings were set, but later meeting dates were dictated by progress and circumstances of school and focus group.

I went to schools with a cassette, tape recorder and notebook. Focus groups were asked whether they minded if the discussions were tape-recorded in order to track the progress. I informed all focus groups that the purpose of tape recording was to transcribe the discussion and take it back to them for review and further exploration. I followed Dawson et al's. (1992) recommendation of the use of the cassette recorder, that it was ideal because it would allow me to check sessions to which I might not pay careful enough attention to check performance, translation, and provided an accurate and permanent record of the sessions.

#### **3.3.4. Focus group characteristics**

The participants were purposefully selected from a limited number of each school constituent in order to facilitate data collection. The constituencies that were used to gather the data included the following:

- School Management Team (SMT)
- Educators
- School Governing Bodies (SGB'S)

- Representative Council of Learners (RCL)

One district manager and Superintendent of Education Management (SEM) were interviewed individually to clarify some of the issues that were raised by focus groups, or in some instances, to confirm them.

In focus group design, both homogeneity and segmentation were borne in mind. Segmentation was used to control group composition in order to match the chosen categories of participants carefully. Homogeneity allowed more free-flowing conversations among the participants of the focus groups. But this also facilitated analysis and the examination of differences in perspectives between groups (Morgan, 1997).

In this study focus group discussion, with not more than eight randomly selected members of each constituent of the school, was conducted. Also, informal and formal interviews were conducted with key stakeholders of the school. A tape recorder was used, except at the last case study school, to tape the focus group discussions and interviews. Notes were also taken in addition to the tape recording. A write-up was done not later than a day after an interview or focus group discussions had been conducted.

I was a participant observer who visited schools, firstly to establish rapport and then plan dates for subsequent visits and contact times. The subsequent visits involved the observance of the behaviour of educators and learners by paying particular attention to their interactions among themselves in their response to change. A systematic observation of role performance to determine how they perceived their role was conducted.

The structure of the group is commonly determined by the extent of the researcher's involvement and the interview standardization. The interview standardization in this study refers to the fact that all focus groups were asked the same questions, and this predetermined the content of the interview. According to Morgan (1997), more structured groups are one of the strategies for combining different degrees of interview

standardization and researcher involvement. In this study the strong research questions required a more structured groups approach to make sure that groups discussed these issues in a relatively comparable fashion. A higher level of researcher involvement was to keep the discussion concentrated on the topics that interested the researcher rather than extraneous issues.

The structured groups in this study required the organization of the discussion topics into a guide that I followed in more or less the same order from group to group. This structure as a guide imposed on discussions was valuable both in channelling the group interaction and making comparisons across groups in the analysis phase of research. Communication skills with open ended questions were used to elicit data from focus groups.

An icebreaker in the form of self-introduction with specific reference to an educator's speciality and extramural interests at the school was used. I stated the imperative of every participant's contribution of a meaningful response in the discussion. They were informed that the goal was to hear every participant's opinion on the topic.

After ten minutes of open discussion I created an opportunity to introduce the first substantive topic on the guide. This research was about responses to change, and the hypothesis was that IsiZulu speaking schools resist change. Therefore I introduced the first question as follows:

*One thing I have heard several people say is that IsiZulu medium schools resist change. People quote perennial poor matric performance as examples to support their perceptions. I would like to hear your responses to this perception with particular reference to this school's history of academic performance which has achieved a pass rate of less than 40% for three years in succession.*

### **3.4. The process of data collection**

Focus group interviews took place in the staff room for educators, in a classroom for the RCL and the principal's office for SMT and SGB members. The interviews took place in the afternoon, during study time, except for the SGB who had been consulted during the day. Focus group members sat in a circle with a table in the middle, which was used by me for placing interview paraphernalia and taking down notes. I followed Morgan's (1997) suggestion by sitting at the end of the table in order to exercise some control over each individual's level of participation.

I went to the school with a tape recorder, a pen and a writing pad. Taking down notes helped in formulating new questions as the interview moved along, and this also facilitated later analyses (Patton, 1987). All focus groups consented to the recording of the interviews. My observation of the interviews included noting impressions and the most obvious elements of body language (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999) during the interviews.

Dawson et al. (1992) warn that the transcription must be done as soon as possible. Breakwell (1995) concurs in stating that the analysis of transcriptions is of the most challenging aspects of the focus group method. I therefore decided to transcribe each tape immediately, on the day on which the interviews were conducted. This immediate transcription helped to adapt the facilitation style, and reformulate questions for the subsequent sessions in order to fill in gaps and clarify some issue which were vaguely stated (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999).

I started with what Kruger (1994) calls the key question. This question according to this author requires the greatest attention in the subsequent analysis. Secondly, I asked open-ended questions because they revealed what is on the interviewee's mind as opposed to what the researcher suspects is on the interviewee's mind. Morgan (1997) supports Kruger (1994) states that open-ended responses permit one to understand the world as seen by the respondent, and helps one to understand the respondent's perspective.

The sessions I had with the constituents differed from school to school, depending on the process of the interview and follow up needed. The available time did not allow me to follow Kruger's (1994) recommendations according to which the number of sessions should be determined by the theoretical saturation. According to Kruger (1994) the number of sessions also depended on the observation of a paradigm shift by some members of the focus group regarding a certain topic under discussion, or resistance to shift the paradigm.

I used structured and standardized focus group interviews in that all focus groups in all schools were asked the same initial question. The initial question was based on the historical record of the academic performance of the school because one of the criteria of selecting the schools was the poor academic progress of a pass rate of below 40% especially in grade 12 final examination results. I had, according to Morgan (1997:34) to prepare a "relatively structured interview with high moderator involvement." Barbour and Kitzinger (1999:5) give more clarity on the moderator involvement, when they state that "any group discussion may be called a focus group as long as the researcher is actively encouraging of, and attentive to, the group interaction."

I started with an introductory icebreaker in all focus groups and in all case study schools. The icebreaker was in the form of self-introduction by all members starting with the researcher himself. This helped to build rapport and break possible reluctance to talk and defences against participation. After a few minutes I introduced the topic as follows:

*One thing I have heard several people say is that IsiZulu medium schools resist change. People quote perennial poor matric performance as examples to support their perceptions. I would like to hear your responses to this perception with particular reference to this school's history of academic performance which has achieved a pass rate of less than 40% for three years in succession.*

This was the main standard question for all focus groups. I was guided by the grounded theory and Egan's (1994) theory of communication and counselling skills. Subsequent questions emerged as focus groups responded to the standard question. In Morgan's (1997) view, the researcher's interests provided the focus, and the data came from the group interaction. Most questions were generated by my use of communication skills such as the reflection of the speaker's content and probing. These skills helped groups to realize unused resources within themselves and see new perspectives of issues. Using Egan's (1994) approach, I challenged each focus group to:

- own their problems and opportunities
- state their problems as solvable
- move beyond faulty interpretations
- see their evasions and distortions
- explore the consequences of their behaviour
- act

The process of transcription, as Breakwell (1995) suggests, helped me to analyse the content of the discussion directly from the tape. After the analysis of the content, I identified the gaps and questions, which were not adequately answered. I therefore formulated new questions in accordance with the required information to fill the gaps and clarify some issues in the next session of the action research cycle. This was done in all focus groups. Contact summary forms were used to summarise data obtained and data required in terms of the formulated new target questions in the next contact session.

It was however difficult to meet the SGB as frequently as the researcher required because, as parents, members of the SGB's are always engaged in their household businesses and self-employment enterprises. It was also difficult because SGB members had first to consult with parent constituents in order to address or respond to a particular issue. They needed from two to three months to organize parents; hence it became difficult to wait for them. Besides, the SGB's appeared to be depended on the principals, hence they did not provide new information.

### 3.5. Data analysis

The process of focus group discussions and interviews produced massive chunks of information which needed to be organized for easy retrieval. The organization of the information was done through the following three strategies:

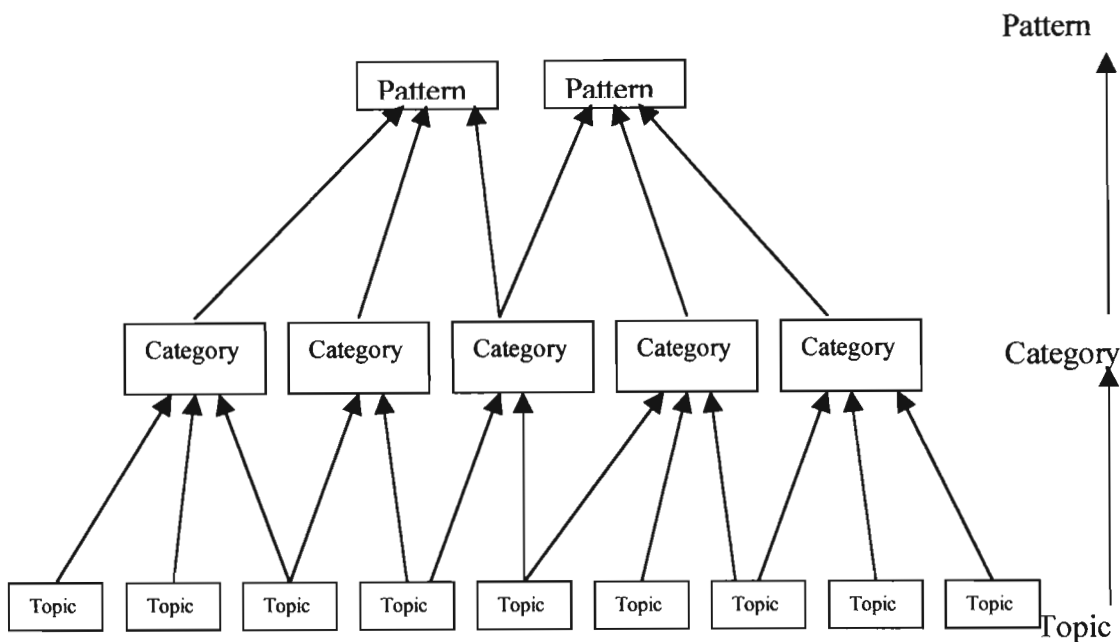


Figure 3.2: Building Patterns of meaning (adapted from McMillan and Schumacher, 1993:497)

#### 3.5.1. Generating topics

Based on McMillan and Schumacher's data analysis techniques, I read the data in order to have the sense of what the information was about. As I read the data I realised that topics were emerging to give me the sense of themes emerging from the focus groups. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993:488) a "topic is the descriptive name for the subject matter of the segments."

I then made a list of topics for easy comparison to check for repeated and overlapping themes. I put all similar topics together to form a cluster topics that are similar, and kept on returning to the data wherever it was necessary. For each cluster of topics, the best-fitting name was selected from among the original topic labels or a new one was created that captured the essence better.

### **3.5.2. Generating categories**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993:492), a “category is an abstract name that represents the meaning of similar topics.” Those categories that represent the insiders’ views are called emic, and those that represent what the phenomenon means to the researcher are etic (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993).

McMillan and Schumacher (1993) maintain that the goal of qualitative research is to make general statements about relationship among categories by discovering patterns in the data. They further state that “pattern-seeking means examining the data in as many ways as possible....where researchers attempt to understand the complex links between various aspects of people’s situations, mental processes, beliefs, and actions”(McMillan and Schumacher, 1993:495). Topics may be part of more than one category and can have several connotations.

In order to develop categories from topics data must be looked at from different perspectives. The researcher uses emic categories which represent insiders’ views such as actions, and explanations that are distinctive to the setting of people. This is the people’s perspective and the preferred name for topics and categories are those that come from the data. McMillan and Schumacher’s (1993:495) view is that “categories should be internally consistent and distinct from one another ... and grounded on categories of meanings held by the participants in the situation.”

The etic categories represent the outsider’s view of the situation, that is, the researcher’s concepts and scientific explanations. Etic categories represent what the phenomena mean

to the researcher. These categories come from the researcher's personal experiences, academic discipline and language (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993).

In this study the majority of categories generated were etic categories based on the researcher's experience, and academic discipline, using his language to describe the situation as an outsider. However, these categories had to be compared with the emic categories to confirm their validity. Further exploration of issues raised in focus groups was done and separate individual interviews were conducted to ensure that my etic categories were in line with or validated the focus groups' emic categories.

### **3.5.3. Generating patterns**

My hunches, the research problem and the selected theoretical framework guided the process of pattern generation. It was a circular process of returning to the data to validate each pattern and then to modify or recast the idea as part of a large abstraction (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993).

Generating patterns required me to ask how categories affected and were affected by other categories. Pattern seeking was further informed by discussions with others including my supervisor. Also my field experience, that is, school experience in the past, enabled me to theorise about the most important patterns that could explain what I saw and heard in terms of events, behaviours and beliefs.

### **3.5.4. Data display**

Within and cross-case display were used to present information in a visual format that led to systematic organisation. Depending on the data gathered, the formats, which were used either matrices or summary tables. The display of data helped in exploring, describing, explaining and understanding the causal relationships between variables.

In view of the fact that this study was a multi-case study design, cross-case displays was done to enhance generalisation, to help find negative cases to strengthen a theory built through examination of similarities and differences across cases.

The multi-case design helped to increase generalisability, reassuring one that the events and processes in one well-described case were not wholly idiosyncratic at a deeper level. Its aim was to see processes and outcomes across many cases, to understand how they were qualified by local conditions. Glaser and Strauss (1976) are of the view that using multiple comparison groups helps to find out under what sets of structural conditions hypotheses are minimized and maximized. Cross-case comparisons did not only pin down the specific conditions under which a finding occurred, but also helped to form the more general categories of how those conditions were related. It also helped to:

- Make contrasts and comparisons
- Note relations between variables
- Note patterns and themes
- Use extreme cases to strengthen a theory

### **3.6. Reliability and validity**

Reliability and validity means checking how one may be wrong, particularly in one's research process (Bickman and Rog, 1992). It was ascertained by ensuring that the research questions were clear and congruent features of the study design. The internal validity was ensured by context-rich and meaningful descriptions of the cross – case comparisons. The external validity was ascertained by making sure that the characteristics of the focus groups in each case study school and the processes were sufficiently described to permit adequate comparisons with other samples.

Ensuring the understanding of one's values, which influence the conduct and conclusions of the study, checked threats to the validity of the study such as bias and reactivity. A search for discrepant evidence and negative cases was executed to ascertain that data that

could point out flaws in one's reasoning and conclusions were not overlooked.

Reliability is about consistency, stability and repeatability of the informant's accounts and the investigation's ability to collect and record information accurately. When informants are interviewed over time, their responses to the same questions on the same topic should be answered with essentially the same information.

In order to ensure the reliability of the informant I tape recorded the interviews, transcribed them, then presented the informants with literal transcriptions of the interviews for verification of what was said. The verification sessions were meant to clarify the content as well as the verbatim terminology, expand on the information by clarifying unclear or incomplete materials and essentially validate that the material was correct (de Vos, 1998). I followed the verification process of information with educators and SMT's only, and in the first and second case study schools. During verification some focus groups members changed their views.

A major method of verification of the truth of the data lies in the use of the multiple methods itself. This is relying on pragmatic validation procedures. Interview materials are verified by direct observation of the situation, event interaction or person, and any discrepancy can be picked up and examined closely.

I also used the following four concepts which help to ensure reliability and validity in qualitative research as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (Robson 1993).

### **3.6.1. Credibility**

The goal here is to demonstrate that the enquiry was carried out in a way which ensures that the subject of the enquiry was accurately identified and described (de Vos, 1998).

Credibility ensures prolonged involvement and the investment of sufficient time to learn the culture, test for misinformation, build trust, and generally the literature procedures

central to case study design. Also specific situation within the case study need to be observed over a sufficient period for the researcher to identify those aspects of a situation that are most relevant to the issues involved, and focus on them. It is maintained that persistent observation brings depth to the study.

### **3.6.2. Triangulation**

The term triangulation “originally referred to mainly to the use of multiple methods of data collection with a view to increasing the reliability of observation (de Vos, 1998:359). It is therefore one of the useful techniques to use for evidence of different investigators from different sources. Also the peer debriefing where the enquirer exposes his analysis and conclusions to a colleague or other peer on a continuous basis, can assist in the development of both the design and the analysis of the study.

### **3.6.3. Transferability**

Transferability “requires that a data base be provided that makes transferability judgement possible on the part of potential appliers”(Robson, 1994:405). This is done by providing a description which specifies everything that a reader may need to know to understand the findings, and providing examiners with the raw data as a separate document in order for them to have access to data. A full specification of the theoretical framework on which the study is based facilitates the transferability, and helps those designing studies or making policy within that framework to determine whether or not the case described can be transferred to other settings.

### **3.6.4. Dependability**

Dependability is analogous to reliability. A study that is shown to be credible is also dependable. Triangulation could be argued as being more obviously a measure of assessing dependability. An enquirer has to make sure that the processes used, are acceptable and in line with accepted standards, that they are clear, systematic, well

documented, to provide safeguards against bias and ensure that they constitute dependability.

### **3.6.5. Confirmability**

Confirmability is the corresponding concept to objectivity. It also answers the question whether enough has been told about the study not only to judge the adequacy of the process but also to assess whether the findings flow from the data. It is also asking yourself whether an outside person could follow what had gone on, and whether the findings could be justified - and the conclusions drawn in relation to the material or data collected (Robson, 1994).

### **3.7. Ethical issues**

Miles and Huberman (1994) maintain that it is important to consider the rightness or wrongness of actions of qualitative researchers in relation to the people whose lives they study.

Ethical issues are nested in large theories, which help a researcher decide that an action is right, correct or appropriate. The following ethical theories are a useful framework in giving guidance to correctness or wrongness of action in qualitative research:

- Relational ethics emphasises issues of attachment, caring and respect. Researchers taking relational view stress equal-status, collaboration, and researcher and researched are more symmetrical. Fieldwork seeks to avoid imposition of any sort, and reports serve to confirm, support, or even celebrate people who are defined as friends.
- A utilitarian view (often traditional “scientific stance”) address the recruitment of respondents via informed consent and protect this traditional stance through confidentiality in reports.

- A rule-based, deontological view stress reciprocity - that both researcher and researched must gain, and that reports must be just, fair and honest.
- A comprehensive ecological view of ethics leads the researchers during recruitment to be sensitive to the language and meanings of the local culture to avoid detachment. It also considers how to act responsibly in making public what was learned (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

The specific ethical issues which I carefully considered in this research was firstly, informed consent. All informants were fully informed about what the study involved. Thus their involvement was based on their consent to participate freely and voluntarily, especially because they also, were to gain by having the quality of education and their school improved.

Secondly, I was careful to assure educators in particular, that the study would not harm them and put their position at risk by exposing their weakness. I was fully aware that “harm to participants can come in many varieties: from blows to self-esteem or “looking bad” to others, to threats to one’s interests, position or advancement in the organisation ...” (Miles and Huberman, 1994:292).

Harm and risk was ensured through maintaining privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity. Names of participants were concealed. I used symbols such as LRA for learners, EDA for educators, and SGA for SGB members and SMA for SMT members, where A represented the first respondent. The schools studied were also given anonymous names.

I tried to be honest and develop a relationship of trust with the schools and constituents. Consequently all respondents eventually became free to divulge what they considered to be sensitive information.

All the ethical issues had implications for analysis and quality of conclusions, and dealing with the issues effectively involved heightened awareness, negotiation, and making trade-offs among ethical dilemmas, rather than the application of rules.

**CHAPTER 4****EGONQWENI HIGH SCHOOL****CASE STUDY 1****4.1. Historical background**

This school is situated in a rural community. The community built the school to help learners who previously travelled long distances of about 15 kilometres to the nearest high school. Its average enrolment has always been about 650 learners. Parents were responsible for the provision of financial resources, except educators' salaries.

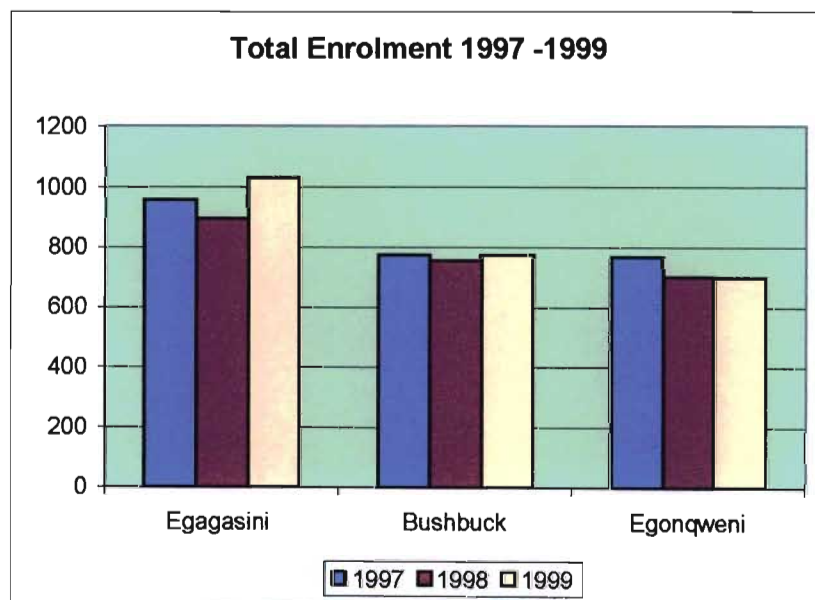


Figure 4.1: Comparison of schools' enrolment

Egonqweni is a fairly big school, as reflected by the enrolment above. However, the enrolment decreased from 1997 to 1999. In 1997 the enrolment was about 680, and it

dropped to about 650 to 645 in 1998 and 1999 respectively. One of the reasons for the perennial decrease in roll was the poor academic performance of the school. Compared to other two case study schools, it had the lowest roll.

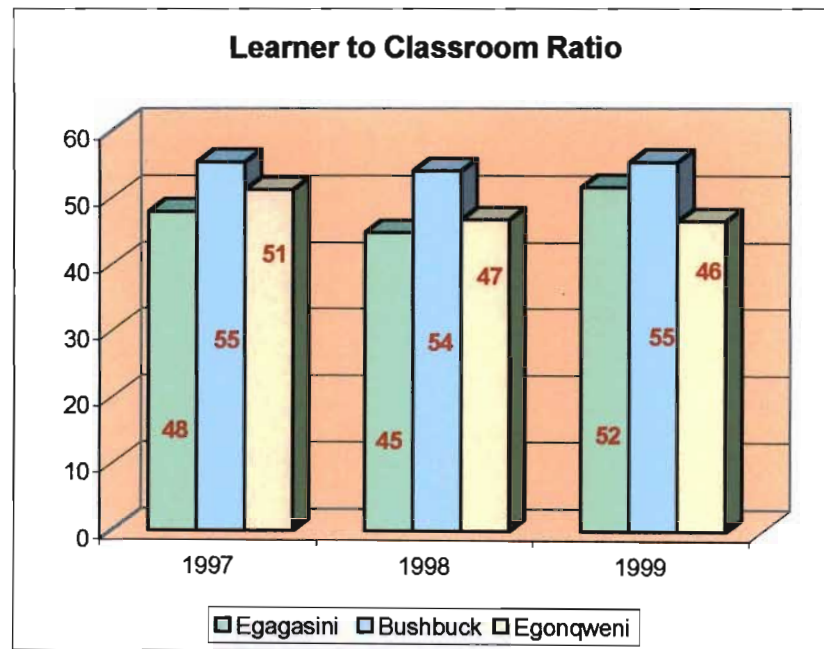


Figure 4.2: Comparison of learner to classroom ratio

The learner to classroom ratio of 51, 47 and 46 in 1997, 1998 and 1999 respectively, was stable compared to the desired national average over the three years. It gradually improved for each year.

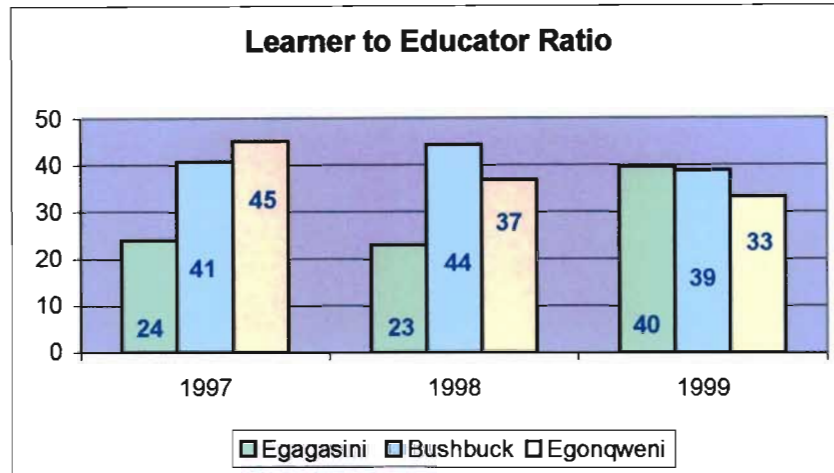


Figure 4.3: Learner to educator comparison

The learner to educator ratio decreased over three years in succession. The improvement of learner to educator ratio was caused by more employment of educators to make classes manageable by educators.

#### 4.2. Socio-economic situation

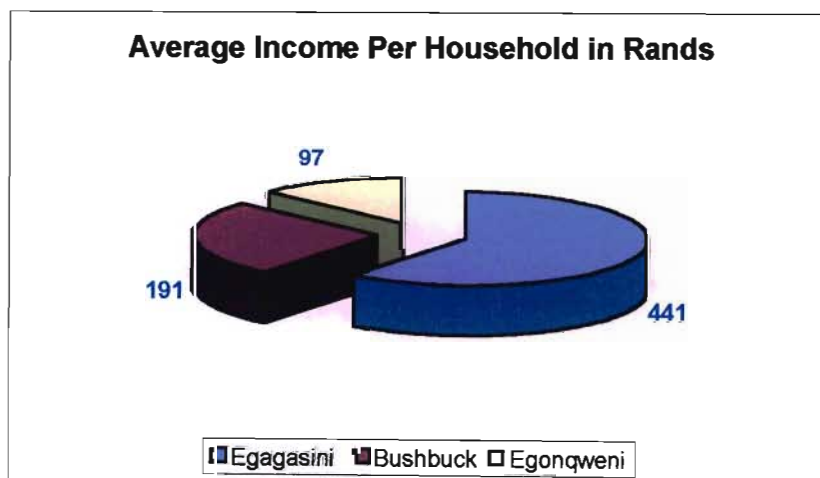


Figure 4.4: Comparison of income per household

The average income per household was the lowest for Egonqweni because the school was in the deep rural areas.

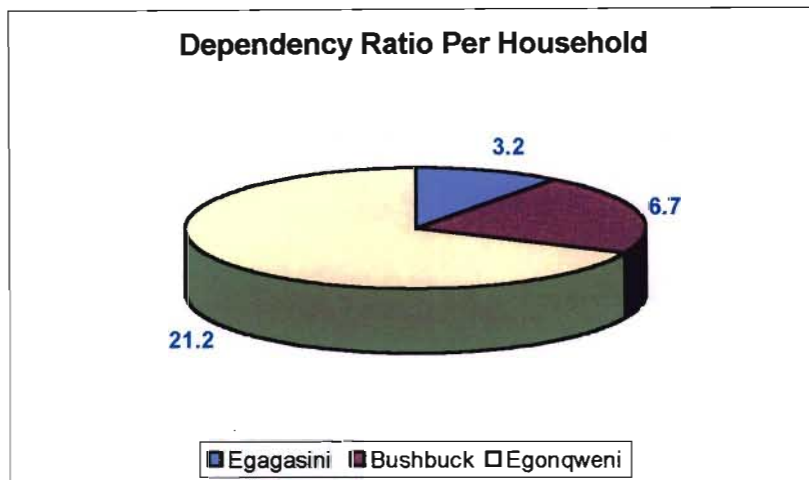


Figure 4.5: Comparison of dependency ratio per household

The dependency ratio reflected the level of unemployment in this community.



Figure 4.6: Comparison of level of employment

80.7% were unemployed in this community, an index of poverty stricken area that must impact on the school.

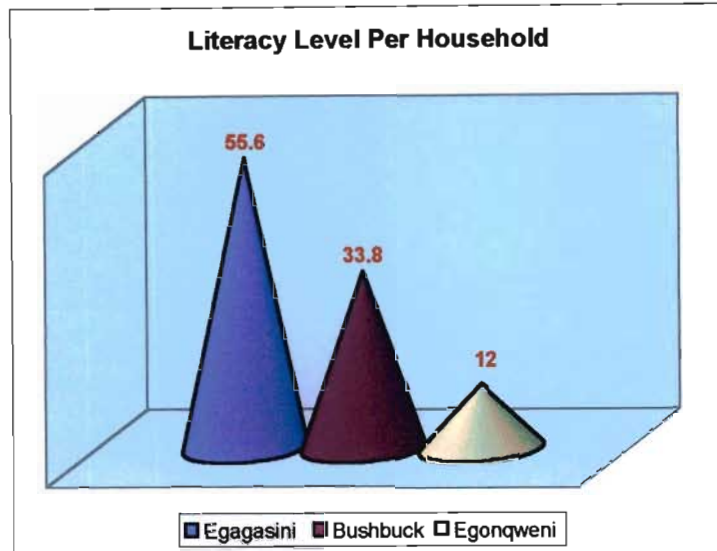


Figure 4.7: Comparison of literacy level

The literacy level was also very low at Egonqweni high school, which correlated with the high level of unemployment.

This school was selected as one of the case study schools for two reasons. Firstly, the grade 12 academic performance over the period of three years was problematic. During the first year, in 1997, the overall percentage pass was 35%, in 1998 it was 29% and in 1999 it was 11%. It thus seemed as if academic performance of the grade 12 learners was plummeting.

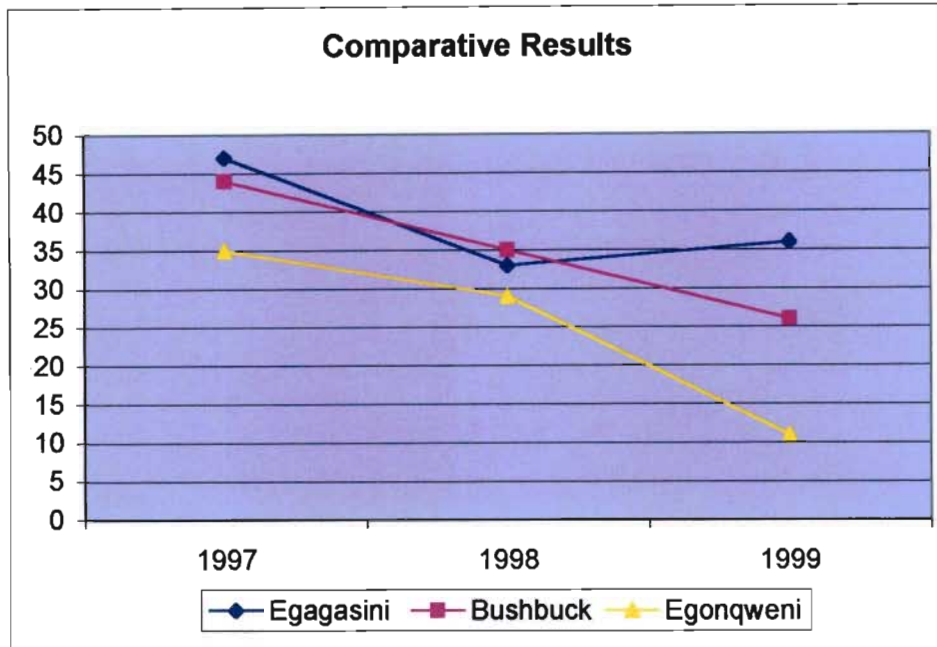


Figure 4.8: Matric results in three years

The second reason for selection was that this school performed poorly in the common tests introduced by the Department of education as an intervention to improve the performance of the grade 12 learners of schools which had obtained less than a 40% pass in grade 12. Grade 12 was chosen because it was regarded as a measure of the quality of education delivered by the school, compared with the general performance and academic standard of the whole region and the province.

#### 4.3. Entrance to the school

The KZN provincial Department of Education and Culture selected this school, on the grounds of the leadership potential of its principal, as one of the schools in which the Matric Intervention Programme (MIP) would be implemented in the region. Leadership and management of the school was important to the department because funds of about R100 000 would be channelled to the school in order to buy equipment and material resources to help change and improve the culture of teaching and learning.

The school was also promised professional support by personnel of the department, such as subject advisers and school psychologists, who would visit the school on an almost weekly basis to build capacity and to follow up an intervention programme. I was also requested by the Education Management Services (EMS) of the department in the region to be involved in this project from the Psychological, Guidance and Special Education perspective. I took advantage of this opportunity to choose this school as one of the case study schools where I could study and observe the process of change.

I visited the school and informed the educators at the school that I would be involved at the school in order to investigate obstacles to change, and work with and through them to address any such obstacles. Educators were also told that my role would be that of support and facilitating the discussions, and that the intervention approach would be problem solving, rather than a top-down expert approach.

I did not expect to encounter any problems regarding my position as an official from the department of education because the school psychologists had always been taken as supporters and allies of the school, rather than inspectors of schools who were perceived as judges. However, one could not rule out the fact that AmaZulu have a culture of fear and respect for a departmental official, sometimes to an extent of unquestioned submission. I was then very cautious about being taken as an external expert change agent. I resolved to be very non-directive in my approach, relying on communication skills to elicit information and help them map out their way for change.

#### **4.4. Focus groups**

The four focus groups were Educators, School Governing Body (SGB), School Management Team (SMT), and Representative Council of Learners (RCL).

Table 4.1: Focus groups

<b>GENDER</b>	<b>EDUCATORS FOCUS GROUP</b>	<b>SMT FOCUS GROUP</b>	<b>SGB FOCUS GROUP</b>	<b>RCL FOCUS GROUP</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
MALES	4	3	3	5	15
FEMALES	3	2	3	8	16
TOTAL	7	5	6	13	31

The emphasis was put on two of the constituent bodies of the school, SMT and educators as more influential in the school. Consequently I had more sessions with these stakeholders, than with the Representative Council of Learners and the School Governing Body members.

All focus groups were asked to respond to the standard question (3.2. focus group design, p. 65) of the perennially poor academic performance of the grade 12's as reflected in the four matriculation examination results over the consecutive years shown in figure 4.8.

#### **4.5. Data Collection**

The following is the order I followed in conducting focus group interviews. Dates were not predetermined, but I followed my work schedule, except where I wanted to return immediately in order to validate certain data or to get more details.

Table 4.2: Focus groups dates and sessions

<b>FOCUS GROUPS</b>	<b>DATES</b>	<b>SESSIONS</b>
Educators	10/10/2000	1
Educators	23/10/2000	2
School Management Team	06/12/2000	1
School Governing Body	19/01/2001	1
Representative Council of Learners	20/02/2001	1
School Management Team	20/02/2001	2
Educators	19/03/2001	3
School Management Team	08/05/2001	3
Educators	10/05/2001	4
Representative Council of Learners	14/08/2001	2
Representative Council of Learners	12/09/2001	3
Educators	26/09/2001	5
School Management Team	27/09/2001	4

I had five sessions each with the educators, and the SMT, three sessions with the RCL and one session with the SGB. The number of members of focus groups varied from session to session on different dates because I would find some educators or SMT members absent from school on some dates. I followed the order of educators, SMT, SGB and lastly RCL because my standard question was based on the examination results of the three years in succession (figure 5.8). The three first constituents were the one that would be able to answer the question. I wanted to use the RCL to validate the information given especially by educators and SMT members. The available time did not allow me to follow Krueger's (1994) recommendations according to which the number of sessions

should be determined by the “theoretical saturation” (p.88), and secondly by the observation of paradigm shift on certain positions by some members of the focus group regarding a category under discussion, or resistance or adamancy to shift the paradigm.

#### **4.6. Process Analysis**

In this section I shall describe the course of action and the proceedings I followed in data collection and how informants responded to me as a researcher and a departmental official in their school. It will also include what I observed in general at the school, such as the tone, ethos and culture of the school. In the following section I shall use italics to distinguish the words of participants.

##### **4.6.1. Educators’ focus group**

I started with the standard question on which the whole discussion was based (see figure 3.2. focus group design, p.77). I then showed them a graph (figure 4.8) indicating their performance over the three years in question.

I used this session of the focus group to collect information without much interpolation of probing and reflection. There was no need to probe at the initial stage because the educators’ focus group members became so involved that they interacted among themselves enthusiastically and it was not necessary to encourage discussion.

Also educators were very free with their comments, as if it was an opportunity for them to express their anger and frustrations. This helped to build confidence and rapport between the focus group and myself. It enabled focus group members to participate in discussion.

During this session there was an expression of anger and frustration by all members of the focus group except one female educator who hardly said a word. I also experienced what I think the principal experiences at the school, that is, difficulty ensuring that

educators participate in the discussion and arrive at a common decision. One or two members remained passive and their opinions were not heard. I also feared that I might lose the flow of discussion if I tried to pay individual attention to the passive educator persuading her to take part in the discussion.

Educators gave a list of what learners were, and did, which caused poor grade 12 results at the school. Learners in particular were labelled as negative, paying little interests in their school. One of the examples among others cited was learners' refusal to do homework.

I realized that the educators' focus group did not deeply analyse the underlying causes of the learners' resistance to the process of teaching and learning. They identified problems with others, and not with themselves. However, I did not directly make them aware of this problem, but tried to involve them in exploring further the underlying factors behind learners' refusal to do homework and assignments, by asking them to describe the process they used to address the learners' problems. To gather further data on their perceptions, I asked:

*What do you do when learners don't do their homework and assignments?*

To this question the educators' focus group responded in general vague terms. For example, they stated, *There are so many things we have done to help these learners*. I used probing to elicit those *many things* and this led to a pause before they responded. Educators were stuck, as if they did not know how to respond. After looking at one another, one of them said, *Someone must answer this question*. They struggled to enumerate what those many things were which they did for the learners. This appeared to suggest that educators were caught off guard, not prepared to account for their performance. Consequently they used learners' weakness as an excuse to hide behind.

Further exploration of causes of poor performance made educators shift the blame to the DoEC that put a heavy load on them to carry, that is, forcing them to give learners a lot of work.

Eventually after the short pause and silence, one of the members of the focus group stated that they gave guidance to learners by sending them to visit career exhibitions and tertiary institutions. Again I requested the speaker to expand on how they gave guidance to learners. There was a hesitation again. They looked at each other and simultaneously broke into laughter. Educators appeared to be unsure and uncertain of what they did to assist learners, which appeared to point to a lack of concerted effort and planning to address learners' problems.

Three members of this group, one female and two male educators appeared to dominate this part of the discussion. Further probing and exploration failed to get clarity on what educators did to address learners' negative attitudes towards their schoolwork. During this session educators appeared to be doubtful and uncertain about the role they were supposed to play in order to assist unmotivated learners.

A seeming contradiction emerged when one educator suddenly blamed the weakness of learners, who failed to cope with the academic work, whereas they had earlier on said it was the pressure of the department which forced them to give an unmanageable load of work to learners. I challenged the focus group members to clarify the contradiction and inconsistencies and this resulted in a heated argument between one female against two males, where the latter refused to shift from their position that learners' weakness was to blame. The two male educators insisted that the *reason we say we have overloaded them is because it is not too much work from teachers, but for learners because our learners are weak*. The group strongly pointed fingers at learners, except for one female educator who expressed the view that educators needed to take responsibility for learners' learning problems. *We did not give a well-organized homework. We have to change*. This was an example of Krueger's (1994) points that sharing of ideas and listening to others' views by members of focus groups modifies the thinking and the behaviour of participants. There

was a struggle as one female member of this group tried to persuade the group, but was overpowered by two aggressive male members who were not prepared to own the problem. It was evident from the contradictions and educators' opposition to one another that they lacked team spirit, cohesion and common vision that should have united them under a common goal. The division also appeared to be on the basis of gender – males against females.

The educators' focus group apportioned blame to the DoEC that was accused of stifling their initiatives. The feeling of the group was that they needed to be given their professional freedom, instead of the close supervision that seemed to dictate everything they were supposed to do.

The lone female voice continued with her struggle to encourage the focus group to own the problem, and then change, while the other female remained silent. The male educators relentlessly insisted that they did not cause the problem. The passive female member of this group softly and timidly mumbled a seemingly irrelevant contribution to the current argument; *we have a lot of work*. However, as Morgan (1997) and Gross et al. (1971) have pointed out, participants are influenced by the forcefulness of others in the group.

The interactive process eventually brought about a slight modification in terms of their perception of educators, when the other active female member of the group said that *...some educators if given freedom would not do their work*. This was one time when this group accepted ownership of shortcomings and made a slight shift in their positions. They reached a consensus that some educators needed close supervision, while others needed freedom to exercise their professional responsibility. They thought that the responsibility of the Heads of Departments (HOD) was to know the individual needs of each educator.

The topic that raised a heated argument was the DoEC's outlawing of corporal punishment, which educators believed was the best method of discipline for Zulu learners. They appealed to cultural norms and values to justify the use of corporal

punishment. Again there was disagreement between educators on this issue. The scale was tipped in favour of a strong educator in the group who influenced all the educators because he maintained that he was a strong adherent to African culture and tradition. This member of the group dominated the group discussion at this point. Secondly, the same educator indicated clearly that educators allowed learners to dictate terms to them, and in doing so he appealed to the ideology of democracy, which the government was propagating. He maintained that what they were doing was democratic. An example of this is: *I informed them that I would implement corporal punishment if they wanted me to do so, thereby allowing them to control me.*

Despite this strong advocacy by one educator of corporal punishment, one member was bold enough to differ alone. He rejected this presentation of problems as unsolvable. This helped to bring about a slight shift in the discussion that the nature of learners demanded corporal punishment. He made what seemed to me to be an important statement. He said, *it is not their nature, but it is their attitude. Because if we say it is their nature, it means we shall never change from using it. Learners of this time and place still have that same attitude and belief which demand corporal punishment. But it is not in their nature, it is only because they grew up in this environment, and this can be changed.*

In terms of group dynamics, all educators in this focus group were potentially of equal power, and therefore change of attitudes could happen if one was convinced because of facts (Cartwright and Zander, 1977). The change brought about by the above new information, and the acceptance and understanding of this information could help bring about internally motivated change, as opposed to forced change from external pressure.

The member last quoted seemed to be alone in this view. All the other four active members in the group supported the strong member's previous positions. The sixth female member was silent. However the eloquent, logical and convincing argument of the educator who maintained that it was not the learners' nature, which demanded punishment, caused one member of the focus group to shift slightly from her position. *I believe that the cause is both the attitude and the nature.* I asked the group to explain

their understanding of the word *nature*. They understood it as the genetic constitution of the person and the environmental factors, which included socialization and upbringing.

I wanted to test whether this change of thinking was genuine, and also to know what made them shift from their initial position. It became clear that the educators had gained insight during the discussion that learners were not interested in their schoolwork because it did not offer them any hope of employment after matric. Secondly, through the focus group discussion it emerged that educators did not have any homework and assignment policy at this school. Consequently all educators would give homework on the same day, and the homework and assignments had no objectives. It appeared that assignments and homework were an end in themselves. It therefore seemed evident that learners did not fully understand that homework and assignments they were given. However, in spite of this insight and shift in thinking, educators did not, after my departure, develop a homework policy within a reasonable period of time to do so. I wanted to know what caused them not to have such a policy:

*We still have not done anything regarding a homework policy. It is still at the beginning of the year, may be in July we will do something. It is because there are no meetings, no reports to make our HODs aware of our decisions. We are still following the same pattern as last year. There is no change at all, even this year. We still follow the same route. There is no policy indicating how much homework each educator should give.*

I concluded on the basis of the statement above that educators, though they changed their thinking, did not implement change because they tended to postpone the implementation, and secondly they seemed to need supervision in order to do so. As long as their SMT members did not give an instruction to do something, they did not take an initiative. One participant supported this by saying: *We did not have a reminder. It would be impossible without consulting the HODs. SMT did not tell us how we should give homework. There is no communication between SMT and educators; hence there is still no policy.*

However, though the educators had not done anything about homework policy, at my second session (figure 4.2), they took ownership of their problem, they had shifted their paradigm. *We are to blame as educators.* All members of the group agreed and supported the member who said: *learners are not to blame now. We cannot blame all of them. There are no job opportunities outside. We should not blame learners for this attitude; instead we should help them change their attitudes.*

A further issue they raised related to numerous change initiatives that tended to confuse, frustrate and stress educators: *There are so many initiatives, that you do not know where to start. You have found us highly stressed today.* I later became equally frustrated and stressed by the snail's pace the process of change took at the school. I was angered by the fact that although educators gained insight during a focus group that left me with the impression that after my departure they would implement the new gained knowledge and skills, on my return I would find that no action had been taken. For instance, the question of policy development was discussed three times without any action, though they had seemingly gained insight. This became a stressor and demotivator to me. Continued supervision, however, helped me gain a better insight into the process and re-energized me to continue my fieldwork. I consequently agreed, therefore, that the speed of transformation and the nature of events were unmanageable and educators could not cope.

#### **4.6.2. School Management Team focus group**

There were two females and three males in this SMT focus group. I asked them the same standard question that I had asked the educators' focus group. One member of this focus group, the principal, always dominated the group. The other members of this group, especially the female members, played a very subservient role. The principal apparently used his power as the principal to dominate the group (Cartwright and Zander, 1977). It seemed as though the principal did not trust that his team would respond correctly, hence he frequently and frantically intervened to give what he apparently thought was the correct perspective. Female voices were hardly heard; if they did come up, they were soft

and timid. Though the principal dominated, he also showed concern about the confidentiality of the process. I assured him of this in order to enable him to participate in the discussion freely.

There were also some things that the principal did not want to express in the presence of the SMT members. In order to hear his views about the other members of the SMT, and also the views of female SMT members, I had to organize separate interviews for the principal and the female members. Both the principal and female SMT members were inhibited by fear from expressing what they regarded as the truth. I subsequently interviewed the principal and the two females separately in order to identify what constrained them. The principal expressed his concerns about some of his SMT members who had recently been promoted, but he feared to tell them his concerns.

The interview with the female members revealed that they were careful and guarded because they did not trust me: they thought I could expose them to the department of education. This was a vestige of the old apartheid perception that an official of the department was seen to be coming to judge and punish educators. *We are only reserved when we talk to you, normally we are free, and we contribute during our SMT discussions on school matters...You sort of think you must be careful and not say something that will be irrelevant or something that might expose you and your colleagues. We sometimes think you want to expose our weaknesses. We think this research might eventually turn against us because of our weaknesses.*

I realized that they were inhibited in the group because their ideas contradicted those of the dominant male members. Again the division of staff on how they saw and understood their work emerged in the SMT focus group. Educators were also divided on male and female basis. It also seemed as if they feared to differ from the group. There was a slight shift of position by the female educators when they were separately interviewed.

It was encouraging to see that the female SMT members had changed their attitudes towards me after I had assured them that the discussions were not meant to expose their

weaknesses. Consequently they became free to express their concern about how they perceived my role. This restored and gradually developed trust between SMT members and me. I was then able to clarify this issue and the real purpose of the research which helped them to express with increasing freedom their weaknesses and limitations. The following disclosure at a subsequent meeting is an illustration of this trust: *We are not fit; we cannot tackle the task of developing the homework policy. We feel inadequate, and sometimes doubt ourselves whether we can develop and implement a homework policy.* Again this contradicted the male persistence that it was learners and not educators who had problems. Also the contradiction of the need for supervision versus professional freedom was highlighted. The SMT confirmed what educators stated: that their failure to implement was due the fact that they needed supervision. *We do not know what makes it difficult to implement. May be it is because we wait upon the principal to drive the process of implementation.*

The SMT ultimately decided to develop the homework policy because they realized that whenever I visited the school I needed to see the SMT and its policy development. When this happened I was already impatient and stressed because it took the course of the whole year, that is four sessions, to see this slight shift.

The shift of paradigm was also seen when the SMT focus group agreed that they were aware that they were giving learners a lot of homework. *We are aware of the fact that we are giving learners a lot of homework. We knew that there is a way to solve the problem.* This statement contradicted an earlier statement by the principal that *educators work under pressure to finish the syllabus. They do not therefore give homework every day. Therefore learners are not overloaded with a lot of work as they claim.* This again exposed the fact that the principal and his staff were not one. Also, that the principal's domination was based on this fear of educators expressing inappropriate views.

#### **4.6.3. School Governing Body Focus group**

There were three males and three females in this group. Obtaining an appointment with this group was very difficult because they were self-employed. As a result I could only obtain one appointment. Male members were again the ones who were dominating in explaining issues, and one female passed a few comments. Seeing that some of the members did not fully participate, I decided always to give each person a turn, rather than allow voluntary participation whenever a person felt like responding during the discussion. It was also clear at the beginning that the SGB depended on the principal to give direction. They did not have their own plans and vision of what they wanted to accomplish as SGB members.

#### **4.6.4. Representative Council of Learners focus group**

I randomly selected these learners from those who were in grade 12. In interviewing them I followed the same procedure of posing the common question. They responded immediately by owning the problems the school and learners had. They clearly stated that they were responsible for their failure due to their negligence and lack of concentration on their work. However, this was the most passive and least interactive focus group. In the first session only one boy talked and girls did not participate in spite of my persuasion. But this did not motivate them to talk. There were times when there were embarrassingly long periods of silence. Then the one boy would rescue the situation. The frustration I felt made me realize that educators go through the same frustration in an attempt to involve learners in school activities. I subsequently called off the session because it was not yielding results with one learner talking and the rest passive. I decided to select other learners whom I thought would be more active and participatory to replace the passive ones. This was simply a random selection, which I asked one educator to do for me.

The second group was not significantly different from the first one. However, it was better because at least two boys were active but girls were again still not prepared to talk. Evidently girls in these two focus groups were not free to express their opinions. I wondered why those girls were not prepared to talk. I thought I might have been a stranger to them, hence they feared to express their views, just as was the case with the female SMT focus group.

#### **4.7. Content Analysis**

McMillan and Schumacher's (1993) data analysis techniques were used to segment data into units of meaning called topics and group to topics into categories. I collated the categories of all four groups by comparing and synthesizing in order to interpret and explain them (McMillan and Schumacher 1993). Therefore what follows below are categories which were produced by combining common topics from all four focus groups. The summary of the content analysis is displayed in figure 4.3.

##### **4.7.1. Parents' non-cooperation.**

This category featured strongly in all four focus groups. There were several factors mentioned by focus groups which indicated that parents were not co-operating with the school. One of the frequently mentioned factors was apparent refusal to buy textbooks for their children. The parents' refusal to buy books and learners' failure to do homework were explored with the same focus groups, which mentioned it, and also cross-compared with other focus groups to check its validity and accuracy.

However, the parents' perspective was that educators did not tell them what their children needed; hence they did not know what books were needed at school. Educators linked non-cooperation by parents to their non-attendance at meetings at school where they were supposed to be informed about the needs of the school. The parents tended to shift all responsibilities to educators, even moral issues such as pregnancies of girls and substance abuse. The tolerance of such learners' behaviour by parents was disheartening to

educators. When I checked these opinions by comparison with views of other focus groups, I found that the majority of parents were unemployed. Because the school is in a poverty-stricken area, some parents resorted to selling drugs to make a living. Parents appeared to have been helplessly caught up in this corrupt system.

There also appeared to be a communication breakdown preventing exchange of information between educators and learners and between educators and parents. This was fundamentally a lack of communication between the school and the parents. The school did not make parents aware in advance of its requirements for their children, that is, what books were required, how much they cost and when they were required.

#### 4.7.1.1. Non-support of children.

All focus groups were in agreement that, in the process of not co-operating with the school, parents reportedly neglected their children at home, and in some instances disturbed their schoolwork. All focus groups concurred that parents did not help their children with homework. According to educators most parents expected their children to do domestic work first, before they did school work. *The learners also have household chores, which take priority over homework. By the time they finished household chores they were usually tired.* The SGB lamented the fact that *parents are not supportive of the school and their children.*

Parents did not seem to have the capacity to support their children because of their historical and educational background. Also, they did not respond to the school's invitation to go and view their children's exercise books. This happened because parents did not see the need to view children's exercise books at school. It had never happened in these schools in the past, but came with the new dispensation of transformation under the new government. The SMT focus group were of the opinion that parents might not be able to make any meaningful contribution at the school because they were inhibited by negative self-esteem owing to their illiteracy.

One member of the SMT stated that *the SGB is the principal*. This meant that the principal was seen to usurp the SGB functions because the other members did not feel competent enough to make independent decisions without the principal's approval. The principal took advantage of the SGB members' inadequacies to dominate their meetings.

#### **4.7.2. Learners' qualities**

This category emerged from three focus groups' discussions. It did not feature much with the SGB members, understandably, because they were concerned with school requirements. The negative attitudes of learners towards their schoolwork formed a common thread in all focus groups. Learners were also described as lacking cognitive or intellectual ability to do their homework and to comprehend lessons, especially concepts.

Learners blamed educators for their failure and believed that educators purposefully orchestrated their poor scholastic performance, which led to failure. Learners described themselves as *lazy* - due to the fact that education *does not help us find employment*, and also that they often have *nothing to do*. They were notorious for playing truant and according to the educators were completely uninterested in their education. There seemed to be lack of trust between educators and learners, hence the tension between the two.

The SGB, educators and SMT concurred with one another that non co-operation of learners impeded change at the school. This non-cooperation, even resistance was manifested by the fact that *learners refused to buy books* and also *refused to do manual work given as a punishment for misconduct*. Also, learners did not cooperate with educators regarding homework and assignments.

Also, learners thought that *when we voted for this government we would receive free education*. Learners also appeared not to know what school fees were used for; hence they demanded that the textbooks be bought from school fees.

Learners also refused to give their own extra time for any exercise such as meetings to resolve problems. According to the educators' focus group, *Learners do not want any encroachment into their own time such as breaks and after school hours. Even for sports, learners refuse to use their time.*

There was therefore a sense that the lack of adequate communication among learners, their parents, the educators and SMT was what led to perceived non-cooperation of learners with educators' plans and requirements.

#### 4.7.2.1. Misconduct

All three focus groups that mentioned learners' characteristics indicated the prevalence of unacceptable behaviour by learners. The SGB reported learners to be *disorderly, unruly and disrespectful of educators. They would verbally and physically attack educators. Our children are very rude and aggressive. They actually dictate terms to educators.*

Educators attributed this behaviour to substance and drug abuse that was rampant in the school and community. Learners were also reported to be socializing so closely with some educators that there was no dividing line between them and some of their educators. Learners drank together with some of their educators. Educators described learners as *unreliable and inconsistent, unpredictable and capricious.* They said this because learners would agree about a particular policy, and on the next day they reneged. It is evident that educators felt unable to influence learners' behaviour, but aspects of some educators' behaviour also had an influence on learner behaviour. Educators did not stand firm to protect their professional image when they drank together and socialised with learners as equals.

#### 4.7.2.2. Overage

This category surfaced only in the educators' focus group. It was mentioned as a factor which hindered discipline. They argued that some learners *expected to be treated with*

*due respect as adults at school* because some are 17 years old in grade 8 or 25 in grade 10. The age range in these grades was said to pose problems when there was a need to enforce punishment.

Overage learners, according to this focus group, were often parents *themselves* because they left children at home. Consequently they expected different and better treatment. Also, overage learners had an impact on controlling and directing educators because some were older than some of the educators.

#### **4.7.3. Corporal punishment**

There was a marked disagreement between the school constituents and the department of education regarding corporal punishment as a method of discipline. This category featured prominently in the educators' focus groups. Educators appeared to be helplessly caught in the middle. The department has outlawed corporal punishment in schools; instead other forms of punishment such as manual work and detention are recommended. On the other hand, educators claimed that corporal punishment was a culturally acceptable method of discipline in which they were socialized as children. They argued that Western methods such as detention did not work on Zulu learners. For example they said: *Corporal punishment cannot be abandoned due to the nature of our learners and the environment.*

Educators in favour of the use of corporal punishment blamed the environment. Above all, they reported that all stakeholders at the school endorsed corporal punishment. The department was accused of being a stumbling block to the cultural way of disciplining children. Also, the department was seen to be setting educators and learners at loggerheads, by, for example, encouraging learners to sue educators for using corporal punishment. The department was seemingly unaware that educators, learners and parents were said to be in agreement with one another on the use of corporal punishment. The question of corporal punishment had reportedly divided the community, and the DoEC,

and educators were angry with the department, accusing it of contradictions, and being prescriptive in its approach without consulting stakeholders.

Educators acceded to the learners' lead when they agreed to be dictated to by them as to when to use and not to use punishment. Learners said, according to educators, *if you don't use corporal punishment on us, we shall not do your work*. The SGB focus group supported this assertion when they said, *as parents we encourage educators to use corporal punishment though we know that the government prohibits it. Learners have accepted the use of a cane*. The RCL also supported the use of corporal punishment. They urged the school to develop a punishment policy because *there are cases and learners who would need it*.

While all school constituents on the one hand supported this method, the department of education has outlawed it. This conflict over cultural values between government and school and community frustrated the educators and caused an unresolved conflict. This was a sensitive issue. Educators stated that they found themselves in a dilemma. Parents gave them permission to punish their children, whilst the department on the other hand urged learners to sue them. They believed that this conflict caused a breakdown of discipline.

#### **4.7.4. Socio-economic factors**

This category was mentioned only by the educators' focus group as a factor hindering change processes. Resources could not be provided for because parents could not afford to buy books for their children, or to fund their education further.

The sale of drugs was apparently also attributed largely to the socio-economic conditions of the place. Drug abuse reportedly underlay disciplinary problems of the school, and educators became stuck in a non-productive vicious cycle where they saw the problems, but did not do anything about them and kept on blaming everybody else. Age, substance abuse and socialization seemed to contribute to the disciplinary problems.

#### 4.7.5. Racial vestiges

Educators' focus groups compared their performance as educators with that of their White counterparts. They attributed their inability to command respect from parents, educators and learners to racial factors. They felt strongly that as African educators they were marginalized. They believed that the National Department itself *looks at White schools to take cues for change. They do not look at the situation in rural areas.* Therefore failure was perceived as characteristic of Africans, while success was seen as characteristic of Whites. Also, educators felt that as Africans they were unable to command respect from African parents. *Parents and learners do not respect us because we are Africans. Whereas if they take their children to White schools they change their behaviour and begin to respect White educators.* In multiracial schools White educators are seen to be successful because they work hand in hand with cooperative parents. Thus the power relationships which are a legacy of the previous regime were still seen to be influencing current attitudes and practice.

#### 4.7.6. Unprofessionality

The educators' focus group discussion made educators aware that their approach to giving homework was inappropriate and problematic. It dawned on them that it was their responsibility to develop a homework policy to guide all educators.

The topic of the need for homework policy development emerged in three successive focus group discussions. However, there was no action taken to address the problem. I had two hypotheses for the cause of this behaviour. Firstly, I thought they were resisting developing the policy; they were simply reluctant due to laziness or stubbornness. Secondly, I thought that they did not know how to develop it. I based my belief on the following cues with regard to the homework policy development. In one focus group session they said, *regarding homework policy, it is still at the beginning of the year, may be in July we will do something.* In the second session they stated that they had not yet

developed the policy *due to many distractions*. In the third session in the following year, 2001, they said, *we have not yet developed the policy, we are still thinking about it*.

I needed to check and confirm my hunch that educators were unable to develop homework policy. On the fourth focus group discussion they said, *we are inadequate and unfit to develop the homework policy*. The female group, which met separately, stated this fearfully, not wanting to disclose the weaknesses in the system which male counterparts defended up to the end. This seemed to refer more to my second hypothesis.

Reacting to external pressure from the department was stressful to educators because they could not cope with the speed with which transformational processes were forced on them within a short space of time. They were grappling with the problem of *unavailability of time*. They were reluctant to sacrifice what they called *their time*, for what they called *school work*.

Unprofessional behaviour was raised by all four focus groups. The following were given as examples of this behaviour. The RCL focus group stated repeatedly that educators were *bunking classes*.

Educators said to learners that *in teaching, educators do 5% and learners do 95%*. It emerged from the discussion that learners believed that educators did not prepare thoroughly before they went to class. Consequently they simply read from the textbooks to the class with little or no explanation. Learners also maintained that homework was given as a punishment, because they were threatened with homework if they misbehaved. It was also reported that learners felt that educators were not able to deal with learners' problems.

The SGB focus groups expressed their inability to control educators who *absented themselves frequently, took sick leave frequently* and kept on postponing the work they could not handle, or shifted it to other people. Again this indicated that the SGB did not feel capable of dealing with the problems at school.

#### **4.7.7. The SGB members' incapacity**

Educators' focus groups were the only ones that raised the issue of the SGB's incapacity to provide effective leadership and governance at school. The SGB members were often unable to handle educators' sophisticated misconduct. An educator said: *Absenteeism of educators who often come with a medical certificate to justify their absenteeism is out of (their) control.* Educators also had difficulty in breaking down the bureaucratic walls in applying discipline. One of the SGB members said: *We are unable to deal with any case of misconduct because of the government's laws, which prevent us expelling educators, or learners who misbehave.* Expulsion and corporal punishment were seemingly the only strategies they could use to discipline learners, and the DoEC prohibited both of these strategies.

The result of the apparent incapacity of the SGB was that educators undermined SGB members and parents in particular. I investigated the reasons for this attitude and behaviour. Parents and hence SGB members did not have confidence in themselves because they compared themselves with educators and felt that they were *ignorant* and therefore could not make a valuable contribution to the school and the education of their children. The negative self-image of parents was probably reinforced by educators' attitude to them, where in most instances they were marginalized and ignored because they were illiterate.

#### **4.7.8. The Department's prescriptive approach**

This category surfaced vigorously only in the educators' focus group. The department's top-down management seemed to have been felt only by educators. Educators raised a litany of issues as evidence that the Department of Education did not involve them in the process of change.

Educators complained that the department forced and controlled educators to follow the syllabus as it was without any freedom for independent thinking and creativity.

Superintendents of Education Management, Heads of Department, Subject advisers and Matric Intervention Teams reportedly forbade the individual approach and interpretation of the syllabus. The department was even seen to prescribe the textbooks to buy. When I investigated this last factor I discovered that it was caused by the communication breakdown between educators and the principal. Principals usually did requisitions for textbooks, after consultation with educators. But in some instances principals simply requisitioned books without consulting educators, and the latter assumed that the department actually prescribed books for them, whereas it was the principal who made the choices without subject educators.

Though they taught learners, educators reported that they had no control over learners' promotion to the next grade. According to them this was *decided by the Superintendents of Education Management* (Superintendents) who, in spite of the fact that they did not know the learners, did not consult the educators when they wanted to transfer some learners unconditionally.

The department set schools against one another in competition to exert pressure on them to conform through punishments and rewards. Schools that produced quantitatively good results were rewarded at a congratulatory ceremony, and those which performed poorly, were called on a separate day to account for their failure and were reprimanded. To this end, the department unilaterally introduced common quarterly tests that were set at the head office examination centre and written by those grade 12 learners in schools that obtained less than an overall 40% matric pass rate.

When the department outlawed corporal punishment, educators and schools in rural areas were reportedly not consulted because educators said cues for *change are taken from White schools, which do not use corporal punishment*. Consequently an educator's focus group asked: *Why should the department prescribe for us? This creates a feeling in us that we are undermined and that there is no trust in us.*

The department was perceived by educators to be marginalizing rural Zulu schools, and favouring White schools because White school culture is imposed on rural Zulu schools with regard to corporal punishment.

The department's approach seemed also to have influenced the school's management approach. The culture of the school itself was that of unilateral decision making in most cases. The principal, to a large extent, depended on the instructions from Superintendents. The school code of conduct, for instance, was done because the SEM demanded it. The principal would react unilaterally to the external pressure. He drafted the code of conduct alone in English in spite of the fact that learners had demanded the code of conduct in IsiZulu. This was frustrating to the learners who were not consulted and involved in matters of interest to them.

The educators' focus groups maintained that the external pressure put on them by the top departmental officials led to their disorganization. They saw themselves as reactive to the external instruction and demands. They said they were *forced by the superintendents, heads of departments, subject advisers and Matric Intervention Team (MIT) members* to conform to what the syllabus dictated. The educators argued that the Superintendents prescribed the textbooks and the number of exercise books in accordance with the learner promotions decided. Educators were influenced by the departmental approach to management to believe that the *department does not trust us*. This apparently lowered their morale.

It seemed that educators themselves were influenced by the DoEC's prescriptive approach because they too, did not involve other school constituencies in their attempts to implement change. When the code of conduct for learners was drawn up in an attempt to improve discipline, the principal alone reportedly drew up the code of conduct and then each grade educator was asked by the principal to go and read it to his or her grades. The consequence of the non-involvement of learners was the rejection of this code of conduct by learners. Educators misinterpreted this behaviour as demonstrating rebellion and non-

commitment of learners to the observance of the code of conduct. Clearly from the above, learners did not see themselves as part of the process of drawing up the code of conduct.

#### **4.7.9. The principal's leadership**

The previous principal was the type of a person who allowed the school to run, as it wanted. He did not make decisions and respond to the needs of the school. Educators were not empowered to teach effectively, and learners were not guided in terms of their homework. He had an intimate relationship with learners that caused him to lose his authority and control of the school. He did not pay much attention to the discipline of both educators and learners. When the school was upgraded he was transferred to another school of his academic level. A new principal was promoted to this school. The new principal was the opposite of the previous one because he was domineering. The previous principal's successor appeared to be an instructional leader who invariably acted without consultation, such as developing school policy alone without involving educators, learners and the SGB. The principal himself stated that *learners did not know that we were trying to solve their negative attitudes*. Educators and SMT members agreed that *the principal developed it (policy) and brought it to us to adopt. .. They could not implement this policy because there are several things which are difficult to implement*. Secondly they did not implement this policy because they *wait upon the principal to drive the process of implementation*. Even in focus group discussions he showed this characteristic. However, he too could not gain control over the school immediately. Girls were not protected from aggressive boys and there was no intervention to help educators teach effectively. Therefore the leadership styles of the two principals did not help the school to improve its education provision.

##### **4.7.9.1. Laissez-faire leadership**

The educators, SMT and SGB reported that the previous principal was responsible for the mismanagement of the school that led to chaos. The school did not control sick leave: educators regularly took sick leave on a monthly basis leaving learners without teachers.

There appeared to be no authority to control educators' absenteeism. According to the SGB, this happened because *the principal was weak and not strong and strict towards staff and learners*. Consequently educators often did not go to teach during their class period. To compound the laissez-faire situation, the principal was reported to be too close and friendly with the educators and learners, they reportedly drank *liquor together*.

All focus groups mentioned the principal and their SMT management as an important factor in facilitating change. There were situations where the Management of the school reportedly took a non-intervention approach when they should have acted. This left the school, especially learners and educators, unprotected from the deviant behaviour amongst community youth. Girls were mostly victims of this situation. One girl mentioned how she failed her examinations because a boy who harassed her had disturbed her. *This boy disturbed me even during the examination time, as a result I failed*. The school could not protect this girl so she transferred to another school.

The previous principal, because of being what was seen to be soft to educators and learners, lost respect from educators and learners, and hence they bunked classes. Learners, especially those from a poor socio-economic background, were not protected from educators who punished them for not wearing a uniform, either by caning them or letting them to do manual work, because of poor communication between the principal and educators. Parents would negotiate with the principal about their failure for, instance, to buy uniforms, and the principal would agree to give them some time, but would not communicate this information to educators. Learners would then continue to be punished for not wearing uniforms.

Despite the appointed new instructional principal, educators did not change immediately. The SMT reportedly had a tendency not to act or solve problems with which they were faced. Instead they were said to keep on postponing them. The SMT focus group itself said, *we have not done anything to encourage parents to be involved in the school affairs because we relied on the SGB to do it*. The SMT should have developed a homework policy after being made aware of its need during focus group discussions. They

responded by saying, *we have not yet developed the policy; we are still thinking about it. We have it in our minds.* The concern about too close relationships between educators and learners was never addressed by the SMT. Though educators had resources such as the document 'Education Law and Policy' they reportedly had no time to study it.

The school management team and the principal seemed to fear making decisions and to act. Some members of the SMT were inhibited by a lack of confidence because, though they were promoted, they knew that they had not done their work faithfully when they were still educators. Therefore they were reluctant to take a stand against other educators.

The SMT also faced other severe issues they did not tackle, such as overage learners who created disciplinary problems at school. They did not put in place a system to reject overage learners. The repetition of grades by learners, which exacerbated this, was not addressed. The principal and the SMT therefore seemed to react passively to issues that needed immediate attention.

#### **4.7.10. Unemployment**

Learners' negative attitudes to their academic work and school as a whole was said to be exacerbated by the general unemployment situation. The RCL focus group stated that learners were not interested in education because it did not *help them find employment.* They saw many unemployed educators and peers in their environment who had passed matric in previous years: *It is discouraging to know and see your peers who passed grade 12 in the previous years still roaming around in the community without any occupation.* They believed that there were no job opportunities for matriculants in the job market. This had consequently devalued the importance of passing grade 12. Unemployment as an unmotivating factor was blamed by the RCL focus group for their not working hard to achieve and improve their academic results.

#### **4.7.11. Zulu culture**

This category was mentioned by the SMT focus group only. The group maintained that, *Zulus unlike Whites strive to maintain good relationships with their fellow workers.* Therefore they reportedly always avoided aggrrieving co-workers by imposing discipline on them.

*It is difficult for us Africans to be strict and stern and keep to the rules of the school because we must always keep the relationship with our educators and learners good, because we live together in the same environment. Any seemingly harsh treatment of a colleague may be revenged. You get death threats.* They were therefore afraid of reprisal should they be seen to be unkind to their colleagues. Threats of reprisal followed what they perceived as ill treatment such as strict control and discipline. These two factors, according the SMT focus group, inhibited Management from acting to institute discipline against those educators who did not perform their duties.

#### **4.7.12. Lack of Time**

What appeared to be the pattern here as I tried to verify these emic categories was that educators could not manage the processes of change because of time factors. Fitting all events and processes of change within their normal school time of seven hours was difficult for educators because they seemed to be unable to utilize time efficiently. It could be stated that educators might not have been trained and developed in time management during their training. One also wonders whether the department of education could allow educators to cope with external pressure of change by prioritising the initiatives in order to implement new management procedures. The Superintendents were interviewed about this question. Their views were that: *Homework policy development requires a lot of time and involvement of HODs. It needs planning, and could possibly disrupt the teaching and learning process and inevitably the timetable.*

The assertion above is also manifested in the educators' expression of inability to cope with and manage time. This seemed to emanate from their separation of schoolwork and private time. They appeared to be unwilling to allow encroachment into what they called their own time. A series of events may not be accommodated within this school time. They appeared to be rigid and inflexible when it came to what needed to be accommodated within school time. Also, there was no prioritisation of these events and initiatives from the department of education.

Both educators and SMT focus groups mentioned lack of time as a hindrance to the process of change. They were too busy to attend to some of the issues such as homework policy development, dealing with parents to encourage them to be involved in the affairs of the school, and even to involve all the stakeholders. They said they had no time to consider the concerns of learners about structures to address learners' problems. In order to save time, learners were reportedly not progressively involved; consultation with them was merely tacked on at the end.

Also, educators reported that they had not looked at the *education law and policy document because there was no time to do so*. When the code of conduct was required by the SEM there was *insufficient time to involve all the constituents of the school, especially the learners*. Learners also said that they had no time for schoolwork.

#### **4.7.13. Resources**

Educators, SGB and SMT focus groups pointed out that lack of resources was a factor in the failure to improve learners' achievement. The following statement was a common theme among all stakeholders. *At this school there is no laboratory, apparatus for physics, and consequently we do everything in theory*. The school also lacked financial and material resources, textbooks, magazines, newspapers, library, television and radios.

#### **4.7.14. Freedom**

The educators' focus group strongly expressed their frustration about the lack of freedom to decide how they did their work. The department of education was said to prescribe everything for educators, such as the syllabus and how they had to stick to it without any deviation. This deprived them of the *freedom to handle the syllabus in the way we want it*. Educators agitated for freedom to choose the section of work they wanted to do and time to do it. There was no negotiation between supervisors and educators about what work must be done, and how, it was simply a top-down instruction. The department of education also prescribes the quantity of work to be done, such as the number of exercises, tests and compositions. They therefore maintained, *freedom would allow us to give learners as much work as we think they will cope with*.

I was however, not sure of how honest educators were about the freedom they wanted because when they were left on their own to exercise freedom of thought and initiative, they demanded supervision. The hunch I had was that they used this as an excuse for not acting to address their problems.

#### **4.7.15. Communication**

One of the major problems at this school was communication. One of the focus group members supported this when he said: If we worked hard in hand with the parents you would discuss that with the parent who would then discipline the child at home....but our parents refuse to come to school when they are called. Our parents believe that frequent truancy or absenteeism by a child is a minor offence for them to be called to school. They abuse educators for simply give corporal punishment for this and leave them alone.

When it comes to promotions, the SEMs will not consult us to know why we fail some learners.

There was not a single educator who was consulted about this decision (banning of corporal punishment). Western and urban oriented people who do not understand problems in the rural areas decided it on the top.

There was very little interaction between parents and the school, and also between the school and DoEC. Whenever communication was done, it flowed from top to the bottom with little feedback.

#### **4.7.16. Solutions**

All focus groups suggested solutions during focus group discussions. Firstly, solutions were based on ownership of the problems, and acknowledgement of incapacity to deal with the problems. For instance the approach to the assignment of homework was problematic, resulting in a vicious circle. Educators acknowledged that they needed to develop a homework policy. However, the development of policy did not happen until the end of the year when the SMT drew up a homework timetable, which they thought was a homework policy, and presented it to me.

The educators' focus group realized the need to communicate with parents to establish and improve their relationship. This was never implemented, because educators shifted this responsibility to SGB members. Educators and the SMT had established committees reportedly to address the question of learners' negative attitudes to learning. I checked on the relevance of these committees. These were sports, discipline and entertainment committees on which learners were not represented, invalidating the view that educators wanted learners to be part of the decision-making structures of the school. This again pointed to a lack of strategies to address learners' problems.

Career development and counselling was suggested by educators' focus groups. Learners would be taken to career days to expose them to different careers in an attempt to make them realize the opportunities, which lay ahead. This was aimed at changing their negative attitudes toward their academic work. But, on the whole, learners were not

involved in these attempts to find solutions. Educators acknowledged that they *need to change strategy*.

Educators demanded professional freedom to decide how to teach and handle the syllabus, as against the prescription given by the department. They articulated the view that the department did not trust them. The educators' focus group felt that the SMT also needed to give direction to educators, though they had earlier demanded professional freedom.

The RCL focus groups made a proposal, attempting to address the problem of traditional teaching approach, in which educators were requested to *teach with long patience and compassion*. They said that educators needed explanatory skills to be effective in their teaching. The RCL encouraged a democratic process in the conduct of school affairs. The learners had to be made to participate in all matters that affected them, and all stakeholders needed to be involved in the affairs of the school. The RCL focus group's suggestions that there should be a punishment policy was valid because though the school had a code of conduct, it did not address the mode of punishment, except stating that breaking of rules and regulations was punishable.

#### **4.8. Within case study analysis**

I used the following table to determine the number of factors which appeared to emerge from more groups and those which appeared in less groups. I used this as an index of the importance of that particular factor to the groups.

Table 4.3: Egonqweni within case analysis

<b>CATEGORIES</b>	<b>EDUCATORS</b>	<b>SMT</b>	<b>SGB</b>	<b>RCL</b>
<b>Parents' non-cooperation</b>	Non-response to invitation to come and view their children's books and listen to misconduct cases	They do not assist educators in monitoring learners progress and school work	They do not attend meetings and supervise their children's school work	They do not give their children time for home work, instead give them household chores
<b>Non-support of children</b>	They don't assist their children with homework and discipline	They don't monitor learners work at home, and don't attend school meetings	They don't support school and children, refuse to buy books	Occupy learners with household chores, no time to do school work
<b>Learners' quality</b>	Some learners are rejects from other schools, they hate some subjects, only study for exams	Learners are not disciplined, have given up hope and are passive	They do not understand explanation of lessons and are not dedicated to their work	They have difficulties in understanding lessons, but do not know why and don't care
<b>Learners' misconduct</b>	Learners shout at educators while teaching	Drugs are sold by them at school and they are always drunk	Learners rude, stubborn, aggressive and drunk	Once in grade 12 learners don't respect educators
<b>Overage learners</b>		Overage learners cause problems. Their ages range from between 17 – 25 years of age, they are not disciplined	Overage learners misbehaviour, girls fall pregnant, take maternity leave and return later, this worsens overage problem	
<b>Corporal punishment</b>	Learners nature and requests demand it and parents encourage it,	Refuse any other form of punishment such as menial work,	Parents encourage educators to use corporal punishment	Learners agree that some learners need corporal punishment

	while Dept prohibits it	and request corporal punishment		
<b>Socio-economic factors</b>	Unemployment of educators and youth high in the area		Poverty causes parents to sell drugs	Parents have no money, hence cannot buy uniform and textbooks
<b>Racial vestiges</b>	African parents support White educators and African educators rejected. Learners not respecting African educators			
<b>Unprofession-ality</b>	Educators forge reports for learners, and absent themselves on a daily basis	HODs bunk classes. Conflicts and division, insubordinate to acting HODs, dodge classes, unprepared lessons, cook marks for examinations, absenteeism, reading from textbooks when teaching, don't check learners work		Homework given, but not checked. Educators read from textbooks when teaching. Absent themselves from school, unprepared lessons, read from textbooks when teaching, dodge classes, come late to school, resent SMT and in conflict with each other
<b>SGB's members incapacity</b>	SGB members unable to deal with troublesome educators			
<b>Department's prescriptive approach</b>	Promotions controlled by Superintendents, they also demand quantity	Force educators to finish syllabus early in the year	Dept's laws prevent SGB from enforcing discipline	Dept put pressure on educators to demand quantity work

	demand quantity work – number of tests	in the year	discipline, cannot do what they want	quantity work
<b>Principal's leadership</b>	Previous principal did not act, not protecting educators and learners, did not do anything about homework	Present principal developed policy of the school without consultation with educators and learners	Previous principal too intimate and soft with learners, and also drinking with them	Present principal allowed a girl to be harassed until she left school, she could not write exam properly
<b>Laissez faire leadership</b>	Nobody could control drugs, everybody feared	Learners not having time for school work, but always play outside	Educators drinking with learners, no respect for them	harassed without protection from school
<b>Unemployment</b>				Matric not the gateway to the world of work Rural learners last to be considered for bursary
<b>Zulu culture</b>	Africans are kind to one another, unlike Whites. African culture and ubuntu does not allow suffering of a person because of harsh rules			

<b>Lack of time</b>	Can't cope with so many initiatives by Dept, a lot of time needed to do develop policy	No time due to many workshops, no time to implement, learners have no time to do homework, educators can't prioritise		
<b>Resources</b>			Material resources such as textbooks not available	Homework often based on newspapers, TV, radios they did not have
<b>Freedom</b>	Educators can't handle syllabus in the way they want, can't teach the way they want			
<b>Communication</b>	There was little information between parents and school			Little communication between educators and parents, educators and learners
<b>Solutions</b>	Dept must change system and strategy	Parents must be involved in policy development of the school	The community too must be involved	Educators must teach with love and compassion

#### 4.9. Emergent factors

Factors are categories which emerged as a result of two perspectives, the informants' and the researchers' views, called emic and etic categories respectively. The categories (Table 4.3) summarised on the table above, were essential for making the educational situation

described at this school, understandable to the readers and other researchers for knowledge development.

The within case study analysis helped me to see whether the four focus groups saw, understood and interpreted their school situation in the same way. This process assisted me in gauging the trustworthiness of the data. The emergence of the categories from all groups suggested to me that the data was accurate and trustworthy. Also, it strengthened triangulation, which is the cross-validation among data sources which were four groups at this school. The process also helped to evaluate discrepant or negative evidence (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993). If a particular category occurred in most situations (described by most groups) except for a particular situation (one group), this modified that factor.

Eighteen categories emerged from this case study school, and out of this number, nine emerged from all four groups. These were learners' quality, misconduct and overage as subcategories, parents' non-cooperation and non-support of children as a subcategory, corporal punishment, principal's leadership and laissez faire leadership as a subcategory and solutions. Socio-economic factor emerged from three groups. Three categories, that is, lack of time, resources and communication emerged from two groups. Also, three categories, freedom, unemployment and racial vestiges emerged from one group. Factors appearing in a few groups suggested that they were not important in change processes for the groups at this school.

## CHAPTER 5

### Egagasini high school

#### Case Study 2

##### 5.1. Background

The school is situated in a semi-urban area, a township surrounded by a rural area. The former KwaZulu homeland government built the school. It is therefore a well-built school with reasonably acceptable infrastructure, resources and facilities. Its enrolment ranges from 800 to 1000 learners each year. It is popular because it is situated in the township and learners prefer to attend at this school.

The following graphs were extracted from the EMIS database in the KZN Department of Education and Culture.

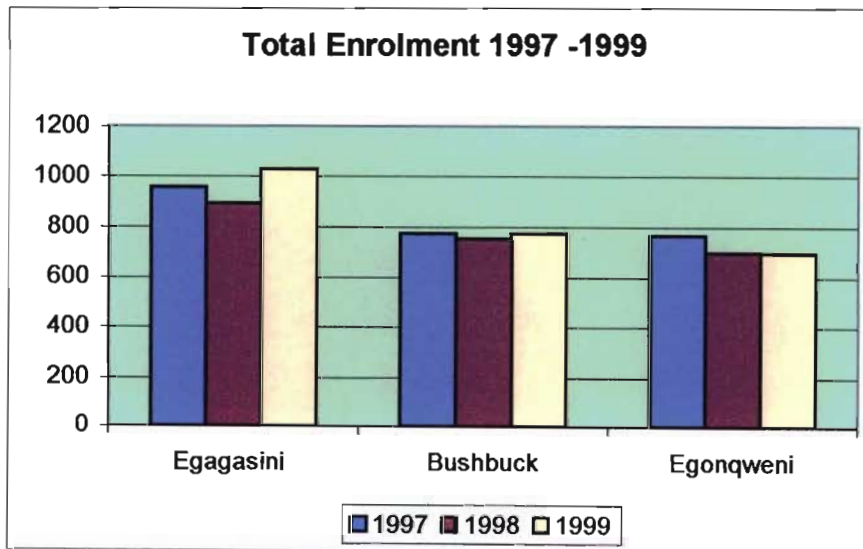


Figure 5.1: Egagasini enrolment compared with that of others

Egagasini had an enrolment of 1100 learners, higher than the other two schools. The political situation developed a culture of chaos and the total collapse of the old

management structure that was previously in control. Political parties and unions influenced the educators' negative attitudes towards the DoEC's officials. When the new management structure came in, it was not easy to change everything suddenly, especially because it was an interim structure. There was a communication breakdown between the school and the department of education. This resulted in inspectors of education being afraid of visiting this school. The principal had the responsibility to invite inspectors to come for inspection. The present principal has changed the atmosphere and has made the school accessible to any official in authority who wants to visit the school for official duties.

There was an insignificant difference between Egagasini and other two case study schools in regard to learner to classroom ratio, as it had the second lowest average enrolment of 48 in three years.

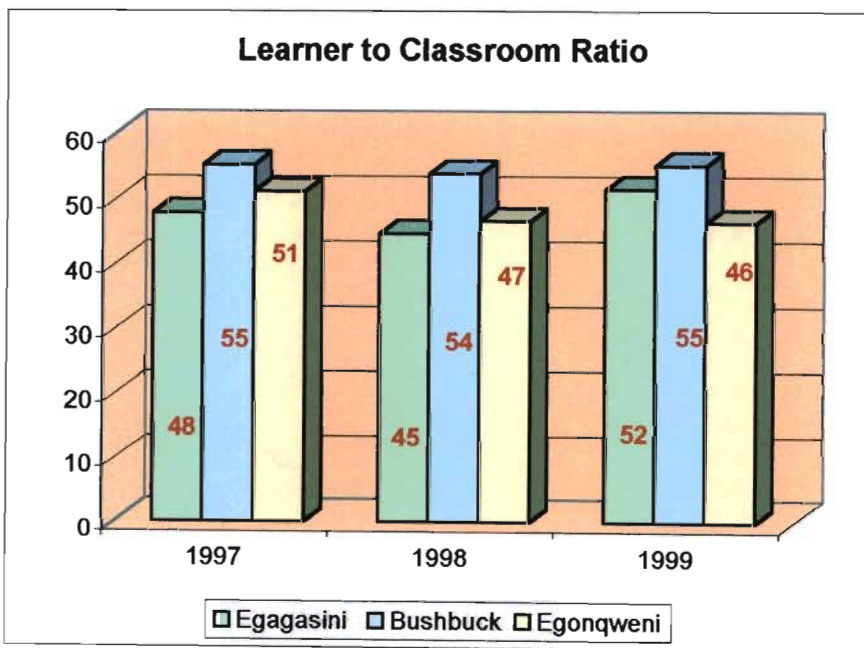


Figure 5.2: Egagasini learner to classroom ratio compared with that of others

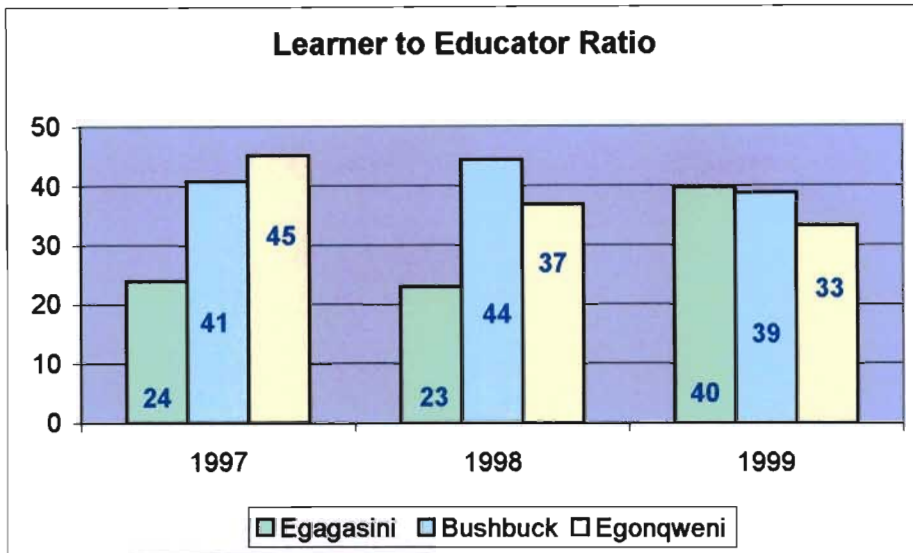


Figure 5.3: Egagasini learner to educator ratio compared with that of others

Compared with other case study schools, Egagasini had the lowest learner to educator average ratio of 29 compared to 41 and 38 of other schools during three years.

## 5.2. Socio-economic context

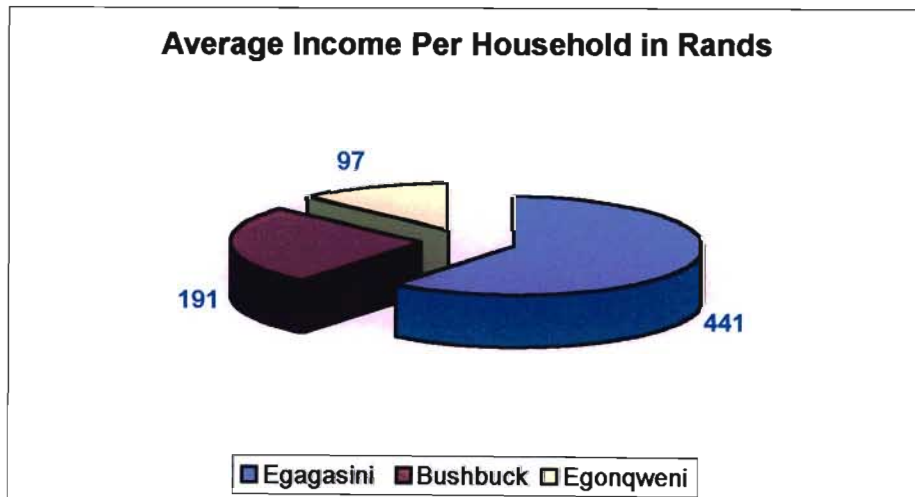


Figure 5.4: Egagasini average income per household compared with that of others

Egagasini had the highest income per household in comparison with the other schools because it is situated in a semi urban area. Consequently the dependency ratio per household as shown in the figure below, was the lowest.

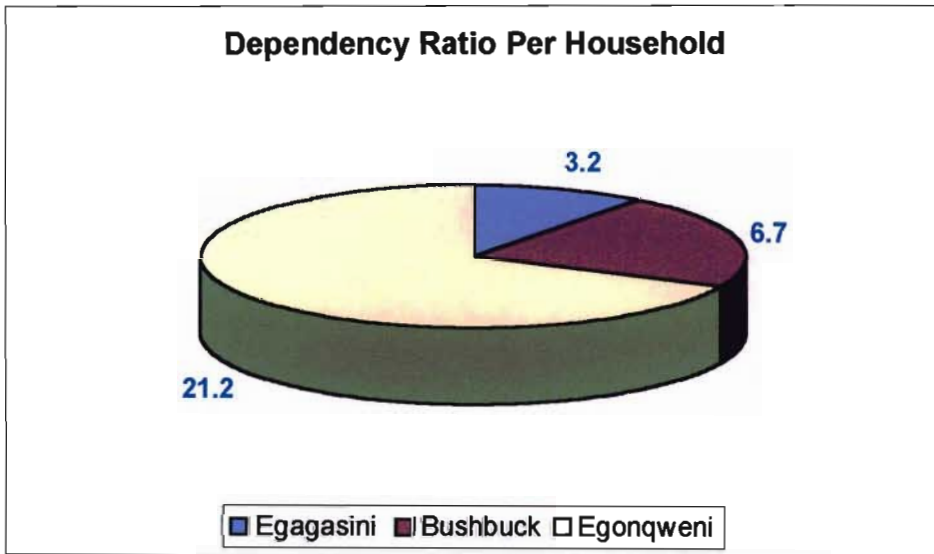


Figure 5.5: Egagasini dependency ratio per household compared with that of others

It is clear from figure 5.6 below that the level of employment at this school was also better compared to others because it is situated in a semi-urban area, very close to a town where there is a large industrial area.



Figure 5.6: Egagasini level of unemployment in the community compared with that of others

According to figure 5.7 the literacy level was also high, which is probably supportive of a better economic and educational environment.

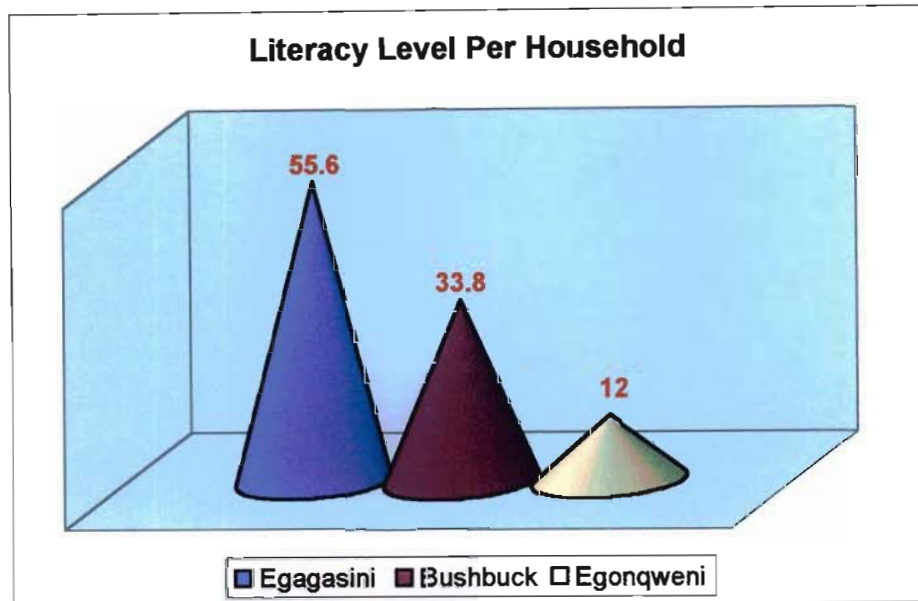


Figure 5.7: Egagasini literacy level per household compared with that of others

I selected this school because, while it had fairly good resources, I had been observing its grade 12 results going down from year to year. In spite of its poor performance, it was not chosen by the department of education as one of the Matric Intervention Programme (MIP) schools as it did not meet one of the criteria the department required, that is, to have a potentially good principal.

The political turmoil at this school had adversely affected the academic performance. The DoEC neglected it because it was one of the problematic schools and the departmental officials developed negative attitudes towards the school. The academic results plummeted from 1997 to the lowest level in 1998 and rose slightly in 1999.

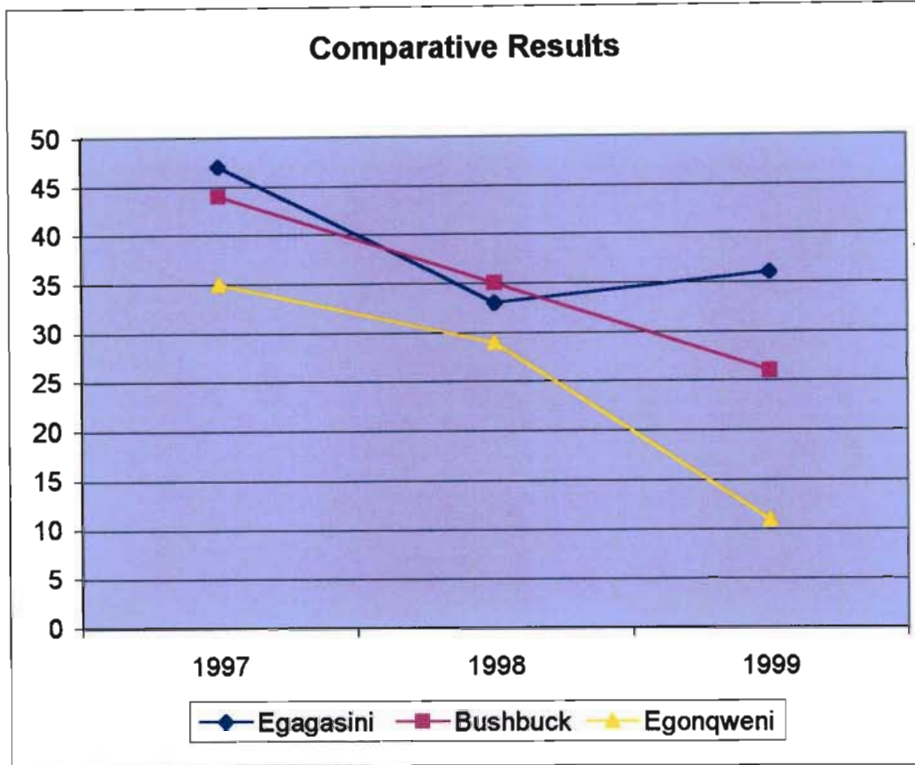


Figure 5.8: Egagasini Matric performance in three years compared with that of others

### 5.3. Entrance to the school

It was easy for me to enter this school, because as a school psychologist I had been coming to administer the Academic Aptitude Test (AAT) to grade 12 learners every year. The former KwaZulu department of education and culture used this aptitude test to predict end of the year results, and therefore used these to motivate both educators and learners. Educators liked this aptitude test because of its accuracy and the fact that it helped to identify the strengths and weaknesses of learners. I was therefore warmly accepted in this school as an official who had always supported the school in their struggle to improve their grade 12 results.

The school was one of those schools which had a strong union which prevented inspectors of education from visiting schools. I therefore feared that educators would not accept everything I said and did, because I was an official of the department. They had a previous record of defying officials of the department. This was for me the second time, in the same year; I visited the school to help it improve its results. The first time I came to this school was when other officials of the department did not want to visit the school because they feared its educators because of the defiant union members. Therefore, when I arrived at the school I explained that my role was to support them, to work with them to identify problems and to work out solutions with them that would lead to the improvement of the school.

#### **5.4. Focus groups**

In this school I also organized a series of focus groups with the four groups of stakeholders for data collection. I concentrated more on educators, learners and SMT focus groups. I had explained to the principal that I was coming to investigate the underlying reasons for poor academic performance at the school, and that together with all constituents would seek solutions. The RCL members were randomly selected while the rest, except for educators, were all taken, as they were, that is, all SMT members were included in the focus groups and the same with the SGB members. It was not easy to organize SGB focus groups because most of the parents were in employment; hence very little time was available to meet with them.

Table: 5.1: Egagasini focus groups

<b>GENDER</b>	<b>EDUCATORS' FOCUS GROUP</b>	<b>SMT FOCUS GROUP</b>	<b>SGB FOCUS GROUP</b>	<b>RCL FOCUS GROUP</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>MALES</b>	7	4	2	10	<b>23</b>
<b>FEMALES</b>	6	2	2	15	<b>25</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>48</b>

### 5.5. Data collection

In collecting data I used the same methods I used in my first case study school (section 5.5.1). I followed a schedule which was not predetermined but depended on my work schedule and the need of follow-up after a group meeting to clarify more issues from the previous interactions.

Table 5.2: Egagasini focus groups' dates and sessions

<b>FOCUS GROUP</b>	<b>DATES</b>	<b>SESSIONS</b>
Educators	10/11/2000	1
School Management Team	15/11/2000	1
School Management Team	25/11/2000	2
School Management Team	28/11/2000	3
Educators	30/11/2000	2
Educators	02/12/2000	3
Educators	02/03/2001	4
Representative Council of Learners	02/03/2001	1
Representative Council of Learners	27/03/2001	2
School Management Team	21/05/2001	4
Educators	07/05/2001	5
School Governing Body	12/07/2002	1
School Governing Body	19/07/2002	2

Table 5.2. shows that the focus group interactions occurred over a period spanning almost two years. However the RCL and SGB meetings were confined to two short periods in 2001 and 2002 respectively. This happened because the school was so extensively affected by the educators and SMT conflicts that divided them into clicks which made it difficult to work together. I had to mediate in this conflict first, in order to normalise their working relationships.

## 5.6. Process analysis

When I entered the school I immediately observed that the school seemed chaotic, and the climate did not seem to be conducive to learning. School learners came in and went out at any time. Some learners came late and went home early. While teaching and learning took place in classes, some learners stood outside, some hid themselves in the toilets, and others were sneaking out of the school secretly. There was a permissive atmosphere with apparently little regulation or control.

### 5.6.1. Educators' focus group

Some educators came to school late, and left early in our initial meetings. Educators showed the feeling of despondency and helplessness. One educator stated, *when you leave this school you simply forget everything about it and go on with your life because there is nothing you could do about the situation*. When I entered the school I was struck by the fact that educators remained in two different rooms (to be explained below). Most educators were always in their staff room.

I was accepted at school as an agent to bring about change, because I had always supported the school even when some officials of the department rejected the school because of its notoriety. The educators' perception of me caused them to open up freely without trepidation. They trusted me because I did not wear the hat of a judgmental inspector, nor had I worn it in the past. They did not appear to fear that I would expose their weaknesses because I had always come to assist them in many instances of trouble at the school, and they also knew that their school was in chaos. They therefore expressed their sincere appreciation of my arrival at the school.

The situation at this school was politically volatile because of existing conflicts resulting in the division of the educators into two camps. Leaders of the two factions were in the SMT, thus I decided to deal with the leaders only. While educators were keen and free to

tell their story, they would not tell in the presence of everybody. There were times when I interviewed educators and the SMT separately to enable them to express everything that was of concern to them. Unlike at the first school, both male and female educators were very assertive except a few who needed more encouragement to express their views. For most of the time educators accepted the responsibility for and ownership of, some of the problems in their school. They stated the following:

*We have HODs whom we do not respect. We defy their leadership and guidance undermine their authority and ask who they are to tell us what we must do because they have not been officially appointed... We don't accept one another as colleagues. It is this poor and unhealthy relationship that is a problem. This year we had very good learners who are cooperative, but our unhealthy relationships spoiled everything.*

The educators' focus group articulated an understanding of the process of change and teaching as a profession:

*Change is very difficult, and not easy to accept. Since teaching is no longer a calling but a profession, we need to change. In olden days educators went to school willingly. Nowadays it is a duty to go to school. We go to school to earn money; therefore we must work hard in order to earn it. It follows therefore that because we have come to work for money, we need a manager that can make us work hard by allocating duties for each one of us so that the business can run smoothly. Duties must be assigned to us so that there is accountability to the manager who monitors our work.*

The above statement showed that they were very dependent on a strong instructional leadership rather than having a professional attitude. During the process of interaction and exchange of ideas, hearing one another's views and perspectives seemed to cause educators to gain insight that led to the ownership of their problems. They realized that *even if he (principal) can do things right, if we teachers are not doing the right things, we are going to point fingers at him. He is having problems and we are having problems.* It was the educators' unanimous view that both the principal and educators had to change.

They boldly acknowledged that as educators they had problems and that the principal had problems, particularly with them. Educators' willingness to cooperate with me also showed that they were tired of the problems because they had had the problems for more than seven years. According to them it was difficult to work in that school.

The educators became positive that a lazy teacher could be changed here *in the job and not in his private life*. Their strong argument was that *it does not matter how lazy you are, the atmosphere and the circumstances surrounding you can change you*. The educators' focus group seemed to be saying that what mattered most was the school system you were in, that has power to change you.

#### **5.6.2. The SMT focus group**

Members of this focus group, both male and female were assertive and very active during the discussion. They manifested willingness to solve their problems and to change. They were, however, to some extent constrained by fear to express some of their concerns. There were some sessions when I had to interview them individually. The principal appeared to be reserved and not free to express his opinions. Whenever he responded it was to defend himself. I learnt later that he might have felt guilty because he was blamed for all the problems of the school as a weak leader. In order to give him an opportunity to express himself freely I decided to conduct separate individual interviews with each one of the SMT members later.

The principal was very defensive in the SMT interviews and refused to admit what members of the focus groups perceived as his faults. But when I interviewed him separately he admitted his faults and weaknesses. He once stated, *even myself I am at fault because I did not play my role very well in the sense that I did not call staff meetings to address the problems*. However, the SMT as a whole took ownership of their shortcomings to address the problems at the school. The interactive process also enabled the principal to gain insight and realize his shortcomings. I asked him what he had done about the excessive absenteeism at his school, and his response was: *Nothing. Maybe its*

*one of my shortcomings and an oversight. What I can say is that I failed; I confess I should have done that.* The principal continued thereafter to say, *I shall follow the procedures when a person is absent and tie that up with the leave register and absence register so that we record it as it happened.*

The principal appeared to have changed his attitude after this interview and because of the insight he gained. But this change was costly in terms of time and money. It took an almost a year for the principal to gain this insight, and it also took long for him to implement the plans he suggested. It seemed as if the principal did not have the capacity to implement what was agreed upon because he liked to work alone. The SMT focus groups would agree on working together as a team in accomplishing a particular objective, but when I came to follow-up, some members of the SMT would inform me that the principal was still not involving them in the running of the school, and this was frustrating to them and to me.

### **5.6.3. The RCL focus group**

Learners at this school were reportedly notorious for their misconduct. Consequently I expected to find them unruly and aggressive towards the authorities perceived as representing the Department of education. However, their behaviour was contrary to expectation. They were cooperative and timid like most African learners in rural schools. I also expected to find them open minded and free to express their views without any trepidation, seeing that the school was once used as the site for political activities. The converse was true, like all other learners in other case study schools; they were reserved and needed to be encouraged to talk. However, in this case, there was an insignificant difference between boys and girls in terms of their active participation. They all needed to be encouraged and after they had been encouraged they all gradually began to talk. However, getting them to talk was a process which needed patience and probing. The majority of learners did not talk until the end of the discussion.

There was no resistance from learners in terms of owning the problem. Learners acknowledged that they *fail to do homework because we are lazy*. The further exploration of laziness revealed that the so called laziness was related to the homework itself, because it was difficult and seen as irrelevant.

The focus group concentrated on the educators' teaching style and methodology. Though some of the learners showed anger and frustration about the fact that educators were frustrating them by their poor teaching approaches, which directly contributed to their reluctance to carry out educators' instructions, others were indifferent and apathetic. It appeared as if they were not worried whether they were taught or not.

#### **5.6.4. The SGB focus group**

It was very difficult for me to meet the SGB of this school because I depended on the principal to convene their meeting to enable me to talk to them. I requested him to organize a meeting of the SGB in 2001, but this did not happen until 2002. When I realized that it was not taking place, I decided to visit them to interview them in their homes. The members of the SGB, like others in the previous schools, are either self-employed or employed full-time, hence they could not attend meetings at school.

The SGB of this school was one of the most well informed SGB groups in the region. The chairperson in particular, was knowledgeable about legislation, for example that which regulates human resources such as the Employment of Educators Act 1999. The SGB members seemed to understand everything that went on at school. They expressed disappointment and regret that their interventions did not succeed. But they appeared to know what their responsibilities and tasks should be.

#### **5.7. Content analysis**

I followed the same procedure as I did in the first case study school as described in section 3.2.

### 5.7.1. Learner qualities

Again in this case study, discussion was characterized by a culture of blame, where two focus groups of educators and the RCL raised the issue of learner characteristics as a factor in the process of change. Learners were described as chaotic, and reluctant to work hard. They were said to study only for tests and examinations. They reportedly had no future vision and also had a negative attitude towards their subjects.

I checked the negative qualities with the learners' emic topics. The learners' perspectives of their negative attitudes were that they had difficulty in understanding lessons due mainly to language difficulties, exacerbated by the fact that educators talked fast when they taught learners. Learners admitted that they were *lazy to do homework* because they were given much homework with which they could not cope.

Educators complained that learners were not dedicated to their studies; but

*They begin to take their work seriously in grade 12: from grades 8 to 9, they relax. They lack vision and purpose for their future. Internal grades are causing chaos at school. Learners from feeder schools are rejects that had not passed the previous grades; consequently these learners go out of classes and play truant because they do not have goals. Grade 12 learners do not have future career goals.*

Also, learners themselves asserted that they had a poor understanding of lessons taught, and this was exacerbated by the fact that they had no books. Once learners were in grade 12 they refused discipline because they reportedly had an attitude of *I don't care, now that I am in grade 12 because educators are no longer going to mark my scripts at the end of the year*. Learners appeared to have been misinformed to think that they should respect educators in order to avoid the punishment of being made to repeat the grade. Learners in grade 12 thought they were out of their educators' hands once they were in this grade.

Democracy and human rights were blamed by educators for encouraging misconduct among learners. Consequently they took advantage of the fact that they were no longer punished and no actions were taken against their misconduct. Learners' misdemeanour involved stubbornness, rudeness, aggression and forcing others to disobey educators. More seriously, the educators reported that *there was a day when learners came drunk to disrupt a meeting organized by the SGB*. Learners had gone to the meeting in order to fight against some educators they wanted to chase away from the school. The behavioural pattern of learners described above seems to depict the picture of very frustrated learners.

#### 5.7.1.1. Misconduct

Learners did not respect educators. They were rude, stubborn and aggressive to educators. Consequently one focus group said *after break it is yizo yizo (chaos) here at school. Learners stand outside, shout when you start teaching and others begin to go home. .... Sometimes only 2 learners out of 40 remain in class*. Some of the learners reportedly sell drugs at school; hence the level of drunkenness was high.

When learners were lent the department's books during lessons, they often did not return them to the educators because *some learners have stolen them*. Learners would seemingly not cooperate with educators in returning those books.

#### 5.7.2. Parents' non-cooperation

Parents were reportedly not cooperating with the school. They were not involved in the education of their children. Educators said: *When we call meetings at our school parents do not come. Parents send (their) pregnant girls to school. As educators how can we nurse pregnant girls? These are the problems we have here. They occupied their children with household chores and did not allow them to do school work*. Also the RCL focus group claimed parents did not buy textbooks for their children.

#### 5.7.2.1. Non-supportive parents

Educators voiced their concerns about the fact that parents lacked commitment in supporting their children and the school. Parents were described as aloof. *Parents are not involved in the education of their children. They do not encourage their children to do school work; instead they send them to do household chores. They cause them to neglect their work. They appeared to be disinterested in the education of their children.*

Educators were also concerned about parents' non-involvement in disciplining learners for immoral behaviour; instead they were tolerant of some of their children's misdemeanour, such as pregnancy and substance abuse. Educators were of the opinion that parents feared to discipline their children. My investigation of this assertion revealed that the problem was more complex than it was said to be. Some of the children did not have parents; they either lived alone or with their grandparents who were too old to discipline children who were involved in substance abuse.

#### 5.7.3. Corporal punishment

Corporal punishment was a thorny issue at this school. It appeared as if the past dependency on corporal punishment by educators disempowered them. Educators expressed the need for the department to workshop with them methods of punishment because they did not have other methods of disciplining learners. Failure to discipline learners had caused some of the educators to avoid going to class to teach because they feared *an undisciplined class we cannot handle because corporal punishment was abolished*. According to educators learners cooperated only when they were threatened with the use of corporal punishment. They also maintained that the methods of punishment which are used by White schools were ineffective with their learners. They thus maintained that learners' behaviour demanded corporal punishment as a method of discipline. But they could not use it because they were inhibited by the fact that the law, based on their human rights, protected learners and learners had consequently rejected corporal punishment.

I learnt from this school that educators had seemingly stopped using corporal punishment because learners themselves had censured educators. Learners told one educator who tried to apply corporal punishment on learners to *stop being a lion*, and he stopped because he feared a reprisal.

#### **5.7.4. Socio- economic situation**

Learners themselves raised the issue of their family circumstances which were not conducive to learning. Some of them lived in one-room of houses with more than five members. It was not easy to study and concentrate in these circumstances. Members of the family prevented them from having lights on while they were asleep.

Parents were unable to buy textbooks for these learners, they could not pay school fees, and they could not give learners food before they left for school because they did not have money. Welfare organizations and Councillors had been asked to assist these learners, but no assistance was forthcoming. One educator stated that it was difficult for learners to study hard because they knew that *even if they passed matric, parents would not help them further their studies* because of financial constraints.

#### **5.7.5. The Department's prescriptive approach**

Both the educators and SMT focus groups raised a range of difficulties about the Department of Education's management approach:

- Centralized promotions of learners were problematic for educators because the Superintendents of Education Management (SEM's) did not consult with them when they decided on conditional transfers, which resulted in weak learners being promoted. The learners did not *work hard because they know that they will be condoned*. Promotions consequently caused confusion at the school.
- The imposed concentration on only grade 12, through manipulating schools by setting them against each other to compete, *sends a clear signal that grade 12 is*

*the only important class. The result is that the other grades' educators relax and think everything will be done in grade 12.* This concentration on grade 12 was done at the expense of other grades, and shifted the resources to this one grade. Schools were set against each other to compete on the basis of grade 12 academic performances at the end of the year. Those who did well were rewarded and praised and those that fell short of the mark were reprimanded at a specially organized ceremony. This impacted negatively on other grade educators who perceived themselves as being unimportant and marginalized.

Educators challenged the conditional transfers of learners, which were controlled by SEM's. The response from the Superintendents was *it is a prescription from above; there is no other way of going around it. The department does not communicate properly. It imposes and instructs.* The SGB focus group supported the educators when they said, *there is no consultation, and instruction comes from above. Whenever there is a case, and you first hear that the decision is taken without your involvement.* The top-down approach of the department appeared to have disempowered educators and confused them in the execution of their duties.

The procedure for filling of vacant posts in schools followed a lengthy process of bureaucratic red tape. Consequently certain subjects remained without teachers for long periods. The delays in appointments discouraged educators and lowered their morale. In spite of this school's high learner enrolment, it did not have officially appointed HODs for a long time. The decision to advertise posts was centralized at head office. The department would have to wait for a list of other vacant posts in the whole province, before any posts could be advertised. The delay in the appointment of Management educators seemed to have destabilized the school and exacerbated its problems.

The department's instructional management frustrated educators. They expressed their frustrations about the fact that *nobody was interested in listening to and hearing our problems.* Educators maintained that the officials of the department often ignored the suggestions they made to solve their problems. For instance, the conditional transfers of

learners were arbitrarily unscrupulously done, without their involvement and consultation and the challenge to change this was not heeded.

#### **5.7.6. Unprofessionality**

This category emerged in all focus groups. There was unanimous agreement among all focus groups, except the SGB, that educators bunked classes. Also, two focus groups concurred that educators lacked coherence and unity; instead division into cliques continued to dog them. The consequence of the division and fights was that they undermined one another. They fought over learners' promotions as some based them on learners' participation in extramural activities.

*Everyone has an influence in passing grade 12 learners. I have seen it in my subject where a learner had not written my subject, and yet I saw that he all of a sudden got marks in his report. Last year one of my grade 9 learners failed all my subjects. I wrote a report reflecting his dismal failure and submitted it to the parent. In January the following year, I saw him in grade 10. I was not informed about his promotion. When I inquired about that, I was told that the boy was good in extramural activities.*

This indicated, according to educators' and SMT focus groups, that there was no policy at the school. Focus groups raised the following concerns about educators' professional behaviour:

- frequent absenteeism from school showed lack of commitment, which had ripple effects on learners
- educators did not plan their work
- they did not have explanatory skills
- they refused to repeat or revise lessons
- when teaching they read from the textbook
- they refused to entertain questions from learners
- HODs themselves bunked class periods, they did not go to teach

Thus it seemed to me that there were many examples of unprofessional behaviour on the part of educators. It seemed as if lack of cooperation was due to the belief in hierarchical structure by educators. It was only a person in a high position who was accorded respect and loyalty by educators. But how sincere this was, was proved when the educators who were acting HODs were confirmed and officially appointed in these positions. They still did not enjoy the cooperation of educators. There could have been other factors that contributed to this attitude, such as the long history of political rivalry in the school.

#### 5.7.6.1. Conflict

Conflict at this school was referred to mainly by the educators' focus groups. It appeared to have been caused by a combination of factors. Educators expressed difficulty in understanding the two concepts, democracy and human rights on the one hand, and professional responsibility on the other. Some educators who did not perform some of their duties cited human rights as an excuse for refusing to be instructed to go to class:

*We do not understand democracy and need to be educated because if a teacher does not go to class, he/she will say he has a right, so you can't push him/her for not going to class. The SMT then had difficulties in causing educators to go to teach in classes due to this problem, and it created a conflict.*

The Department of Education had a different understanding of punishment to that of educators and parents. Educators and parents believed that learners could only be changed by corporal punishment which the Department regarded as physical abuse and outlawed. This ideological clash created a conflict that left educators feeling helpless since they did not know of other methods of discipline.

Educators were divided at this school, and this division dated back to the times of political conflict in the area. The conflict led to the still existing cliques and two staff rooms led by different educators each pulling in its own direction. Because of this division, *when A suggests something I do not accept it until it is suggested by B.*

The two groups already existed when the present principal took over; he was confused, not knowing to which group he should give his allegiance. The stronger group controlled him and thus prevented him from correcting what he saw was wrong. The difficulty was compounded by the fact that he belonged to one group before he was promoted to the position of principalship. The SMT could not resolve this impasse. The division created a problem for both educators and the SMT. One focus group remarked: *Educators were concerned that the SMT do not come to us with one voice.* The educators' view was that the conflict was caused by lack of leadership at the school and in the Department of Education. Although the Department knew about this conflict they did not intervene. This was the reason why educators welcomed me at this school; because no official of the Department had come to help them. Therefore, according to educators, what they termed democracy was complicating problems at this school.

#### **5.7.7. Supervision**

Educators seemed to have a high regard for a hierarchical structure, employment rank and seniority in the place of work. A position was apparently respected due to the power attached to it, and must be officially confirmed through appointment. At this school, the principal was the only person officially appointed in the management position. Educators believed the principal alone had the legitimate power to exercise authority and discipline educators and learners. He was expected to act in order to run and change the school. The acting Heads of departments were not accepted and respected by educators because they were not officially appointed by the Department of Education. It was an internal interim arrangement to enable the school to function. They believed that supervision could only be accepted if done by an officially appointed person in a rank higher than that of educators.

The educators' focus group expressed the need for supervision when they said, *if you teach without being checked, you might mislead your students and you might discover too late that you have been using wrong methods.* Educators did not go to class to teach

because they maintained *even if I sit at the staffroom nobody says anything to me*. They were also of the opinion that supervision could *change a lazy person*. They unequivocally stated that they needed to be *monitored by the principal*. Though educators demanded supervision from the principal, it also appeared that they did not respect him because of his personality. They described him as soft and weak. That is why they did not go to classes to teach. This behaviour seemed to suggest that they wanted to be supervised by a strong instructional leader. The following statement by one of the educators supports.

*The problem at this school is that there is only one person who is officially appointed in managerial position, that is, the principal. There is no deputy, no HODs who are official, the others are unnoticed. I can say our colleagues who are now acting, as HODs are on the same level like us, therefore nobody will respect them when they apply discipline to us. There is no recognition of Management because they are not officially appointed. We usually say who are they to give instruction? Even the principal does not give them his blessings. If they had their offices we would know their offices and approach them respectfully.*

The above explains the dilemma the acting HOD members had in regard to discharging their duties. They were not free to function because they knew that educators did not accept them. As a result, they feared to occupy offices, which were meant to be used by HODs because they thought *I am not sure whether I shall get this position*. The impact of having unofficially appointed SMT members was reflected clearly when they refused to use their offices, hence creating problems for educators who believed that there must be a separation between super ordinates and subordinates.

#### **5.7.8. Recognition needs**

The need for recognition was strongly expressed by educators and SMT focus groups. Educators maintained that they had low morale due to lack of praise and rewards for their achievements. There was a strong feeling that nobody ever appreciated his or her work after evaluating it. *Some educators need to be told to go to class, and others need follow-*

*up. For instance from January – December nobody has ever appreciated your work after evaluating it or praise you. Workers need rewards for work well done. All of us are working hard, thus we expect praise.* According to educators, they did not work hard to change the school because their efforts were not recognised, and this discouraged and demoralised them. They also maintained that the functions of Superintendents were misdirected because they were judgmental, rather than designed to motivate educators by praising them for work well done.

#### **5.7.9. Racial vestiges**

Educators tended to evaluate their performance and their stakeholders in comparison with how Whites were perceived by these stakeholders. They perceived Zulu parents to be more supportive of White educators than of them. For instance the Zulu /African parents attended meetings whenever invited at white controlled schools, whereas they did not respond to their invitation to meetings at their schools. One member of the focus group remarked, *I have observed that whites are different from us, when we call meetings at our schools parents didn't come, whereas in White schools our parents attend meetings when they are invited.*

This comparison seemed to suggest that educators did not have confidence in themselves and believed that it was the colour of the skin that helped White-controlled schools to obtain cooperation from African parents. The effect of this racial variable on African educators cannot be ruled out. African parents would consider it a privilege to have their children in White schools and therefore would be as cooperative as possible, lest the privilege should be withdrawn. This was not the case in African schools, and the educators drew implications from this.

#### **5.7.10. Principal's leadership**

The principal of the school was seen as weak and a failure who did not delegate work. One member of the group said *he is not firm and fair. What I said is that he knows his*

*weaknesses...* According to the educators and SMT groups the principal did not have a vision for the school, he acted unilaterally without involving his staff. The SGB also stated that he made decisions without involving them. The reason for this unilateral decision-making, according to the groups, was that *he does not trust us. He has been one of us, may be this mistrust developed during that term when he was one of us and actually saw teachers' unfaithfulness during that time. He might have witnessed incidents of the dishonesty of educators.* It appeared as if the principal did not have confidence in himself, and this affected his leadership style.

#### 5.7.10.1. Laissez faire leadership

Educators described the teaching and learning situation at this school as ruined and chaotic. *One chapter is taught (a year) because teaching periods after break are not utilised because after break it is Yizo Yizo (a TV drama which portrays chaos which existed in apartheid African schools) Some (learners) are singing in the campus, others are roaming around aimlessly and others are playing soccer, and all these things are done during the school working hours. Those who taught during this time were disturbed and jeered. Learners stand outside, shout when you start teaching, and others begin to go home. There is no control in the promotion (of learners), each educator use their own criteria for promotion, such as involvement in extramural activities. Other cases are considered because parents happened to be known by educators. Promotions are chaotic because there is no procedure.*

The type of promotion described above was purposeful, directed by the principal, and based on the fact that learners were not being taught. Consequently the principal advised educators to be considerate and think of the future of learners. *Therefore we should just push them to next grades, because their poor performance is not their fault.*

Educators sat aimlessly in the staff room or basked in the sun during their teaching periods. Also absenteeism for which educators produced medical certificates could not be controlled. Teachers took turns in being absent.

The principal was characterised by educators as a manager who:

- did not take the initiative,
- had no vision ,
- had no control over the school,
- did not delegate functions, but centralised everything around himself,
- was weak, not firm and fair,
- suffered from insecurity,
- was uncertain about what he did, and tried to please everyone
- did not trust his staff and hence worked alone
- did all the talking during staff meetings because he was unable to negotiate issue
- did not have a direction; hence educators *were not clear about what must be done*, hence the chaos that existed at the school.

The educators perceived the principals' behaviour and leadership style as a mistrust of educators. *The principal did not involve us. He is running the school alone. He is just a man of himself. He wants to handle things himself to make sure things are done well. Most of educators are reluctant to attend the principal's meetings because he talks alone at those meetings.*

Educators and SMT focus groups experienced the environment of the school as incapacitating in the process of change. Their argument was that the environment or system could change a person for good or bad. The will to work and change the school was reportedly there, *but it is the environment, if someone could push us...*

According to educators' focus group, they needed this *push* which could be *created by an atmosphere of close supervision, such as monitoring everything you do as a teacher*. The push concept or idea was described as the whole organization of the school, where the *principal monitored educators, where everything should be prepared for me, and the learners should be prepared to learn*. The educators were pointing to the whole microsystem of the school as an important factor in changing the school, including them as individuals or parts of the system.

### **5.7.11. Unemployment**

Educators and RCL focus groups were of the opinion that the matric certificate carried very little value because it did not lead to employment. Learners who passed grade 12 in previous years discouraged their peers because they were not placed anywhere, and they were not engaged in any form of occupation. Even if they desired to further their education at tertiary institutions, they could not do so because their parents did not have enough money to support them. The grade 12 certificates were then rendered meaningless, because they offered no prospects of employment opportunities in the job market. Whenever educators asked learners about their future plans, they responded by saying: *We are going to die because we are going to steal and commit burglary*. This was obviously depressing to the listener and indicated that they had lost all hope of a better future.

### **5.7.12. Resources**

Textbooks and learning support material were not available because parents were said to be unable to buy books and exercise books. There were no photocopiers, typewriters or computers at this school. One educator said, *there is nothing at this school, because learners refuse to buy books on the grounds that they voted*. The school had poor financial resources to cope with the demands of service delivery to learners. The majority of parents did not pay school fees and educators and SMT did not have the strategies to encourage them to comply with the school requirements.

### **5.7.13. Zulu culture**

The SMT blamed Zulu culture for their tendency to tolerate unprofessional behaviour from educators and their unwillingness to discipline them for misconduct. *African culture and ubuntu does not allow us to see a person suffer by, for example, a person failing to look after his family because you have caused him to lose his job through your harsh*

*discipline. As Africans we are very kind to one another... these rules can break the relationship and hurt.*

According to the SMT the principle of ubuntu, which is against harsh treatment of fellows, is deeply embedded in Zulu culture. *Unlike White educators, Zulu educators are taught to be kind and sympathetic to one another.* The educators' focus group blamed this culture for preventing the principal from taking harsh disciplinary action against educators who did not carry out their duties. I asked myself the question whether it was kindness and sympathy or fear of reprisal. The educators' focus group of the first case study school had acknowledged that it was fear of revenge that prevented principals from applying discipline to correct the deviant behaviour of an educator.

#### **5.7.14. Communication**

The principal did not disseminate information to educators. *What we lack here is information. The manager attends meetings alone. He does not pass over the information to us. He attends courses, workshops and meetings and comes back to shelve that information.*

It was not only educators who were not kept informed about what was happening at the school. Parents too were not well informed. The department and the school did not communicate well with all stakeholders. During the time of the research there was an acute shortage of books and stationery at school. The department had not informed the school that they were not going to supply books during that year. Educators maintained that the Department *should have informed parents in advance about what they will not supply in order to give them a chance to prepare and budget for what is needed by the school.* The RCL focus groups' claim was that *parents do not buy books because they are usually not informed in advance about what books they are expected to buy.* Consequently the department and the school often caused confusion when it came to buying books. Educators told learners not to buy books, whereas the department expected

them to buy books. Learners felt that they were *not supposed to buy books because they voted*, and thought the government was going to give them free education in grade 12.

It was again the feeling of the educators that *members of the SGB are themselves not informed because they did not know their duties*. Consequently in 2000 they did not hold any meeting to inform parents about school affairs.

#### **5.7.15. Curricular issues**

The fact that every one was forced to take Mathematics and Physical Science was said to be a major factor arresting progress and improvement at this school. Learners were forced to take these subjects, instead of being *allowed to make their own choices of subjects they like and can manage*.

The wrong choice of subjects, according to the educators' focus group, happened because learners were not guided to select subjects for which they had the aptitude. Consequently they did not cope with their academic work. But most important was the fact that the curriculum was *not structured to cater for learners' needs. This curriculum did not lead to future employment*. It was in most cases packaged to enable them to pass grade 12, given the fact that the education system was examination driven.

#### **5.7.16. Lack of time**

Educators also blamed time as a factor for their difficulty to change the school. They stated that they needed extra time to cope with their work. Syllabuses could not be finished because of lack of time.

#### **5.7.17. Environment**

Educators blamed the system which failed to support them and placed them in a difficult school. They argued that if they could be placed in a different school they would perform

better. They also argued that lazy educators could change if placed in a different environment. They explained the environment that could change them. They requested what they called *push*, which is created by an atmosphere of close supervision, such as *monitoring everything you do as a teacher ... The atmosphere itself has to be encouraging, everything should be prepared for me, and even the learners should be prepared to learn. That push refers to the whole organisation of the school.* One different view from another member was that *teachers should be pulled and not pushed.* But the meaning attached to the *pull* appear to be similar to *push* because this member said, *there are things which can be done by the principal to pull them, e.g. close supervision.* The other members had used the same concept of *an atmosphere of close supervision*, which made me think that the objector's *pull* meant that educators needed to be led, rather than managed.

#### **5.7.18. Solutions**

The focus group interviews and discussions were at the same time an intervention. Interactive processes challenged the groups to think out solutions to their problems. Three focus groups, educators; SMT and RCL suggested solutions during the process.

Educators and SMT focus groups suggested a strong intervention from the principal by comparing school to business to make them *work hard by allocating duties for each one of us so that the business can run smoothly.* There was acknowledgement that some educators needed to be instructed, *to go to class because they are lazy; therefore the management should be very strong.*

Both educators and SMT focus groups felt that the principal should unite educators to heal division, and cause educators to shelve their individual goals in favour of the common goal of the school. Collaboration and networking with other educators was suggested by the RCL and SMT focus groups.

Though the school had been involved in the educational management development (EMD) programme of the region, it had not yet implemented this management plan in the school. The principal, as the only officially appointed person in the School Management Team, had attended meetings alone. The suggested strategic plan was intended to lead to the development of vision and mission, action plans for the whole school development and improvement, school policies, rules and procedures. Policies, rules and procedures were expected to lead to the development of a code of conduct for both educators and learners.

Educators felt that a bureaucratic approach based on a democratic principle should be followed, where the department calls *all the educators and SMT to develop the policies together, allocates duties to all of them*. Involvement also suggested a participatory approach where the principal *must trust SMT and educators* and delegate work to all of them.

The following were suggested by the RCL focus group, and centred on what needed to be done for them by educators. Learners suggested that:

- They be given notes after lessons
- They be involved in all matters, especially those affecting them
- Educators be patient with them
- Educators should not compare them with learners from other schools

In addition, educators were asked to network with others in other schools, and that the school must communicate with parents.

### **5.8. Within case analysis**

I used Table 5.3. to determine the number of factors which appeared to emerge from more groups and those which appeared in less groups. I used this as an index of the importance of that particular factor to the groups.

Table 5.3: Egagasini within case analysis

<b>CATEGORIES</b>	<b>EDUCATORS</b>	<b>SMT VIEWS</b>	<b>SGB VIEWS</b>	<b>RCL VIEWS</b>
<b>Learner qualities</b>	Some learners are rejects from other schools, they hate some subjects, only study for exams	Learners are not disciplined, have given up hope and are passive	They do not understand explanation of lessons and are not dedicated to their work	They have difficulties in understanding lessons, but do not know why and don't care
<b>Learners' misconduct</b>	Learners shout at educators while teaching	Drugs are sold by them at school and they are always drunk	Learners rude, stubborn, aggressive and drunk	Once in grade 12 learners don't respect educators
<b>Parents' non-cooperation</b>	They are not attending meetings at school, not coming to view their children's books and progress. Allow their pregnant girls to go to school	They are not involved in their children's education, not encouraging their children to do school work, but engage them in household chores	They do not respond to invitations to school for meetings, and refuse to come and see their children's work	They do not buy textbooks for their children
<b>Non-supportive parents</b>		Parents don't support their children, they are aloof from school		
<b>Corporal punishment</b>	Educators don't use corporal punishment hence lack of order. Other types of punishment ineffective, hence learners like them	Learners misbehave because they know they must not be punished, and hence they misbehave		
<b>Socio-economic factors</b>	Parents are poor	Learners steal and burgle for survival		Learners go to school hungry, live in congested houses and no

				money to buy textbooks and for FET
<b>Department's prescription</b>	Dept imposed policy of conditional transfer and controls it through SEM, forces concentration on grade 12 at expense of others	Dept puts emphasis on grade 12, resulting in the neglect of other grades. It imposes and instructs. It has imposed common tests programme	No consultation instruction comes from above. Lower grades neglected. Educators are caused to concentrate on grade 12 only	
<b>Unprofessionalism</b>	Educators forge reports for learners, and absent themselves on a daily basis	HODs themselves bunk classes. No class records are kept		Excessive homework given, but not checked. Educators refuse to repeat lessons and they read a textbook when teaching
<b>Conflict</b>	Educators divided in groups in fighting over past political divisions	SMT divided according cliques, and principal is in one of them		
<b>Need of supervision</b>	Educators asked to be made to work by a principal, need to be checked and instructed to go to class to teach	Educators don't go to class for there is no official HOD to supervise them Principal must instruct educators to go to class, and must be firm		
<b>Recognition needs</b>	Educators efforts not recognized, no appreciation and praise for those who work	No appreciation of work done. Educators' hard work not appreciated by		

	hard	SMT and this is discouraging to them.		
<b>Racial vestiges</b>	African parents do not support African educators, but cooperate with White educators in White controlled schools			
<b>Principal's leadership</b>	Weak and seen as failure, no delegation, no vision and direction, everything centres around him	No vision, acts unilaterally, makes decisions alone, does not act against educators' absenteeism, lenient and soft, no minutes are taken at meetings	SGB not consulted, decisions taken without them, principal works alone and meetings are not held	
<b>Laissez faire leadership</b>	Promotions chaotic and rules not followed, but done according to participation in extra-mural activities. It is yizo yizo and lower grades are neglected	Forged reports from other schools produced, educators swop question papers, more marks given for little response and absenteeism not handled	Lower grades not taught properly, learners disturb SGB meetings, attend by force. School dumping grounds for rejects from other schools	

<b>Unemployment</b>		Grade 12 learners after completion don't find employment, hence learners always depressed		
<b>Resources</b>	Material resources needed			There are no textbooks, laboratories and other facilities
<b>Zulu culture</b>	Africans kind to one another, have soft spot for colleagues, and cannot be harsh and discipline educators	Difficult to apply discipline sternly, discipline of educators seen as unkind		
<b>Communication</b>	Principal does not pass on information to educators	Principal does not disseminate information to educators	Lack of information as no meetings are held	Dept and school send different messages to learners on buying books and exercises
<b>Curricular issues</b>		Limited curriculum, learners choose subjects for which they have no aptitude	Physical science and maths problem areas	

<b>Lack of time</b>		Extra time needed to cope with work		Syllabus not finished because educators dodge classes
<b>Environment</b>	They say it is the system which fail them, if placed in a different school, they would change. Lazy educators can be changed by atmosphere and circumstances such as strong supervision			
<b>Solutions</b>	Vision and strategic plan for the school to be developed, participatory approach in decision making to be used	Vision needed to change, communicate it, relations must be improved, principal must know work procedures		

### 5.9. Emergent factors

Out of 20 categories, four emerged from all four groups. These were learner quality and misconduct as a subcategory, parents' non-cooperation and communication. The department's prescription approach, principal's leadership and laissez faire leadership as a subcategory, unprofessionalism and social-economic factors emerged from the three groups. Seven categories, that is corporal punishment, need of supervision, resources, recognition needs, and Zulu culture, curricular issues and solution emerged from two groups. Racial vestiges, non-supportive parents and unemployment emerged from only

one group. The frequency of the emergence of the factors suggests their significance as factors impacting on processes of change at this school, in the opinion of groups.

## CHAPTER 6

### Bushbuck high school

#### Case Study 3

##### 6.1. Background

The school is situated in a rural area. As with the first school, it was also built and maintained by the community. This is a poverty stricken community, which was also ravaged by political violence and hooliganism in the past. Poverty in this area has created a lot of crime and related moral problems. Crime levels and the strife among political parties have resulted in the erosion of the social fibre of the community.

##### 6.2. The socio-economic context

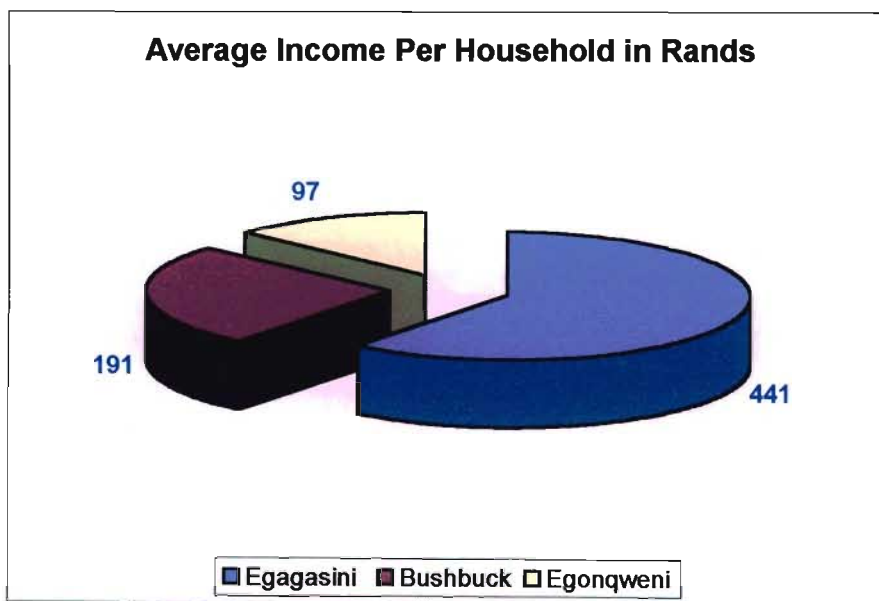


Figure 6.1: Bushbuck's average income per household compared with that of others

The school is situated in an area whose income per household is second best because it is also situated in a semi urban area. Though the school is situated in the semi-urban area, political violence has impoverished the area. The dependency ratio per household, the

level of employment in the community and the literacy level all indicate the poor socio-economic condition of the school.

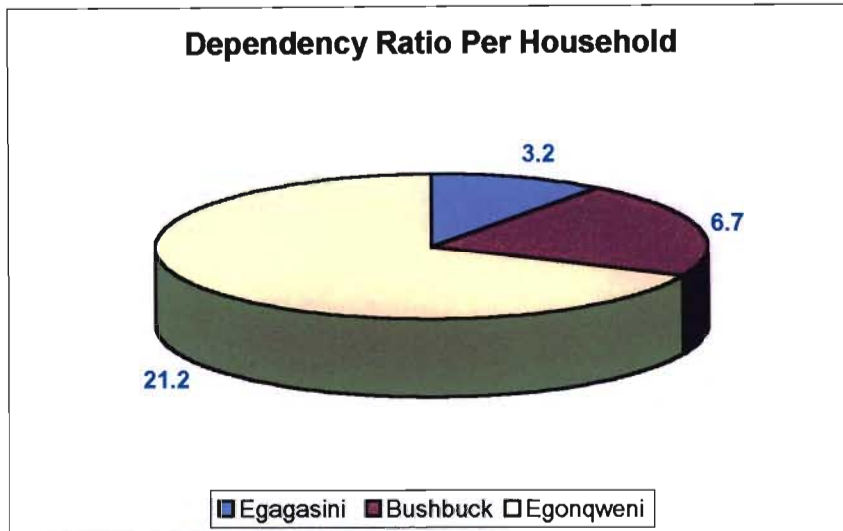


Figure 6.2: Bushbuck's dependency ratio per household compared with that of others

The dependency ratio of 6.7 suggests that more people are dependent on one breadwinner.

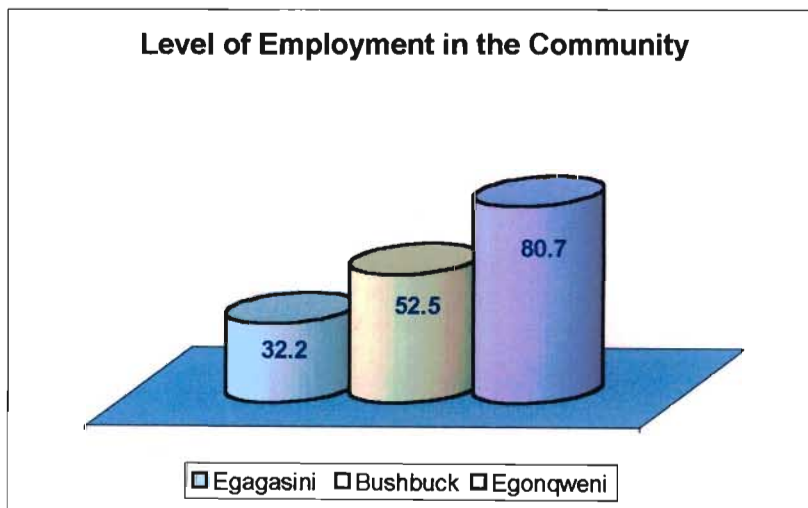


Figure 6.3: Bushbuck's level of employment in the community compared with others

Though the school is in a semi urban area, unemployment of 52.5 is high. The unemployment level seems to correlate with literacy level (see figures 6.3 and 6.4).

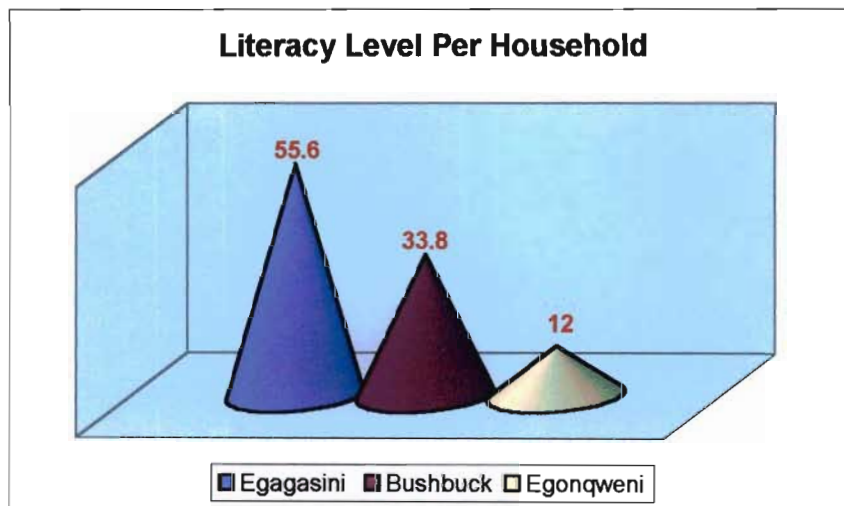


Figure 6.4: Bushbuck's literacy level per household compared with that of others

The literacy level was second highest, though this is a semi urban area. This is apparently due to poverty level.

### 6.3. Educational status

The school was the second largest in terms of enrolment as shown below.

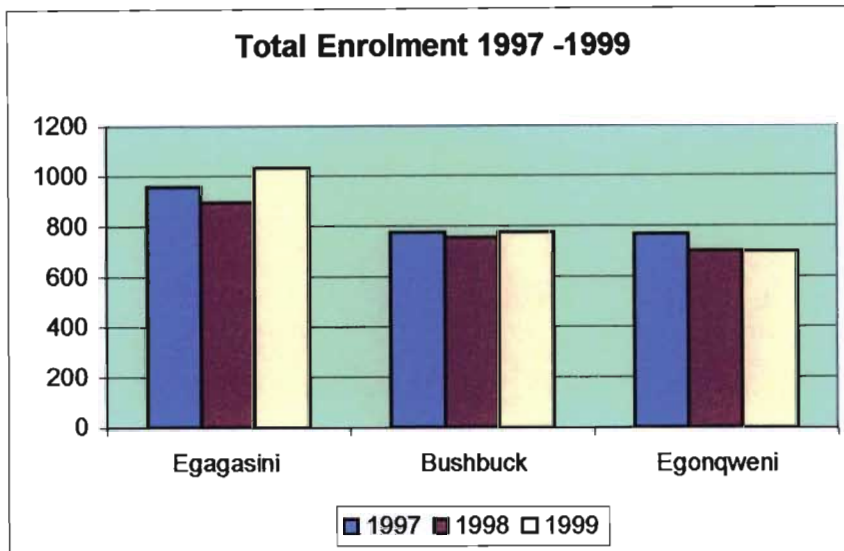


Figure 6.5: Bushbuck's total enrolment compared with that of others

Bushbuck had had a stable enrolment over the past three years.

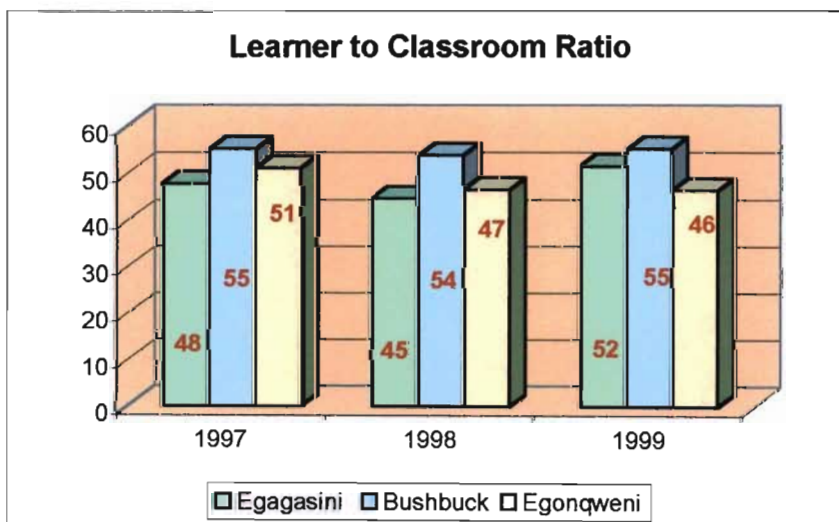


Figure 6.6: Bushbuck's classroom ratio compared with that of others

Bushbuck had the highest average learner to classroom ratio of 54 compared to 48 of the other two schools (figure 6.6).

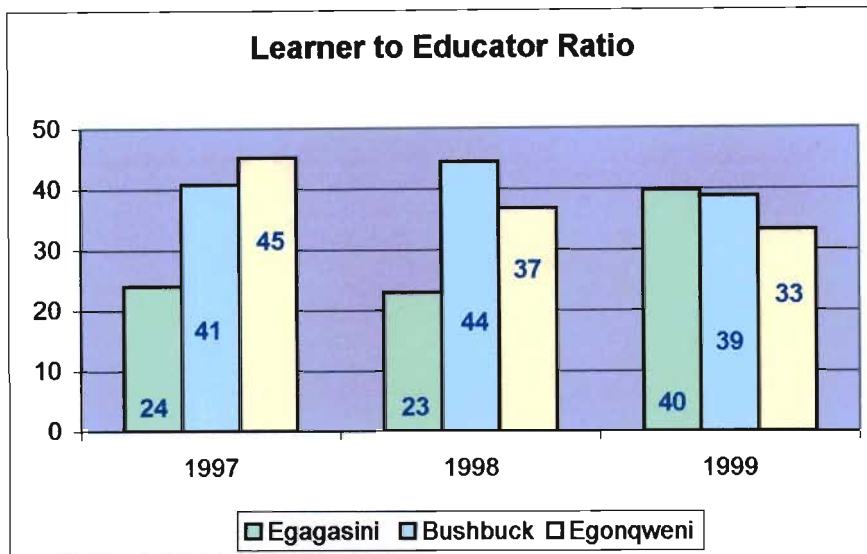


Figure 6.7: Bushbuck's learner to educator ratio compared with that of others

Bushbuck had the highest average learner to educator ratio of 41. However, this ratio was manageable compared to the original National Department of Education's average ratio of 40.

This school's selection was based on the same criteria as the other two case study schools. Its academic performance was better than Egonqweni (figure 6.8). However, its performance was not improving from year to year. In spite of its poor performance, it was not chosen by the department of education as one of the Matric Intervention Programme (MIP) schools because it did not meet some of the criteria the department required, that is, the existence of potentially good leadership within the school. Grade 12 academic results deteriorated perennially (figure 7.8).

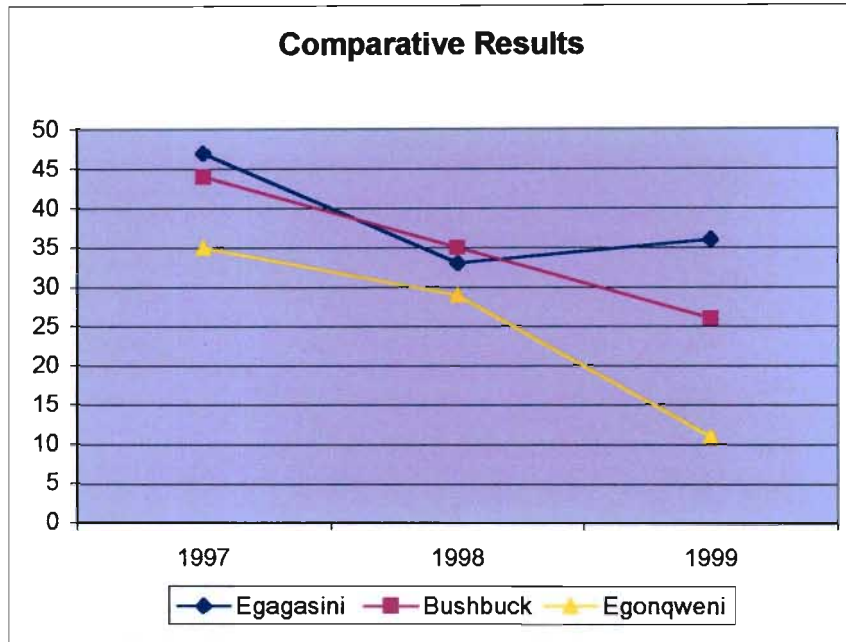


Figure 6.8: Matric performance in three years compared with that of others

#### 6.4. Entrance to the school

The educators of this case study school also had a high regard for me as a school psychologist who always came to administer the Academic Aptitude Test (AAT) and motivated grade 12 learners every year. I was again warmly accepted in this school as a school psychologist who always supported the school in its efforts to improve its academic performance. When I arrived at the school I explained that my role was to support them, work with them to identify the problems and work out solutions that would lead to the improvement of the school.

#### 6.5. Focus groups

As in the other two case study schools, a series of focus groups with the four groups of stakeholders, was organised for data collection.

Table: 6.1: Bushbuck focus groups

<b>GENDER</b>	<b>EDUCATORS' FOCUS GROUP</b>	<b>SMT FOCUS GROUP</b>	<b>SGB FOCUS GROUP</b>	<b>RCL FOCUS GROUP</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>MALES</b>	7	4	3	15	<b>29</b>
<b>FEMALES</b>	4	2	3	20	<b>29</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>58</b>

All constituents, except the RCL, were taken as a group without selection. The RCL members in grade 12 only were selected because the DoEC project was on grade 12 improvement. I did not have many sessions with focus groups in this case study school because the data which emerged appeared to be similar to the other two case study schools. Because I was not getting anything new, I decided to spend fewer sessions with all focus groups, except where I wanted to follow an issue which needed further clarification.

## 6.6. Data collection

The procedure in data collection was the same as explained in section 3.2.

Table 6.2: Bushbuck focus group dates and sessions

DATE	FOCUS GROUPS	SESSIONS
24/05/2000	Educators	Session 1
18/01/2001	School Governing Body	Session 1
08/02/2001	Educators	Session 2
11/02/2001	School Governing Body, community leaders and parents	Session 2
02/03/2001	Representative Council of Learners	Session 1
03/03/2001	School Management Team	Session 1
15/05/2001	Representative Council of Learners	Session 2
16/05/2001	School Management Team	Session 2

The focus group sessions were conducted over the course of a whole year (from May 2000 to May 2001) because I followed my work schedule which was not designed for a full-time research study. Secondly, I handled all three schools concurrently.

## 6.7. Process analysis

### 6.7.1. Educators Focus group

Some of the educators were quite assertive and open-minded, both males and females. Others were reserved, irrespective of gender during focus group discussion. The active

members showed that they were free and independent thinkers who did not fear me as an outsider and official of the department. They probably accepted me without any fear because I had always come to support learners, and not to judge and expose educators. Educators were fully involved in the discussion. It was also noteworthy that educators were easily influenced by awareness of the facts and the problems.

### **6.7.2. School Management Team**

The principal was rather a soft-spoken and reserved person whose school was not selected for the Matric Intervention Programme because he was perceived by the officials to be a poor leader. The principal of the school did not dominate the group; instead he tried to be the last to make an input. This attitude emanated from his personality, rather than conscious determination to encourage participation. He appeared to be relaxed and free. But what happened at his school appeared to indicate that he was rather permissive especially with regard to control of educators. Educators appeared to take initiatives in addressing problems at this school, and the passivity of the principal appeared to advantage educators to work as a team without depending on the principal for direction. Members of the SMT were active and very eager to solve their problems and to change and improve the school. When I returned to the school to continue the focus group discussion I was pleased to find that they had tried to implement what had been discussed in the previous sessions.

The SMT as a whole tried to implement whatever seemed to be implementable, but whatever needed the principal's action, such as educators and learners' absenteeism was not implemented. The late arrival of educators, about which the principal did nothing, seemed to have been caused by fear to act. The SMT maintained that *educators want us to discipline them so that they can cause problems for us*. The stated reason for absenteeism was illness, and the principal would not act against them because they produced medical certificates. He therefore appeared to be helpless in that problematic situation.

### **6.7.3. School Governing Body Focus group**

I managed two meetings with this group because of time factor, and the fact that there was nothing new coming out of the group. Female members, quite different from other schools, were very assertive and open-minded during the discussions. Despite the fact that the community was corrupt and full of drug traffickers, members of this focus group spoke fearlessly. They openly discussed and exposed the corruption of their community and children. In this regard, female members spoke very strongly and showed that they were fed up with the corruption. All members of the group showed a readiness and determination to change and improve their school.

The SGB decided to call a special meeting of all community leaders such as councillors, police, NGOs and parents to address the critical problem of substance abuse that was negatively affecting learners' academic performance. The meeting was called and the community responded very well. Parents and community leaders showed anger against crime in the community, but at the same time they were helpless to do anything about it. However, they promised to support and cooperate with the school.

### **6.7.4. Representative Council of Learners' focus group**

The RCL members, especially the girls, were initially inhibited at the beginning of the discussion. There was no spontaneity from the majority of girls. I had to persuade them to participate. This delayed the process, but they gradually joined boys as active participants in the discussion. This focus group appeared to shift their blame very strongly to educators. They were not open about their own problems, they denied them.

## 6.8. Content analysis

Content analysis produced categories that were generated by identifying and combining common topics among all the focus groups. Each category includes the views of all focus groups at this school.

### 6.8.1. Parents' non-cooperation

There was general agreement among the groups that parents were non-cooperative. Educators described them as unwilling to attend meetings when they were invited to the school. According to one of the focus group members, *when parents were supposed to attend a meeting they sent their children to stand in for them. Both parents and elected members were not committed and hence did not attend meetings.* The SGB described parents as *apparently lazy to come to school.* Parents were said not to cooperate even when community leaders and councillors invited them for meetings.

#### 6.8.1.1. Unsupportive parents

Parents were reportedly not supportive of their children at home. They were said to deprive them of time and opportunity to do their homework. Educators emphasized that *learners are unable to do homework in their homes because of household chores. Parents do not afford them time to do so.* Parents fully involved their children in household chores immediately on their arrival home right up to bedtime. At this time learners are too tired to do their homework.

The parents were also not supportive of the school. One focus group said that *parents also do not respond to invitations to attend meetings pertaining to the education of their children. Where parents are supposed to attend meetings, they send their children instead to stand in for them. When they are invited to school to view their children's work they do not respond.*

Again I had to validate this attack on parents by the SGB focus groups. The non-support of the school and learners was exacerbated by the fact that some of the learners were orphans and others lived with grandmothers or fathers who did not know the importance of active involvement in the children's progress at school. Illiterate parents were unable to help their children with schoolwork, and some parents did not live with their children they were employed in distant places.

The RCL described parents as inconsistent, because they promised to support educators and the school, but they did not fulfil these promises in their homes.

#### **6.8.2. Socio-economic factor**

The RCL raised the question of youth unemployment as a major factor in and hindrance to improving the school. The unemployment of youth was regarded as *most discouraging to learners*. Learners depressingly stated that because of unemployment after grade 12, *you know that there is no future for you; you will not find employment after passing your grade*. This seemed to suggest that learners did not see the value of education.

The high rate of unemployment in this community caused some of the parents to be reportedly involved in the sale of drugs and substances and in conniving at prostitution practised by their daughters. The educators' focus group was of the opinion that the majority of parents were too destitute to support the school and children. Children therefore went to school hungry and could not concentrate on their lessons.

Unemployment of parents made it difficult for them to help their children further their studies at tertiary level. As a result learners did not see any benefit in studying hard to pass grade 12.

### 6.8.3. Racial vestiges

Educators tended to compare themselves with their White counterparts when they referred to their performance. Educators had the perception that African parents did not support African educators in their schools. But the same parents when they took their children to white schools changed their attitudes to support and comply with everything White educators demanded from them. *It is also strange that the same parents would allow their children from White controlled schools time to do their homework. This differential treatment happens to us because we are Africans.* The conclusion drawn on the basis of the statement reflects racial residues of the past, and that educators tended to allow this past to dictate their performance.

### 6.8.4. Learners' qualities

According to the RCL focus group many learners were passive and feared to ask questions when they did not understand lessons. They consequently switched off and became disruptive due to frustration. When I queried the problems of learners' fear to ask questions in class from learners themselves I discovered that learners blamed the educators teaching approach, which reinforced this behaviour. For instance it was stated that educators did not entertain questions because they were in a rush to finish the syllabus. Also, it was stated by learners that some educators went to class not fully prepared, thus they feared to accommodate questions in their teaching.

Parents offered a different perspective. They argued that it was *not true that learners are always bogged down by household chores. There are reports that when our children arrive home, they change their uniform for prostituting clothes and go out. We need to search and frisk. Some of them are criminals who are needed by police. One of the learners is a notorious murderer in the community. This boy killed one of the boys here at school. Some of the boys are gang leaders and educators fear these gangsters.* Learners would be seen walking in the streets during school hours, whereas they were supposed to be at school.

It thus becomes evident that the picture described by learners, and that described by parents are very different. The educators and SGB focus groups give a further, differing view of learners.

Educators and SGB focus groups raised the question of learners' misconduct as a serious factor at the school. Learners were described by the SGB as *unruly and disrespectful towards their educators. They were also rude and aggressive*. Learners were further described as refusing to take instructions from their educators. Educators felt that they dealt with learners who were not interested in their schoolwork. Learner attitudes to educators were reported to be negative, and consequently they did not comply with educators' instructions. They were said not to have time for their schoolwork.

When I validated the factor of discipline with other educators, I found that it was exacerbated by the high rate of drinking liquor, and substance and drug abuse, because *when they were under the influence of these substances, they become very rude and aggressive to educators. Some boys would even call married female educators 'abafazi'*. The application of the word 'abafazi' by learners or children to adults is very disrespectful and an insult which expresses the culture that prevailed at the school. The following statement by one of the educators showed that both educators and parents feared learners:

*Learners in this school are so undisciplined that educators fear them. They refuse punishment of any kind, such as fetching parents to school for offences committed by them. Parents themselves are unable to discipline them due to fear.*

In some instances boys were reported to have fought over girls. Girls were so sexually active that they often fell pregnant in school. *Pregnant girls usually take maternity leave of about two years and then return to school ... as wives*. The level of corruption in the school environment, overage learners, substance abuse and grade repetitions seemed to create a vicious cycle of misconduct.

From the above, it is clear that learner, parent and educator perspectives on learner qualities are very different, obviously influencing learner behaviour and the way in which they are treated.

#### 6.8.4.1. Misconduct

All groups, except learners, were concerned with the learners' behaviour. Cohabitation and pregnancies levels were very high at this school. It appeared as if drugs played the most destructive role, resulting in boys' fighting, abuse of girls and learners' drunkenness. The following were the remarks of the focus group members: *Learners have many problems at this school. There are pregnant girls who hide their condition. Most of the girls stay with boyfriends, co-habiting or staying with in-laws. Drug abuse is escalating and the rate of alcohol consumption is also on the increase. Drug abuse and learners overage apparently cause learners to be "unruly and disrespectful towards their educators.*

Parents themselves reported at the community meeting organised by the SGB to deal with drugs, that their children *arrive home and change their uniform for clothes for prostituting and go out.* Some of the learners were reported to be criminals who were needed by the police. *One of the learners is a notorious murderer in the community. This boy killed one of the boys here at school. Some of the boys are gang leaders and educators fear these gangsters.* Parents and SGB members supported educators when they also stated that learners were rude, unruly, aggressive and disrespectful to educators.

#### 6.8.4.2. Overage learners

Learners' being over age was identified by the SGB as one of the contributory factors to undisciplined behaviour. Educators pointed out that *some learners are too old for their grades. This consequently creates disciplinary problems because they refuse to be punished. They do not respect young educators and are often rude and aggressive.* Both

the educators' and the SGB focus groups maintained that overage was a problem because *many of our learners come to do grade 8 when they are 19 years of age. We cannot reject these learners because they come directly from our primary feeder schools.*

Also, some learners who used drugs and substances failed their grades for several years which resulted in their becoming overage while in lower grades. Overage learners were often difficult to control because they were frustrated and hence aggressive.

#### **6.8.5. Unprofessionality**

The educators' focus groups acknowledged the fact that educators were not committed. There were some behavioural patterns that characterised educators. It was common to hear educators say, *we forgot to do a task* because of the heavy workload. Educators felt in one of the focus groups that *sometimes educators behave like kids*. The SGB observed that educators were *seen during school hours loitering aimlessly in town*.

The RCL raised their concerns regarding educators' conduct in class. In spite of the fact that educators were aware that their subjects were repeatedly failed year after year, they did not seem to do anything to improve their performance. Learners frequently requested educators to repeat and revise lessons, but the educators said they did not have time for that because they worked under an external pressure where finishing the syllabus took precedence over any other aspect of the work.

The educators' use of textbooks and *jumping from one page to another* confused learners. According to the RCL educators skipped some chapters in their teaching on the grounds that learners could understand them on their own, which seemed to suggest that they did not plan their work properly. Educators, according to the RCL focus group, also attempted to do everything in one period. They would give learners tests to write and mark them with learners; thereafter, mark assignments, deliver a day's lesson and give assignments. This confused and discouraged learners. In the afternoons after school learners were expected to attend extra classes, which they resented as tiresome.

Also, educators tended to ignore the weak and slow learners. This was discouraging to learners who often thought, *after all nobody will pay attention to me*. Whenever learners performed poorly, educators reminded them that they did so because they had not passed the previous grades, but they were conditionally transferred.

#### 6.8.5.1. Conflict

The SMT cited the following as the underlying causes of conflict at the school:

- Educators fought over promotional positions within the school. Whoever obtained the position would not enjoy the support of those who lost. *Educators who are promoted from within fear to make decisions because they are not respected*. If the Department promoted an outside educator, the insiders did not support the newcomer. This often forced the school to appoint unsuitable educators for Management positions, and those in management feared to make decisions because they were insecure.
- The question of corporal punishment caused a conflict between the school, parents, community and the Department of Education. The school continued to use corporal punishment, though it was illegal according to the Department.
- The Department threatened to take educators who used it to court. Educators maintained that *corporal punishment depends on the culture and values of peoples*. Educators differed on corporal punishment as some were Africans and others were not. One of the Indian educators said, *I do not believe in it, I would feel reluctant to punish somebody's child because I do not punish my own children*. Evidently educators themselves were divided on the question of corporal punishment. It became evident that the school did not have any policy on discipline. Many educators believed in corporal punishment, and after it was outlawed without what they felt was any consultation with them, felt disempowered.

Educators noted that it was the department which set what educators perceived as low standards. It also imposed the rules to control and discipline learners. In order to improve the matric performance the department dictated the writing of common tests by all school that obtained less than a 50% pass in matric academic performance. The department's values were therefore seen to be different from the educators' and school community's values.

#### **6.8.6. Lack of time**

Educators claimed to have a heavy teaching load, which made it hard for them to cope. I had assisted educators to assess grade 12 learners' academic potential, using the Academic Aptitude Test, and showed them how to do individual counselling based on the test scores. When I visited this school for a follow-up, educators stated, *we forgot to do it; there were too many other demands on us due to the heavy workload at school.... Because learners were committed to morning and afternoon classes there was no time to counsel them.* Educators cited lack of time and the speed of transformation as factors which militated against their attempts to improve the school's academic performance.

#### **6.8.7. Curricular difficulties**

The curriculum was blamed for the following reasons: It was seen to be limited, rigid and not serving the needs of learners. This begged the question about the value of the grade 12 certificate. The restrictive curriculum *does not cater for the diverse needs of learners. The Department appears to be rigid and does not accommodate a broad curriculum to suite the needs of learners.* This consequently limited the occupational choice of learners. The majority were, as a result, unemployed and were not proud of their matric pass and certificate. Learners argued that matric did not fit them for any future employment; they were not accepted in tertiary institutions. The poor value of the grade 12 certificate demotivated learners. The poor value of learners' education appeared to be compounded by unemployment, which in turn resulted in learners' negative interests and attitude.

### 6.8.8. Corporal punishment

All the school constituents seemed to believe strongly in the use of corporal punishment as a means to correct deviant behaviour in learners. When the Department of Education outlawed it, educators were seemingly left disempowered. The result of prohibiting corporal punishment was seen to be setting learners and educators against each other, because the Department encouraged learners to sue their educators for using corporal punishment, whereas *learners on their own demand corporal punishment*.

However, the SMT focus group revealed that they defied the department's orders and used corporal punishment because they felt it depended on the culture and values of their peoples. They stated, *we use it here because some methods do not work on our learners*. Evidently educators defied the department because they apparently did not know what else to do to discipline learners.

### 6.8.9. The department's prescriptive approach

The educators' focus group felt that the Department of Education's management approach was top-down and prescriptive. The following were cited as examples of the Department's prescriptive approach:

- The Department controlled promotions and hence *set low standards of promotion to the next grade*. The thirty five percent pass mark was considered to have been *imposed on the schools by the Department*.
- Corporal punishment was also unilaterally outlawed by the Department without consulting educators and parents and therefore the school *is hamstrung by the Departmental rules and regulations not to discipline learners in the way we want to*.
- *Educators worked under pressure from the Department of Education officials to finish the syllabus early in the year in order to do revision in August*. Consequently the whole teaching and learning was examination driven. *The*

*school only concentrates on passing the examination, which does not serve any good purpose.*

- The bureaucratic procedures, which were followed in the appointment of educators, were frustrating to educators. Educators stated that *one of the depressing factors for educators is the new system of teaching as a temporary educator employed under a contract, which is renewed on a monthly basis. As a result educators are always depressed with no energy to teach because they do not know their future.*

Educators could not therefore plan their work until they knew whether their contracts had been renewed.

#### **6.8.10. Principal's leadership**

The principal's role at the school was hardly mentioned by any group. The principal himself did not say much during the discussion, except to describe the educators' absenteeism without explaining the role he played to reduce the incidents of absenteeism. It seemed therefore that he was unable to act against educators to correct their behaviour, not to give direction to educators to enable them to discipline learners.

##### 6.8.10.1. The laissez-faire leadership

The role the principal played in the midst of these difficulties did not surface clearly during the process of the interviews. There were no focus groups that referred to the principal's intervention attempts, and he himself never mentioned anything he did to address the situation. One SMT focus group member said:

*The rate of absenteeism by both educators and learners is very high. It is not unusual to have more than two educators who are absent each day of the school. Reasons given are always sound such as illness. They produce medical certificates to justify their absenteeism. The principal cannot take any action because of the medical certificates. Because they are not disciplined for absenteeism they do it frequently. Most of them are*

*genuinely ill, and others take advantage without sound reasons. They simply absent themselves with lame excuses.*

The fact that some educators absented themselves on insubstantial grounds probably suggested that no constructive discipline was instituted to control the deviant behaviour. Also related to this is the report that *educators and learners dodge classes, and leave school before time*, and there was no evidence of what the principal did about this anomaly.

The SMT blamed the whole environment around the school as one that prevented them from changing the school because *drugs form an essential business in this place*. Well-known people in the community, whom they could not stop because of fear, operated the drug trade. The community leadership, too, did not have the capacity to address the social ills of the environment. However, the SMT did not utilise the resources and the structures they had to address the problem. Seemingly there was a communication breakdown between the school and the parents. They had structures such as ward councillors, Tribal authority, Youth Organisation and Safety and Security Committee that included all stakeholders in the area. These structures were only consulted after I had conducted the focus group interviews with the SGB members.

#### **6.8.11. Freedom**

The educators' focus group was of the opinion that the Department of Education suppressed their independent thinking and professional freedom. They felt that *the school must be given the freedom to control its academic standard. Schools must be given freedom to set their own standards, instead of the imposed 35% pass mark. Schools need to be given the freedom to compile their own rules to enforce discipline. The Department interferes and restricts schools from using their own mode of punishment.*

The suppression of the educators' professional freedom was consistent with the top-down approach in management. However, the demand for professional freedom seemed to be

inconsistent with the reports of their unprofessional behaviour and response in addressing the problems. The fact that educators tended not to do anything to address problems they faced seems to contradict their ostensible demand for professional freedom.

#### **6.8.12. Environment**

All groups except RCL attributed prevailing problems to the environment. Parents and SGB emphasised that *the whole community is infested with drugs. Parents send their children to go and steal, or if their children come home with stolen goods their parents accept them. The place is known to be corrupt. Some learners come to school already drugged and vandalise the school property. Some learners carry guns.*

These types of environment and community shaped the types of families, which lived there. Drugs were an essential business, which influenced girls to practise prostitution. Home and school consequently became un conducive to teaching and learning.

#### **6.8.13. Unemployment**

Educators, SMT and RCL attributed prevailing conditions described above (learners misconduct and environment) to high rate of unemployment. This is supported by the fact that the GPS (figure 6.1) showed that this community had the second highest average income per household of R191 compared to R441 for the other case study communities. Educators and SMT groups raised the state of youth unemployment as a factor in retarding progress to change in education. Some members of the RCL focus groups said the following:

*You know that there is no future for you; you will not find employment after passing your grade. As a result learners have no hope because their parents are poor, there is nothing that inspires them to work hard.*

The unemployment could have influenced parents to resort to drugs traffic as a means of livelihood. Their children were encouraged to support their parents in this business.

#### **6.8.14 Solutions**

It was suggested by educators that the department needed to give the school freedom to set its own academic standards, to decide on its method of discipline and punishment, and to involve community leaders. The school wanted to raise the sub-minimum pass from 35 percent to 40-45 percent. But would the officials of the department allow this? The superintendents of education would reject this freedom to control the affairs of the school because schools were obliged to follow the rules and regulations of the Department of Education.

The SGB and parents suggested the involvement of the community and all stakeholders in running the affairs of the school. The following were proposed:

- formulation of a Parents Teachers and Learners Association (PTLA) to deal with problems;
- parents to form a community policing forum to look after the school;
- parents to punish their children by withdrawing them from school for misbehaviour;
- the PTLA to work with a ward committee once formed;
- the existing Sakhisizwe Youth Organization to be involved together with the youth committee to support the school;

Educators would then be in a position to report problems to the structures indicated above.

### 6.9. Within case study analysis

I used Table 6.3 to determine the number of factors which appeared to emerge from more groups and those which appeared in less groups. I used this as an index of the importance of that particular factor to the groups.

Table 6.3: Bushbuck's within case analysis

<b>CATEGORIES</b>	<b>EDUCATORS</b>	<b>SMT VIEWS</b>	<b>SGB VIEWS</b>	<b>RCL VIEWS</b>
<b>Parents' non-cooperation</b>	They are not attending meetings at school, not coming to view their children's books and progress. Allow their pregnant girls to go to school	They are not involved in their children's education, not encouraging their children to do school work, but engage them in household chores	They do not respond to invitations to school for meetings, and refuse to come and see their children's work	They do not buy textbooks for their children
<b>un-supportive parents</b>		Parents don't support their children, they are aloof from school		
<b>Socio-economic factors</b>	Parents are poor	Learners steal and burgle for survival		Learners go to school hungry, live in congested houses and parents don't have money to buy textbooks and for FET
<b>Racial vestiges</b>	African parents not supporting African educators, but cooperate with White			

	educators in White run schools			
<b>Learners qualities</b>	Some learners are rejects from other schools, they hate some subjects, only study for exams	Learners are not disciplined, have given up hope and are passive	They do not understand explanation of lessons and are not dedicated to their work	They have difficulties in understanding lessons, but do not know why and don't care
<b>Learners' misconduct</b>	Learners shout at educators while teaching	Drugs are sold by them at school and they are always drunk	Learners rude, stubborn, aggressive and drunk	Once in grade 12 learners don't respect educators
<b>Overage</b>	Overage learners cause problems. Their ages range from between 17 – 25 years of age, they are not disciplined			Overage learners misbehaviour, girls fall pregnant, take maternity leave and return later, this worsens overage problem
<b>Unprofession-ality</b>	Educators forge reports for learners, and absent themselves on a daily basis	HODs themselves bunk classes. No class records are kept		Excessive homework given, but not checked. Educators refuse to repeat lessons and they read a textbook when teaching

<b>Conflict</b>		Fight for positions and promotional posts. Educators promoted from within fear to make decisions for they are not respected.		
<b>Lack of time</b>		Extra time needed to cope with work		Syllabus not finished because educators dodge classes
<b>Curricular issues</b>		Limited curriculum, learners choose subjects for which they have no aptitude	Physical science and maths problem areas	
<b>Corporal punishment</b>	Educators don't use corporal punishment hence lack of order. Other types of punishment ineffective, hence learners like them	Learners misbehave because they know they must not be punished, and hence they misbehave		
<b>Department's prescription</b>	Dept imposed policy of conditional transfer and controls it through SEM, forces concentration on grade 12 at expense of others	Dept puts emphasis on grade 12, resulting in the neglect of other grades. It imposes and instructs. It has imposed common tests programme	No consultation instruction comes from above. Lower grades neglected. Educators are caused to concentrate on grade 12 only	
<b>Principal's leadership</b>	Weak and seen as failure, no	No vision, acts unilaterally,	SGB not consulted,	

<b>leadership</b>	delegation, no vision and direction, everything centres around him	makes decisions alone, does not act against educators' absenteeism, lenient and soft, no minutes are taken at meetings	decisions taken without them, principal works alone and meetings are not held	
<b>Laissez faire leadership</b>	Promotions chaotic and rules not followed, but done according to participation in extra-mural activities. It is Yizo-Yizo and lower grades are neglected	Forged reports from other schools produced, educators SWOP question papers, more marks given for little response and absenteeism not handled	Lower grades not taught properly, learners disturb SGB meetings, attend by force. School dumping grounds for rejects from other schools	
<b>Freedom</b>	There is no professional freedom to handle syllabus and teach in the way educators want.	The school has no freedom to control its academic standards, but the Dept of education imposes them. They cannot decide on what disciplinary measures to use.		

<b>Environment</b>	It this system which fails them, if placed in a different school, they change.	Lazy educators can be changed by atmosphere and circumstances such as strong and close supervision over them		
<b>Unemployment</b>		Grade 12 learners after completion don't find employment, hence learners always depressed		
<b>Solutions</b>	Vision and strategic plan for the school to be developed, participatory approach in decision making to be used	Vision needed to change, communicate it, relations must be improved, principal must know work procedures		

### 6.10. Emergent factors

Out of 18 categories, three emerged from all groups. These were departments approach, unprofessionalism and principal's leadership. Learners misconduct as subcategory and environment.

Parents' non-cooperation and unemployment (5) emerged in three groups. Three of these categories, that is, non-supportive parents, corporal punishment and solution emerged in one groups. These categories were lack of time, average learner, curricular difficulties racial vestiges and freedom. In the opinion of the groups at these school they were important factors in the affecting the processes of the change.

**CHAPTER 7****Emergent patterns**

I have followed the theory of McMillan and Schumacher (1993) in forming the patterns. Patterns are products of the process which starts by developing the topics that are further developed into relatively discrete categories. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993:495)“the ultimate goal of qualitative research is to make general statements among categories by discovering patterns in the data.” I started by listing all categories for easy study, as illustrated in the table below and analysis in order to establish relationships among them. I examined and compared the categories in as many ways as possible in order to identify their relationships. I also tried to understand the complex links between various aspects of people’s situations, their mental processes, beliefs and behaviour.

Table 7.1: Cross case analysis

<b>CATEGORIES</b>	<b>EGONQWENI</b>	<b>EGAGASINI</b>	<b>BUSHBUCK</b>
<b>Unprofessionality</b>	Educator absenteeism, drinking with learners, unprepared lessons, impatient and uncaring	Having continual conflicts and division, insubordinate to acting HODs, dodge classes, unprepared lessons, not completing syllabus, neglects of lower grades, cook marks during examinations, absenteeism, read from textbooks when teaching, don't coordinate homework and don't check learners work	Loiter aimlessly in town while being absent from school under the guise of illness, unprepared lessons, read from textbooks when they teach, dodge classes, come late to school, resent SMT and in conflict with each other
<b>Learner quality</b>	Learners have naturally low potential in grade 12, they admit " We are lazy and not interested in education"	Learners study for exams only, and in grade 12, they are a poor quality with forged reports from other schools, they are promoted on basis of excellence in extramural activities	Learners are not interested in education, some are involved in criminal activities, and some girls are prostitutes and cohabit with boys while at school When pregnant they take maternity leaves and return to school after months of absence
<b>Non-cooperation of stakeholders</b>	Parents and SGB members do not always attend meetings, and hence do not comply with some of school requests such as buying of	Parents don't attend parents meetings, don't give their children time to do homework, afraid to discipline learners. Educators don't cooperate with SGB, absent themselves from school.	They do not attend parents' meetings. Some parents encourage their children to sell drugs, prostitute and steal.

	books. They are not prepared stop those who sell drugs. Educators and learners too do not cooperate with the school. Learners don't buy books with money given by parents and also don't do homework	Both educators and learners come late to school and don't do their homework	Learners and educators absent themselves from school and also come late to school
<b>Socio-economic factors</b>	Parents have no money, hence sell drugs, cannot buy uniform for their children	Parents poor because they unemployed, some learners have no parents and have no money	Parents unemployed and sell drugs, and learners go to school hungry
<b>Principal's leadership</b>	Principal's approach top-down, drew code of conduct for learners alone. He does not act to address problems	Instructional approach works alone and does not involve his staff. Does not act to address issues, absenteeism and late coming by educators and learners, no consultation of SGB, talks alone at meetings	Principal not playing any role in addressing problems. He is rather part of the staff, does not act to stop absenteeism and late coming by educators and learners
<b>Corporal punishment</b>	Parents, educators, SMT and RCL agreed that corporal punishment must be used. Learners demand it in preference to other types of punishment		Learners refused other types of punishment; corporal punishment is still used, though Dept has outlawed it. Educators argue that it is a cultural thing
<b>Non-supportive parents</b>	They do not assist learners with school work, and not assisting school with the discipline of their	They do not support learners and the school, they are just aloof	They do not support school and their children, instead they give their children

	children, monitoring of learners work, instead they engage them in household chores		household chores which distract them from their school work, hence learners have no time for homework.
<b>Freedom</b>	There is no professional freedom to handle syllabus and teach in the way educators want.		The school has not freedom to control its academic standards, but the Dept of education imposes them. They cannot decide on what discipline to use.
<b>Learners misconduct</b>	Learners are naughty, they use drugs, substances, they are truant, and do not respect adults. Boys harass girls	They shout at educators while they are teaching, use drugs, drink liquor, are rude, stubborn aggressive, get drunk and fight against educators	Girls cohabit with boys and girls fall pregnant, they use drugs and substances, often drunk, some learners carry guns at school, fall in love with educators. Some are criminals and murderers sought by the police

<b>Environment</b>	School situated in place where learners often sell drugs, Adults too sell drugs. Parents conform to the conditions of this place. The place is not safe for girls who are exposed to the hooligans	‘It is the environment that make us fail.’ Learners’ misbehaviour due to prevailing culture.	Home and school environment not conducive to learning. Family conditions very poor. Drugs form an essential business in this place
<b>Conflict</b>	Ideological conflict exists, a clash between democracy and human rights and the culture of the people over the use of corporal punishment	Conflict of interests and division, also caused by perception of human rights and responsibility. Some educators and learners reject the principal while others accept him	Educators jockey for promotion. Those who lose refuse compliance, promotion from outside results in internal excess of educators and loss of jobs
<b>Overage</b>	Overage learners cause problems. Their ages range from between 17 – 25 years of age, they are not disciplined		Overage learners misbehaviour, girls fall pregnant, take maternity leave and return later, this worsens overage problem
<b>Lack of time</b>	Little time due to many initiatives. Educators fail to cope with implementation and change. Learners have no time to finish their home works, and educators claim to have no time to counsel learners	Educators have no time to finish syllabus. No extra time always lagging behind, because they go to class once out of eight times	Too many other demands and heavy load at school, hence difficulty to cope
<b>Laissez-faire leadership</b>	No control of drug sales and substance abuse, hence after short break learners	Promotion of learners and exams chaotic, educators swop questions, one answer to one question given too much marks, for	

	late, play in the ground during teaching time. Educators and learners drink together. Girls harassed by boys without intervention	there is no supervision of exams. Lower grades not taught and situation described as yizo yizo – chaos and confusion. Absenteeism not dealt with, and learners disturb SGB meetings and come uninvited. School is a dumping ground for unqualified educators and appointments of educators done through bribery and nepotism	
<b>Resources</b>	Unavailable material resources such as textbooks, newspapers, magazines, library books, laboratory and TVs and radios	Material resources not available, facilities such as laboratories not available.	
<b>Department's prescriptive approach</b>	The Superintendents controlled promotions, Dept forced syllabus driven teaching, DoEC imposed method of discipline, competition of schools against each other on matric results forced on them.	The DoEC controlled promotions, put emphasis on grade 12, imposed common tests to schools which obtained 40% pass rate, or less, caused schools to compete academically.	The department controlled promotions, imposed common tests and employment procedures. The DOEC put pressure on educators to finish syllabus in August.

<b>Unemployment</b>	Matric is no longer the gateway to employment, rural learners are not given bursaries	Learners are discouraged by previous grade 12 learners who passed matric and are still unemployed, could not further their studies due to lack of finance	Learners who passed grade 12 long ago are still unemployed, cannot further their studies due to financial problems. Many young people still loiter in the street and communities are unemployed
<b>Communication</b>	There is little communication between educators and parents because parents don't attend meetings and the school does not write circular to parents	Principal does not cascade information to educators from the Dept. and workshops he attends. Also communication breakdown between the District Manager, the SEM and the school, they all send contradictory messages to parents and learners regarding fees and the buying of books	
<b>Racial vestiges</b>	African parents and learners support white educators only; these are favoured and trusted even before they perform. African learners will change when they go to white controlled school.	African parents don't support African educators. They cooperate very well with white educators in multiracial schools.	African parents only respect White educators and undermine African educators
<b>Need of supervision</b>	Educators depended on SMT guide on policy, because they did not initiate this process, they could not on their own do so	Educators stated that they needed a manager to make them work, check them, would teach if instructed to do so by HODs	

<b>SGB's incapacity</b>	Members of SGB could not deal with problems such as: parents non-attendance at meetings, sale of drugs and dagga sale, dominated by the principal who runs the SGB meetings and could not deal with educator's absenteeism	They do not know their duties, don't hold meetings, avoid solving some difficult problems because they fear educators who are in conflict	It is difficult for them to deal with corrupt community members who sell drugs and substances and absenteeism of educators and late coming of learners and educators
<b>Recognition</b>		Educators' efforts reportedly not recognized, no appreciation and praise for those who work hard. SMT don't recognize hard working educators	
<b>Zulu Culture</b>	Disciplining an educator is harsh, and goes against Zulu culture of kindness to one another. Also fear of reprisal and revenge from those disciplined	Africans are kind and hate disciplining fellow colleagues because it causes hatred and mistrust	
<b>Inertia</b>	Educators did not develop homework policy, did not attempt to get parents to attend meetings and for all these matters they did not know why they did not act	Educators and HODs lived in conflict and did nothing about it and principals did not implement suggestions without any reasons stated	When educators are given work to do, they simply forget. Principal and SMT did nothing about daily absenteeism of educators and late coming of learners and educators
<b>Curricular issues</b>		Curriculum doesn't meet the learners' needs, they choose subjects in which they have no aptitude, and maths and physical science HODs not	

		respected and given co-operation by educators because were not officially appointed and paid more. They were not accepted and their authority rejected, "Who are they to instruct us?" HODs, themselves, did not work together. They were not committed because were not sure whether they would get these positions	
<b>Solutions</b>	Change strategy and department must change the system. Parents must be involved in policy development. Community and all stakeholders must be involved and educators must teach with love and compassion	Participatory approach must be used. There must be strategic plans preceded by vision. Communication and good relations must be striven for and the principal must play his role and also know all work procedures	HODs should guide and supervise educators and non-cooperative educators must be disciplined. HODs must work with unions, and educators who are ill must report first at school before going to see the doctor. A meeting of community leaders and parents must be called to address the problems of drugs and substances

### 7.1. Cross case study analysis

The total of twenty-five factors emerged from the cross case analysis. Sixteen of these emerged in all case study schools. These were Unprofessionalism, learner qualities and misconduct as a subcategory, parents' non-cooperation and non-supportive parents as a

subcategory, socio-economic factors, principal's leadership and laissez faire leadership as a subcategory, environment, conflict, lack of time, Department's prescriptive approach, unemployment, racial vestiges, SGB's incapacity and solution. Corporal punishment, freedom, overage, resources, communication, need of supervision, Zulu culture, and curriculum issues emerged from eight case study schools. Recognition needs emerged from only one case study school. It can be stated therefore, that all these factors, recognition needs, were important in all these schools, in influencing change.

The guiding question for pattern development was, how categories affect and are affected by other categories in this study. This resulted into the establishments of relationships and links which McMillan and Schumacher (1993) call patterns. The consequence was patterns which were further summarized by four main overarching patterns: legacy, new order, educational and socio-economic context and the impacts on the school constituents. The patterns reflect the educational resources handed down from the previous apartheid education, which was coloured by philosophical and political ideologies of the time which I tried to explain in more detail in chapter one.

## **7.2. Legacy**

In chapter one, I discussed the philosophy of apartheid education, its practices and how this ideology was applied, and its resultant damage on the Zulu people and Africans at large. It has become evident that the whole mental and social lives of the African educators and learners were disrupted. The method and process of teacher training was seemingly so orchestrated that it would produce educators who would serve, wittingly or unwittingly, the culture of the dominant group.

The management approach of the apartheid education department was based on bureaucratic, instructional and paternalistic philosophy, which apparently created passive educators and a dependency syndrome among the consumers. The results were essentially the product of educators who were conditioned to perpetuate apartheid education.

The present study has shown that many of the apartheid legacies such as poor quality of educational training and lack of resources in African schools still exist. It can be argued that African educators so internalised the apartheid system of education, that it is now self-perpetrating. This will be shown in the ensuing eight patterns:

### **7.2.1. The instructional top-down approach**

The previous KwaZulu government's DoEC management approach seemed to be consistent with and reminiscent of the apartheid approach. There were many instances, in all three case study schools, of prescription and top-down instruction such as the introduction of common tests in grade 12, which was not negotiated with educators. Schools were set against each other in competing for quantitatively good academic results. A carrot and stick method was used to try forcing them to improve grade 12 academic performance.

The unequal power relations between educators and SEM's from the DoEC caused tensions and confusion in learner promotions. The SEM's condonations of undeserving learners were perceived to lower the academic standards, resulting in poor matric performance. Educators were consequently frustrated by the fact that the Department did not allow them to set their own academic standards.

The deprivation of power to make decisions on testing and promotion of learners was also linked to lack of professional freedom to choose the teaching approach, the parts of the syllabus to follow and the selection of prescribed textbooks. The selection of textbooks also indicated that the principals had learned the top-down approach and used it, in most cases without consulting subject educators, when they requisitioned textbooks. When educators accused the department of prescribing textbooks for them, they were not aware that it was their principals who did not consult them. Their principals had seemingly internalised the apartheid education top-down approach, and the former KwaZulu DoEC had also apparently reinforced the top-down leadership and management approach. The principals tended to use top down frequently in the running of their

schools, and educators might not have observed this in their principals because it might have appeared normal to them. Principals did not involve educators in many aspects of school management, such as the choice of prescribed textbooks owing to poor communication and an apparent lack of understanding of more consultative, democratic approaches.

The DoEC's top-down approach seemed to produce and intensify an examination driven education system. The fact that the DoEC put high premium on grade 12 learners by reprimanding schools which obtained less than a 40% pass rate and rewarded those which did well, could have given wrong impression to educators that lower grades were not important. Therefore the grade 12 academic performance and comparison between regions and provinces apparently reinforced the examination driven education system, and this system was maintained at the expense of all lower grades learners because few resources were then channelled to these apparently insignificant grades.

The grade 12 academic results were seemingly politicised because success in these results was perceived as the success of the ruling political party in that particular region and province. Learners were consequently seen as statistics that could be used to reward those schools that did well quantitatively and punish those which fell short of a 50% pass rate. The politicisation of matric performance may have put pressure on the DoEC to use an instructional and bureaucratic management approach in order to expedite the process of change. The imposition of the examination driven education system at the same time produced learners who were poorly prepared in the neglected lower grades; who, when they reached grade 12, were not ready for this grade. The production of poorly prepared learners became an interminable vicious circle, which continues to plague the system of education.

The concentration on grade 12, examinations in the most recent years resulted in educators strictly screening grade 11 learners in order to allow only the best learners to proceed to grade 12 to improve results.

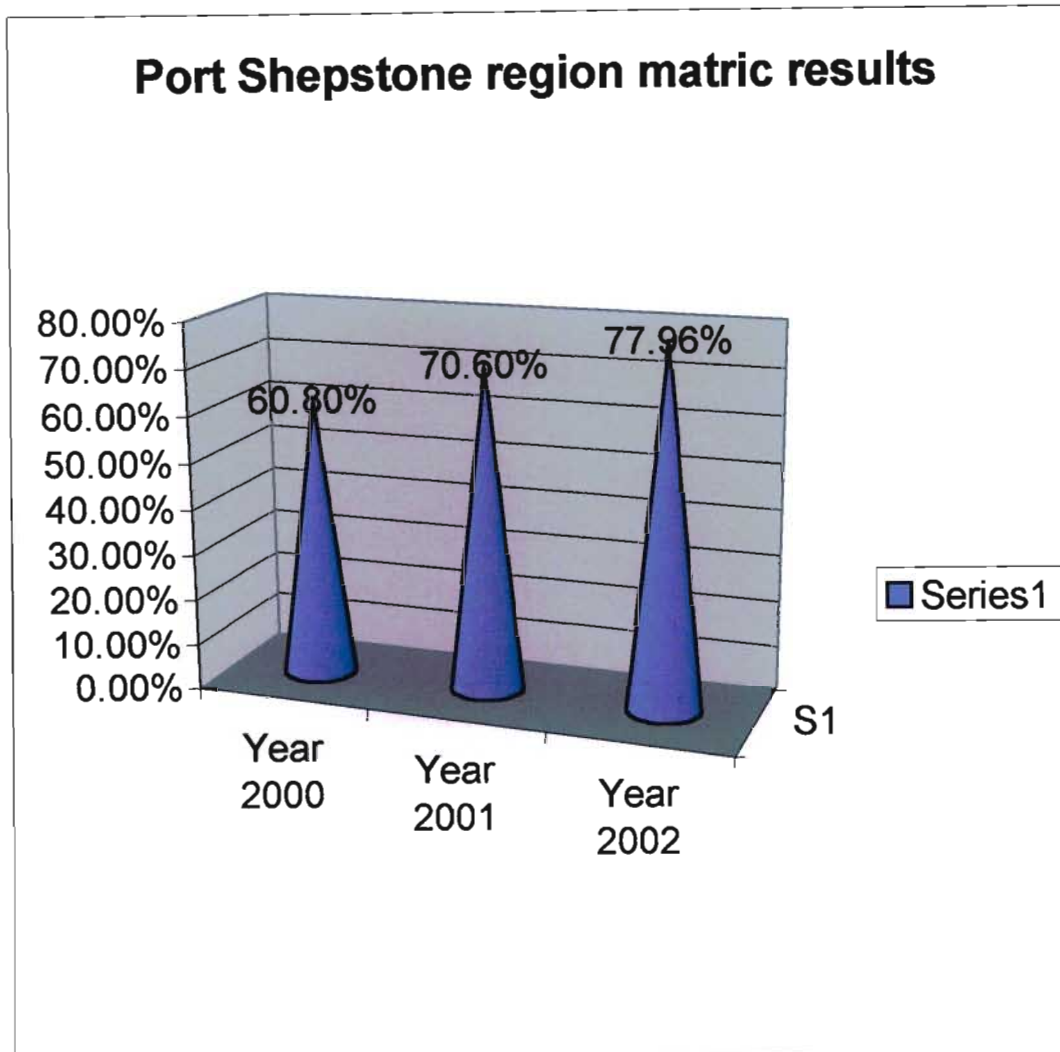


Figure 7.1: Matric performance improvement

It can be argued that the improvement of results from 2000 to 2002 (figure 7.1), was not due to change but due to gate-keeping in grade 11. It is also argued that only four out of every 10 children who start school in grade 1 make it to matric. School principals and educationalists blame Asmal, saying his demand that the matric pass rate increase by at least 5% every year forces them to hold back learners. While the matric pass percentage has been going up, the number of matric candidates has been going down.

But the education authorities said schools themselves were responsible for 18 –year olds ‘disappearing’ because they wanted their pass rates to look better. Statistics released by the national Department of Education show that over the past six years fewer than 39% of the country’s 18 – year- olds have made it to matric.

Salim Vally of the Wits Education Policy Unit (Monare, 2003) support the view above that schools, influenced by their provincial departments were deliberately holding back learners. Provinces don’t want to be seen to be under-performing. Some schools keep the slow learners from going to grade 12.

The Director-general of education said, “ our participation rate at (school) entry level is 90%, which is excellent by world standards. However, our challenge is to sustain (learners) right up to the end of their schooling. He acknowledged there was evidence that grades 10 and 11 were particular problem areas” (Monare, 2003:3).

Therefore the strict sorting out of grade 11 could be a factor that contributed to the production of better academic results over the past two years from 2000 to 2002, without necessarily improving the quality of teaching and learning. The fact that the apparent improvement in grade 12 results did not necessarily indicate a significant change in teaching and the District manager supported learning I interviewed, who agreed that the DoEC was aware of how educators screened learners very strictly, and made grade 11 a gateway to matric.

The cultural trap ( AmaZulu’s unconditional submission to authority especially chief or inkosi) of belief in hierarchical structures and the authority stemming from these structures combined with the DoEC’s top-down approach could have produced a dependency syndrome and stifled initiative, creativity and a problem solving attitude in educators. Educators were conditioned by the DoEC not to identify and solve their problems but to wait for external instruction and control. However educators appeared to have learnt to use this at their convenience. If it favoured them, they demanded this external control, if it did not, they demanded professional freedom. Educators were,

therefore, either confused, not knowing what they wanted, or they were playing tricks to hide their shortcomings.

### **7.2.2. The ethos and philosophy toward work**

I have referred to the previous apartheid training of educators in my first chapter of this study, that it was not adequate and related to work experience. The result of this type of training was that it did not equip educators for the work they were involved in, and hence they had little sense of self-efficacy.

The ethos and philosophy of education and teaching should guide the educators' teaching practice. College training should provide the atmosphere and culture to shape, mould and develop knowledge, skills and attitudes in educators that prepare them to meet challenges. One of the aims of educator training is to produce professionals who will conduct their duties in accordance with professional standards (Ngesi, 1984). Professionalism should involve educators' ability to identify problems related to their teaching. This can happen when they question their classroom performance themselves, and then find new or alternative ways of solving the problems.

Unprofessional behaviour was reflected by a number of educators' actions in all these case study schools. However, the actions were not necessarily a product of one variable, but of multiple factors. The high rate of absenteeism, late coming and loitering in town during working hours were behaviours which shocked me. It can be argued that such educator behaviour must have had a direct impact on the learners' performance in the school from grade to grade.

The cyclical nature and circular causality of educators' behaviour patterns repeated by learners was seen in learners' absenteeism, late coming and wandering aimlessly in the community during school hours.

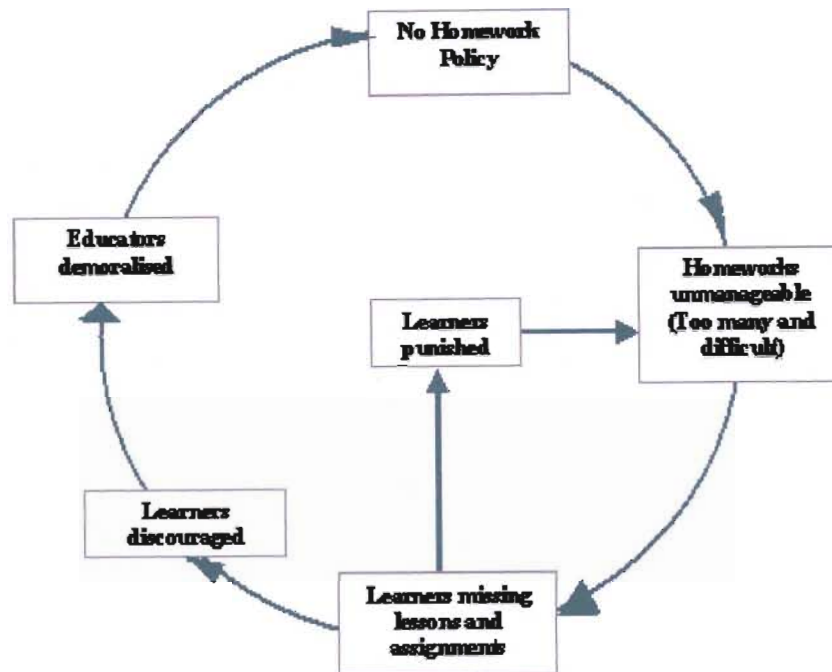


Figure 7.2: Non-productive vicious circle

It seems, then, that the educators modelled the image of a professional; in addition to which, the poor classroom practice of a number of them aroused the suspicion that they had been inadequately trained to meet the challenges of the classroom. Instead of preparing lessons and teaching them, they simply read them from the textbooks, and then set homework haphazardly. They also showed contempt for the slower learners by refusing to revise work which had not been understood. Since, however, it is highly unlikely that they were not trained how to prepare lessons and use various methods, other causes of their unprofessionalism had to be sought in this study. What is quite clear is that the behaviour and practice of many of them impacted negatively on the whole ethos, tone and organisation of the school, and led to the poor results obtained by learners.

Educators' relationships with one another were characterised by conflict and division, which often led, in some case study schools, to conditions which were not apparently conducive to a culture of teaching and learning. The conflict and division could not easily be resolved, despite my intervention through focus groups. It was deeply entrenched because it had been going on for about nine years without being addressed by the DoEC.

In one of the schools, the obduracy of political animosities seemed to centre in the principal who was on one side of the divide. The conflict dated back to the first half of the nineties, when political violence had broken out.

I tried the intervention from 1999 to 2001, in the second case study school, without any apparent success, because the principal was apparently central to the problems. The influence of the principal's kind of personality appeared to need more time and intervention, and the DoEC needed to play a central role to help the school change. However, the Department had mandated changes through policies, legislation and procedures. This forced change seemed to constrain any intervention that one could think of because it clashed with the speed with which everything had to be done. The DOEC wanted speedy results to convince politicians that they were bringing about changes. The only solution could have been with the educators' themselves, if they had the capacity to act as professionals, who should have known how to identify and solve their problems.

### **7.2.3. Lack of knowledge, strategies and skills**

Problems that faced educators at the three case study schools and failure by educators to respond and address them seemed to suggest that they did not have the theoretical or practical knowledge and technical skills to respond to their job demands. This suggested the possibility of inadequate training related to actual work experience. The training might not have equipped them for the type of problems they encountered in the workplace. Technical skills would enable them to use knowledge, methods, techniques and equipment necessary for the performance of specific tasks acquired from their experience, education and training.

The following is an example of what the SMT of one of the three case study schools openly admitted after they began to trust me, that they felt "unfit" to develop a homework policy. This was later supported and verified when I visited the school and educators reported to me that they had ultimately developed a homework policy. On reading their document I realised that it was a homework timetable and not a homework policy. This

suggested to me that they did not have the knowledge or had not seen what a homework policy looks like and how it is developed. The assertion that educators lacked knowledge and skills to develop this policy was supported by the fact that it took three months of focus group discussion before they attempted to produce what they thought was homework policy. Also, my focus group interview with grade 12 learners, who had reportedly refused to do the homework, revealed that the scope of the homework set was too wide and did not match the level of the learners. However, the subject educators were not aware of the complexity of the homework. They still insisted that learners did not do homework because they had negative attitudes towards their schoolwork. The educators' attitudes also suggested that they did not communicate with their learners to identify their problems.

In all three case study schools educators reported their inability to get parents to support learners and the school. Normally parents hold educators in high esteem. But continued non-attendance of parents at school meetings suggested that educators did not have the vision or strategies to change parents' attitudes toward the school.

What made educators read from textbooks when they were teaching? What caused them to refuse to entertain questions and revise lessons? Though there could be other variables, the factor of subject knowledge and know-how of teaching seemed to be central to the problem.

Furthermore, when the Department of Education and Culture outlawed the use of corporal punishment, educators felt disempowered because they did not know of any other methods of discipline. They helplessly admitted that they had no other means of disciplining learners and that the use of menial work as punishment was ineffective with African learners. Consequently two of the case study schools decided to defy the DOEC and continued to use corporal punishment. One of these schools complied and did not use it, and their problem of discipline was reportedly worse compared to two other case study schools. This is the school where learners reportedly stood outside the classrooms during lessons and shouted at the educators while they were teaching.

#### **7.2.4. Racial vestiges**

Eight years after the apartheid rule which based its policies on racial differences, there still appeared to be some traces and remnants of racial influence in the thinking of educators. Consequently, they tended to see and evaluate themselves in comparison with their white counterparts. Their perception of themselves seemed to indicate negative self-concepts. They rationalised their poor performance and the good performance of their white counterparts, in order to justify themselves. Educators believed that African parents respected white educators more than they respected them, on the basis of the colour of their skin. White educators' performance was seen against the background of assumed white racial superiority. Educators also believed that learners undermined them on the same ground.

The non-cooperation of parents with the school and their non-support of learners were seen as a reflection of racial preference and esteem. According to SMT focus groups, in at least two case study schools, white educators received credit before they started to work, simply by being white, whereas African educators were categorised and discredited and were not given an opportunity to demonstrate their skills.

Educators also used racial differences for their convenience. The tendency not to act against irresponsible behaviour of educators was blamed on a sympathetic Zulu culture. This contrasted with the perceived inconsiderate white culture that encouraged harsh discipline on educators. According to the educators, there was, at the same time, a sense of fear in the Zulu culture with people's supposedly common tendency to bear a grudge and inflict revenge. When it suited them, educators used the Zulu culture as a defence against their failure to act. In this regard they argued that the Zulu culture is an aggressive and revengeful culture because individuals were attacked in their communities for work related issues. It appeared as if educators were still influenced by racial residues in their defence against feelings of inadequacy, or as an excuse for not changing their professional behaviour.

The study showed that there were still traces of the apartheid education system. The racial reminiscence and the symptoms of poor self-concept emerged in all three case study schools as an indication that the damage to educators' self-esteem in the past continues to influence this present perception of themselves. They seemed to define themselves by their past history of imposed racial discrimination. They were therefore enforcing discipline through corporal punishment in two of the case study schools, probably because of insecurity, lack of confidence and inability to cope with increasingly difficult problems of transformation. It may also be that they had not learnt alternative methods of discipline. The unprofessional teaching style was a reflection of the continued educators' role as custodians of the cultural values of the dominant culture. It was then perpetuating apartheid education.

The reaction of Africans to power relations and the dominant culture through resistance and rebellion was apparently counterproductive and contributed to the causes of disciplinary problems. The resistance to change and the non-cooperation by learners and parents was ascribed to the fact that they no longer respected educators.

#### **7.2.5. Educators' loss of authority and influence**

It appeared from focus group discussions in all schools that educators believed they had lost influence on parents and learners. They were no longer respected on the basis of their authority, knowledge and expertise. Parents did not seem to cooperate with the schools, apparently and partly because they did not hold educators in high esteem. According to educators, parents' behaviour could be attributed to the racial undermining of Zulu educators referred to above. Learners refused to comply with educators' requirements and instructions, seemingly because their lack of professional expertise did not earn them respect.

The educator-learner relationship was reportedly so poor that there was no longer a clear difference between the two, in terms of educational relationship. Educators seemed to

have complacently accepted the type of relationship, in which they were either equals to learners or learners were in control, because they allowed themselves to be controlled by learners in matters of discipline. Educators had stated that they used outlawed corporal punishment because learners requested it and they complied, and openly said that by acceding to the request they were allowing themselves to be controlled by learners.

At all three case study schools learner and educator misdemeanour merged. Educators and learners drank intoxicants together, and both sold drugs and dagga within the school grounds. This probably evidenced a loss of educators' agency. The loss of a culture of teaching and learning and the chaos that prevailed within the schools seemed to support this view.

The focus group discussions did not appear to influence the thinking of educators to change, because they used the defence of blaming others as an excuse for their loss of influence as educators.

#### **7.2.6. Mismatch between job requirements and personal qualities**

There appeared to be a misfit between the demands of the job and the capacities and skills of educators well as their understanding of their roles. The inertia and passivity evident in their behaviour and the seemingly unprofessional responses to the needs of learners pointed to this misfit. Educators seemed to have attitudes and dispositions related to their work that did not help to bring about change. The past apartheid education produced African educators who not only lacked skills and strategies for their work, but who also seemed to lack the personal qualities demanded by the job. The type of work during the time of transformation has required commitment to the job and sacrifice of one's time. The type of learners schools had, required educators who had qualities of patience and empathy. Educators did not seem to have these qualities to help them cope with the nature of their work.

It seemed as if educators did not have the ability to put themselves in the world of learners in order to understand them and their problems. Consequently they appeared to be unable to communicate with learners, or to listen and attend to them in order to identify their problems, and find solutions. Lack of communication was therefore one of the major factors in hindering change in all three case study schools.

There was a mismatch between the school system, the methods it employed and the learners' needs. There was also a mismatch between the educators' training needs and the DoEC's in-service training because the latter did not identify educators' needs through consultation. Again the problem was due to the fact that the district and circuit officials seemed to communicate ineffectively. This resulted in a lack of information at the school level. Also, the officials sometimes failed to understand and interpret policies and legislation correctly. This caused contradictory messages, which the DoEC and the school sent to parents and learners, resulting in confusion, tension and frustration.

In the focus groups it was evident that there was reluctance in some educators to express their opinions and feelings. In some instances I had to persuade them to take part in the focus group discussion. This seemed to be characteristic of female respondents, particularly in a focus group in one case study school in the rural area. I concluded that this school was insulated from the political influence of the 1990's because the area was a stronghold for a political party that was perceived to be conservative and traditional, whereas the other two case study schools were in the areas dominated by the more transformational political party. One would have expected transformation to make the educators in these two schools more assertive. The limited participation of educators in focus group discussions seemed to suggest that they did not freely discuss the development of their school. I had the impression that it was difficult for a principal to get maximum participation of all educators during school development planning meetings, and that this led to some of the non-participative educators not owning any process of change and not committing themselves to it.

The way in which educators carried out their business of teaching was problematic. Very few concerted efforts were planned to coordinate their work. Consequently they could not produce an intervention programme for assisting learners.

Learners requested educators to teach them with love and compassion, but educators tended not to entertain questions that needed patience, revision and repetition of lessons because these would delay the teaching and learning process. They blamed the DoEC for demanding the fast completion of the syllabuses. These tasks were reportedly done impatiently and unempathically with an attitude to just get the work done and leave the classroom. Educators were responding inappropriately to the DoEC pressure, in a way that did not match the learners' learning styles.

Furthermore, some educators did not seem to have a sense of social boundaries in their interaction and relations with learners. Drinking intoxicants with learners was also suggestive of lack of parental care and responsibility, because an educator has a legal authority from the fact that he or she takes the parent's place in the school. Parents have entrusted educators with that part of education they are unable to handle themselves. Therefore educators have an ethical responsibility to behave as if they were the learners' parents.

SGB members and SMT members as lax and weak described some principals of the three case study schools, whereas the problems that existed at the schools demanded tough principals who were able to act decisively. One principal was further described as unfit for the turbulent school because he did not act against any of the educator absentees for fear of reprisals. Also another principal was reportedly slow to act, whereas his educators and learners were quick in acting against the school rules and norms.

It seemed evident from the above that all the principals of the three study schools had personal qualities which did not match and qualify them for the demands of the schools over which they were put in charge. They were thus not well equipped to lead their schools to change and improvement.

### **7.2.7. Lack of energy for problem – solving**

Whites (in Hersey and Blanchard, 1982) state that one of the mainsprings of action in a human being is a desire for competence. Whites describe competence as control over environmental factors. People with this motive do not wait passively for things to happen but want to manipulate their environment and make things happen. The motive reveals itself in a desire for job mastery and professional growth.

It seemed that in all three case study schools, constituents, particularly educators, lacked the energy to act when faced with problems. They were rather stuck in what seemed to be a non-motivated and non-productive cycle of blame. They passively lamented their situation and seemed to make little effort to take initiatives to identify the causes of the problems and to seek solutions.

They were complacent as they reported that parents did not cooperate with the school in attending meetings and supporting learners and educators in the teaching and learning process. Educators did not make any attempts to encourage parents to attend meetings because they reportedly thought that the SGB members should and would do it. Apparently the non-action was interplay of lack of energy to work for change, and a lack of sensitivity to what might be needed.

The inertia of educators could be attributed to a dependency syndrome, probably developed over the years of the apartheid education era. During this era innovations were prescribed from above and educators had to conform and implement. Educators also became the victims of circumstances and labels, and agreed to being defined by others. They probably waited for external agencies to make interventions and offer solutions.

It did seem, however, that educators were opportunists and used circumstances for their convenience. I once asked educators' focus groups why they did not take the initiative to develop homework policy. Their response was that they were waiting for HODs to

instruct them. The SMT focus group, in turn, admitted that the weakness that made them fail to implement change was to wait for the principal to instruct them to implement policies. There was an apparent contradiction, however, on the one hand educators agitated for what they called professional freedom, to be given power to make decisions, but on the other hand, when it suited them they defended their inertia on the grounds that they lacked supervision and instruction from authorities to help them address their problems.

### **7.2.8. The principal as key role player of the school**

This study has confirmed and supported studies, which have found that the principal is the linchpin in the leadership and management of the school (Gumede, 1989, Lashway, 1995). The school's success or failure, to a large extent, depends on the principal. In all three case study schools, the type of leadership given by the principals appeared to depend on their personalities. In two case study schools principals were described as weak, soft and either friendly with educators and learners or just passive because they did not act (e.g. section 5.6.2). The principal who appeared to succeed in bringing about some discipline among educators and learners was the one who was described as strong, firm and instructional in his leadership. The two other principals seemed unable to instil discipline in their schools.

Also, those principals who were described as weak and soft had difficulties and shortcomings with some of the managerial functions such as supervision and motivation of educators, in spite of the fact that educators appeared to be dependent on direction and instruction from them. They tended to avoid the supervision and giving of direction to educators or making decisions, although educators had repeatedly expressed their needs of these (section 5.7.9 and 10).

Personality variables as a factor that influences leadership style can be supported by a cross comparison between the principals of Egonqweni and Bushbuck. The former dominated the focus group, apparently causing some members, especially females to

withdraw from full participation in the discussion. But the principal of Bushbuck was a soft spoken and reserved person who allowed educators to talk and would be the last to express his view. This behavioural attitude enabled the group to generate more ideas freely without any fear.

### **7.3. New order**

The new educational dispensation after the apartheid era has brought about a new order to which schools must learn to adapt. The old order was what I called the legacy of apartheid education that I have explained more explicitly in chapter one. It was a system that did not adequately develop school constituents to deal with their problems. The new order came suddenly after 1994 when South Africa was liberated from apartheid rule, and introduced to a democratic rule that set in motion many processes of change which included education. The new order came before schools were ready to accommodate and adapt to the new system. Therefore this study seems to point to the fact that these schools were not yet ready for such a new order and paradigm shift. Consequently change was difficult to achieve at these schools because they were not adequately prepared for it.

The transition from the old order to the new one seemed to be the basic problem of the officials of the DoEC and all stakeholders in three case study schools. Parents were not involved in the education of their children in the past. The sudden demand for them to participate in school activities and the affairs of their children was new. Consequently they were reluctant to be involved. Also, they were unable to cope with the school's demands on their time and money, given the high unemployment rate in their communities.

The officials of the department also reportedly experienced difficulties coping with the new order. The DoEC seemed to struggle with understanding and managing the ideological and cultural differences between African and the Western values, and with understanding democracy. The department appeared to have difficulties in coping with democratic decision-making and consultation with all stakeholders, because it was time

consuming. The DoEC was anxious to improve the quality of education rapidly. This lack of involvement of educators in the decision-making processes confused and frustrated them. The department confused educators by the fact that they distracted them from giving equal attention to lower grades. Educators' professional behaviour was manipulated by setting schools and educators in competition against each other for the best results; and by carrot and stick approach of rewarding those who succeeded and punishing those who did not.

The leadership and management of African schools historically hinged on paternalism and top-down decision-making, which consequently created a dependency syndrome in educators. It is this dependency syndrome, which could be regarded as one of the factors, which caused educators to wait for an external agency to come and tell them how to solve their problems. Also the African consumers assimilated and internalised the top-down approach from the apartheid education system, and seem now to be perpetuating it.

### **7.3.1. Clashes of ideological and cultural beliefs**

The clash of ideological and cultural beliefs between the DoEC and the parents left the educators caught in the middle. The influence of ideological and cultural beliefs featured predominantly in all three case study schools. The DoEC and parents and educators reportedly had divergent values and beliefs, especially on corporal punishment. The issue of corporal punishment was one of the factors which showed how ideological differences can make it difficult to change. Therefore, as a result of the reported cultural differences of opinion on the question of corporal punishment, all school constituents seemed to be reluctant to shift their position in relation to the department's policy.

The DoEC did not accept corporal punishment, regarding it as an abuse and consequently outlawed it. But parents and learners believed it was an effective method of discipline. Learners demanded it from educators; parents encouraged educators to use it, yet the DoEC threatened legal action to protect the rights of learners. Educators were then caught in the middle of the conflict. Educators at Egonqweni and Bushbuck schools came out of

this impasse by siding with the parents and defying the DoEC. Egagasini decided to comply with the DoEC and abandoned corporal punishment. The two schools that defied the DoEC reported a degree of success in reducing disciplinary problems; whereas Egagasini reported disciplinary problems continuing at the same level.

Educators and parents perceived the prohibition of corporal punishment through legislation as the imposition of Western culture on African culture. According to them this belief is deeply entrenched in the cultural values and norms of the African peoples. Focus groups clashed rigorously over this issue at one case study school. Two case study schools risked legal action by the Department when they continued to use corporal punishment in spite of the fact that it was outlawed. However, they depended on the support of the parents in this. It was this division between the DoEC and the school communities that seemed to be one of the factors contributing to difficulty in instituting processes of change. Being mentally stuck in a groove, they both refused to shift. In the two case study schools that defied the Department and used corporal punishment, SGB members and SMT members claimed limited success in using this method of discipline. But the level of misconduct, which prevailed at these schools, did not support this claim

The school that abandoned the use of the cane in compliance with the Department had the same problems of discipline like the others. The comparisons of the three schools did not seem to support the view that corporal punishment was effective. The focus group intervention had little impact on educators' belief in corporal punishment, even though one soft voice against the dominant voices at Egonqweni managed to create awareness regarding the possibility of change.

This study confirms the complexity of understanding the process of educational change in IsiZulu medium schools. Also that for one to succeed in implementing educational change one must be patient, firm and consistent. Given the high power distance of Zulu society, where an elderly person and or a person who occupies a position of importance was accorded an unconditional respect, the principals should easily have attained initial compliance from educators, but the opposite was seen. It is natural to resist change

because it engenders suspicion at the point of implementation. I am of the opinion that successful implementation of change in the African context will require a sophisticated leadership with a cultural mix of Western and African norms and values, hence the suggestion of the need of a culturally grounded leadership research.

During data collection through focus groups there were dominant and soft voices, and the ideological conflict was sometimes between the two voices. The dominant voices were often males and the soft voices were females. Females were either soft or silent voices. The cultural norms and values in a Zulu society where the female is supposed to be subservient to the males seemed still to be exerting influence, especially on female educators and learners in the one rural case study school.

Members of the SMT were often inhibited by fear, which affected their decision-making process. They were not completely free to express themselves when what they had in mind might embarrass some members of the focus group. Educators also did not trust one another, and this inhibited them from freely expressing their ideas and feelings. They blamed Zulu culture for this behaviour. Zulu culture was described as either revengeful and given to reprisal, or too considerate and empathetic to impose strict discipline was always avoided. This view was in some instances real, and in others, a defence against facing the truth about themselves.

It appeared evident that therefore in these three case study schools there was no freedom of expression and opinion. The cliques in one of the case study schools support this thinking (section 5.7.8).

Each individual focus group and case study school perceived my entrance into their school differently. The female members group of the first case study school were inhibited during discussions because they did not trust me, perceiving me as the old apartheid education inspector who came to judge the schools' performance. This was suggestive of the fact that there are still a lot of apartheid behavioural patterns that influence educators (section 4.5.2).

Educators and SMT of the first case study school eventually developed what they thought was homework policy, though after a long time. It became evident that supervision and follow-up was necessary to get things done in the case study schools.

The agitation for professional freedom by the educators against the prescriptive approach of the Department was one of the manifestations of the clash between the old order and the new order where both sides did not want to shift their positions. Incongruously the Department prescribed top-down direction because it wanted to expedite change. A democratic and wide consultation, it feared, would delay the process of improving schools' academic performance.

### **7.3.2. Educators' perceptions of 'time'**

Educators tended to separate their own time from the school because they were reluctant to work during what they considered to be their own time.

The separation of educators' time from school time was based on convenience. When educators attributed their failure to address certain problems to lack of time, they claimed that it was their democratic right to do so. They maintained that some tasks needed working beyond seven hours, which was seen as encroachment on their own time. They firmly believed that their own time could not be used to finish off schoolwork. Educators also claimed that learners, too, did not want encroachment on their time for both academic and extracurricular work. For example, according to the educators, this resulted in the code of conduct being developed by the principal alone at one case study school, without the involvement of all school constituencies, because meetings would have to be held after school time, and there was resistance to attending such.

This pattern is a combination of two categories. The first one is that of top-down or prescriptive management approach by the DoEC. There were many initiatives which were pushed down on schools with which educators could not cope. Secondly, what also

compounded educators' difficulty in coping with their perception of time – which separated their own time and school time. Educators were prepared to work only for seven hours as prescribed in DoEC Regulation No. 8. The two categories mutually reinforced resistance to change.

### **7.3.3. Beliefs about authority**

I think the Zulu belief in authority that has been conferred on a person by superiors was a cultural trap because in all three case study schools educators had a firm belief in authority officially conferred by superiors. They respected only individuals who were officially put in positions by the Department. This meant that they gave allegiance and loyalty only to officially appointed individuals.

It is a cultural trap stemming from the traditional belief in unconditional obedience to the inkosi (chief). This belief which seems to be perpetuated in many aspects of life of African peoples. The difference in inkosi's position was that he inherits his position, whereas promotional posts are contested. This, too, seemed to cause misunderstanding and tension because some believe that they have the right to 'inherit' these promotional positions, which should not be given to 'outsiders' from other schools.

Making educators act in positions before they were advertised complicated the selection process of people for their positions and the appointment was made difficult by the DoEC in the sense that acting educators had expectations to be appointed in those positions. One would have thought that educators who claimed that they did not respect acting HODs because they were not officially appointed would change their attitudes and behaviour when these HODs were officially appointed in the positions. But this did not happen when the HODs were actually confirmed in the positions. I therefore called this behaviour of convenience which educators used to hide their intentions to sabotage the School Management Team's efforts to help the school change.

There was a variable of familiarity that was also a factor in two of the case study schools. Educators seemed to believe that it was difficult to respect HODs with whom they had once rubbed shoulders and sat in the staff-room as equals who all of a sudden become their superiors. This familiarity variable seems to contradict the cultural trap variable I have stated above and support the idea of convenience behaviour. It became evident that educators would always want to act in a way that would put them in a protected position.

#### **7.3.4. Mismatch between new educational approaches, resources and demands**

During the apartheid education era, educators did not seriously give homework and assignments to learners at IsiZulu medium schools. Consequently they did not fully understand the purpose of giving homework and how it should be organised and given to learners. Educators were also not aware that homework had to be based on policy, though the circular from the department clearly spelt out that the principal had to ensure that among other duties before the beginning of the year, a homework policy was to develop.

Learners did not cope, because they lacked resources to cope with new approaches. Educators often referred learners to television, radios, newspapers and magazines for their assignments and homework. These resources were scarce in all three case study schools. Also, even if educators referred learners to prescribed textbooks, it did not solve the problem, because the majority of learners did not possess them on account of financial difficulties.

It was hoped that parents would assist and support their children with schoolwork. It could not happen here because parents reportedly had little interest in the education of their children. But even if they had, their level of education would not have enabled them to assist their children. Some learners did not even live with their parents because the parents worked in distant places; or they did not have parents at all and lived with grandparents. School academic demands appeared to be too heavy and unsuited to the context of these learners.

The SGB's were not able to empower parents to support their children, because in the past parents had played a minimal and ceremonial role at schools. New approaches in education had placed heavier demands on parents to play a major role in the vision and development of the school. However, they did not have the leadership skills to cope with such tasks. Learners thus bore the brunt of the incapacity of educators and parents to cope with transformation.

### **7.3.5. Educators' non-communication problem**

Educators did not communicate clearly and understand learners' positions. A mismatch between educators and learners' perceptions of their problem appeared to result from difficulties in communicating and understanding the learning process. Educators, particularly at Egonqweni and Egagasini schools, seemed to be unaware of learners' difficulties because they seemed not to care to ascertain these from the learners. When I explored learners' refusal to do homework, I found out that learners did not have the opportunity to express their concerns, feelings and difficulties. They said they were not consulted about matters that were relevant to them. The relationship that existed between educators and learners was reminiscent of the traditional and authoritarian approach of the apartheid education era.

Educators perceived learners as having negative attitudes and taking no interest in their education, seemingly because they did not talk to learners. Also, educators did not seem to want to shift from their paradigm of blaming learners. This researcher often heard them say: *It is learners, not us, who have a problem.* When I talked to learners, they confirmed the frustration of not being heard and this appeared to be based in a dismissive approach from educators. Educators appeared to lack communication skills such as listening attentively, and particularly, empathy. Educators blamed lack of time for their not communicating with learners in order to understand their learning process.

The process of enabling educators to see these difficulties was very long and time consuming. It demanded knowledge and application of communication and counselling

skills. When I pointed out to educators that they had identified faults with everybody else, except themselves, they began to gain insight into how their own behaviour patterns might have influenced learners' negative attitudes to their schoolwork. The application of these counselling skills played a major role in helping SMT and educators' focus groups to shift their position, and accept that they, too, had to take some of the responsibility for learners' attitude to education.

The patterns that have been discussed so far mostly related to the educators' internal problems that incapacitated them responding to the challenges of the new order. Their ideological, cultural and professional conditions were among of the impediments to change. What will follow hereafter are external factors that militated against the intervention to bring about school improvement.

#### **7.4. Educational and Socio- Economic context**

There were two main factors that seemed to impact on the schools' efforts to bring about changes and improvement. The perception of education and the role of the school in the lives of the community were such that the school and its education were perceived to be irrelevant. These two factors appeared to influence the thinking and behaviour of the parents and their children.

##### **7.4.1. Education's loss of value**

The behaviour of all constituents seemed to point to the limited value they placed on education. In a well functioning context, education should be the gateway to employment, financial status and hence a better community life. It seemed, in all three case study school communities, that education was no longer opening these opportunities. Both learners and educators cited unemployment as a major factor in demotivating learners from hard work to achieve a good academic performance.

Parents refused to cooperate with the school because they maintained that they were busy and occupied with their own affairs. Apparently the education of their children did not matter so much to them. They did not buy textbooks for their children, and the latter did not seem to worry, even if they did not possess books. The learners wondered whether working hard for a matric pass would help them find employment.

It seemed plausible to conclude that parents from all three case study schools did not cooperate with the school, nor did they support the school and their children in their learning because they no longer valued education. Parents seemed to value their own business more than that of the education of their children because the latter did not seem to yield financial returns. Their children too, appeared to resist their educators' teaching instructions for the reasons above. But this factor did not account for all parents and learners, because some learners did not have parents; they lived with their relatives such as grandparents who could not respond to schools' demands. It follows also, that those learners who were orphans, or had single unemployed parents were unable to satisfy school requirements. But the school did not appear to be aware of the learners' problems because communication between the school and parents was poor.

#### **7.4.2 Social problems**

The loss of the value of education through the influence of unemployment and lack of opportunity probably contributed to the high rate of drug sales. The sale of drugs and substance abuse was exacerbated and compounded by the fact that parents and educators were involved in the sale of drugs and dagga. The SGB members and other community structures seemed to be unable to address the problem of uprooting the drug traffic because the unemployed parents lived from its proceeds. However, it was difficult to explain what made educators sell dagga at the school, because they were employed.

Poverty and the sale of drugs worsened grade failures, and repetition of grades increased the number of overage learners, which together with substance abuse complicated the problems of discipline in both the communities and schools. Although I identified those

difficulties, there did not appear to be any easy solutions, and it will require the community's initiatives to tackle these issues among themselves.

## **7.5. Impacts**

The type of education that the Zulu community had received could not leave them without scars. The word 'impact' conveys an accurate impression of the pronounced effect this education had on the Black African learners, educators and parents. The impact of transformation exposed the inherited short-comings and inadequacies of the whole system of education, and the impact apartheid education has had on all school and of each of its constituents.

### **7.5.1 Educators' characteristics**

The processes of educational change revealed certain educator characteristics which showed that they were lagging behind in a professional approach to their work. Some of their inadequacies seemed to be intrinsic factors which they inherited from the past apartheid education system. The others were interplay of factors from their community culture, and way of life. When the intrinsic and extrinsic factors were combined they resulted in inertia and incapacity to act. The following are some of the effects of this transformation.

Educators lacked motivation and energy to solve their problems because change was probably not well planned, and it was rushed within a short time of space. Consequently there was very little time to train educators. It is highly probable that they inherited a dependency syndrome from the former apartheid education system and the present Department of Education, whose past management approach was paternalistic with very close supervision which did not allow the development of initiative to address problems. The direct impact on educators was stress, frustration and anger, which invariably lowered their self-esteem and hence confidence.

Educators did not seem to have the knowledge, strategies and skill to identify problems, seek alternative solutions and then solve them. The consequence was little self-efficacy in educators. The combination of the top-down approach and educators' lack of self-efficacy was probably what produced passive educators.

The Department's prescriptive approach, especially in regard to outlawing corporal punishment was probably what disempowered educators who knew no other modes of disciplining on learners. The result was a very high level of indiscipline. It seemed, therefore, that educators were caught in the middle of the conflict between the DoEC and parents whose values were at variance with those of the DoEC.

Conflicts among educators also seemed mentally exhausting, leaving them with little energy for creativity. The protracted conflicts, owing to lack of support from the DoEC, destabilised the schools and affected performance. The DoEC defended itself by putting blame on bureaucratic rules which could not be broken, such as employment procedures. The result was the culture of blame that characterised all school constituents, and seemed to blind them to their own shortcomings and inadequacies. This culture of blame was probably the educators' coping skills and defence mechanism against exposure and attack on their ego.

The above seems to indicate that educators had lost agency. The educators and other constituents' behaviour seemed to indicate that education was no longer important for them. The loss of education value probably led to the loss of educators' agency. Educators had seemingly little influence on learners as well as their parents. This was their fundamental problem hindering change schools. There were factors that worked against them, such as lack of skills and strategies, lack of communication between school, Education Department and parents. Educators were consequently stuck in a counterproductive cycle of blame.

Indiscipline in all three case study schools was a significant factor that supported educators' loss of agency. Educators repeatedly stated that they were unable to discipline

learners. This problem was further exacerbated by the DoEC's reportedly unilateral decision to abolish corporal punishment, which apparently disempowered educators in terms of controlling learners.

The educators' response to their loss of influence on stakeholders and learners was apparently inertia. They seemed to have no energy to solve their problems in all three case study schools. The inability to solve problems appeared to be a combination of many factors such as procrastination, lack of skills, fear, inability to cope with the speed of transformation and lack of time management.

#### **7.5.2. The DoEC's management style**

I have already referred to the politicisation of matric performance in the aforementioned sections. The officials of the DOEC imposed upon themselves the pressure to make changes happen immediately. They probably imagined that the National Department of Education judged their performance against the background of which political party rule their province. Based on the reasons above, it seemed to the Provincial DoEC that putting pressure on schools would expedite the process of educational change because it cut short the long processes of democratic consultation, negotiations and collective decision-making.

The DoEC's imposition was so powerful that some of the officials were also frustrated and angered by the process. They openly expressed their helplessness to prevent the top-down decision-making process. As officials, their duty was to comply and carry out the instruction. The pressure of educational change divided the Department into three: - the National that set standards, the Province that imposed ways of reaching the standards and the Region that received the instructions, added theirs and imposed on schools.

### **7.5.3. Parents' lack of co-operation**

Parents, in at least two case study schools, appeared to be paralysed by the obtaining problems, in particular the seemingly new role they suddenly were expected to play. In the past apartheid education era they were not expected to play a pivotal role in the education of their children. In one case study school they frankly told educators that they were too occupied with their family businesses to accept frequent invitations to school. Educators were told to solve the problems of the school without involving them. These parents' response was a reflection of their experiences of the past.

The consequence of this parental behaviour was that the SGB and community structures were frustrated by their inability to address school problems. Substances use was common in the community, and leaders and SGB members could not address this problem in both Egonqweni and Egagasini schools.

It became evident that the SGB, parents and community had difficulty coping with the educational changes expected. The situation only served to expose the community's incapacity to deal with its problems and hence to support the school. Parents had not been equipped with the skills and competence to engage differently with the school. Stakeholders formerly excluded from education matters could not understand the functions they were now expected to perform

### **7.5.4. Learners' responses**

Learners bore the brunt of the incapacity of stakeholders and lack of support system in the schools. This resulted in frustration and disciplinary problems. When learners became negative and lost interest in their education, they became, in most cases, unruly and aggressive. The sale of drugs and dagga in the community and at school exacerbated their misconduct.

In the face of learners' problems, the elements of their supposed support system became helpless and passive. Change and the accompanying demand for improvement negatively affected learners who then lost confidence in education as an answer to the demand of the future.

## **7.6. Responses to research questions**

One of the aims of this study was to answer questions which were asked in the research design chapter. The questions helped to direct the study, and equipped me in the choice of research methodology and procedures. Through literature survey and focus group interviews and discussions I have collected data and arrived at findings which are explained hereunder:

### **7.6.1. Factors which contributed to officials' and parents' perceptions of resistance to change in AmaZulu schools**

The pertinent question that was asked was about the factors that might have contributed to the perception by both parents and DoEC officials that AmaZulu schools were resistant to change. The following are some of the factors which emerged:

#### **7.6.1.1 Effects of apartheid education**

Parents and departmental officials were aware of the damage caused by apartheid education, and that the amalgamation of education departments after 1994 would expose these effects. Educators were conditioned by that apartheid education wittingly or unwittingly to resist change and innovation, though passively and inefficaciously. Parents and officials saw the manifestations of the past apartheid education in many forms.

A passive attitude and dependency syndrome caused educators to be seen as resisters of change and slow to initiate solutions to their problems. They were seen instead to be

seeking guidance and direction from the DoEC officials. For instance there was often an outcry from parents and the DoEC that ineffective teaching and learning took place at school and educators were not seen to be responding to these concerns. The DoEC officials apparently did not understand why educators could not ensure that parents bought textbook for learners. In some schools it was common to find one textbook in a class. In other instances the one textbook belonged to the subject teacher who had decided to buy it personally because the school had not taken the initiative. On the other hand, parents did not understand why educators could not cause the DoEC to provide textbooks they promised them when they canvassed for votes to elect a new government. Educators were caught in the middle, and the perceptions were that they were not willing to perform their duty of teaching.

The rate of absenteeism was high among educators which often resulted in learners missing lessons. This misconduct was extensive during the apartheid era, and has not significantly improved even during the new dispensation of the free South Africa. All three case study schools struggled to overcome absenteeism because SGB members did not have the capacity to deal with absentee educators, particularly those who provided medical certificates to justify their absenteeism. The DoEC did not deal with this problem because it depended on the SGB reports and recommendation to take action against such educators. Educators' rampant absenteeism apparently caused parents and learners to disrespect educators, especially because it impacted on the standard of academic performance.

Parents and DoEC officials in particular, put great emphasis on the grade 12 academic performance, because they believed that it was the window through which they were seen by the world in terms of their success in providing quality education. Both these stakeholders did not like what they saw happening in education from 1976. Examinations results plummeted from about 70% before 1982 to below 40% after 1982 (Gumede, 1989). This grade 12 academic performance was probably the last straw that convinced these stakeholders that educators were reluctant to improve the education of learners. In all three case study schools grade 12 academic results dropped from an

average percentage of 41 to 36 from 1997 to 1999. Parents did not see any initiative taken by educators to address the problems; instead it was the DoEC that was seen taking to be the initiative to introduce innovative intervention programmes.

The Zulu educators' professional performance and conduct has always been compared with that of their white counterparts. It was a question of comparing grade 12 results and drawing the conclusion that white schools produced good academic results and IsiZulu medium schools were not doing so because of educators' resistance to change. Consequently many of the parents in two of the case study schools had taken their children to English medium schools.

#### 7.6.1.2. The unprofessional conduct of educators

As a result of apartheid education training, educators were not able to carry out certain tasks which should have been their core functions. Educators seemed to have difficulties with developing policies. In one of the case study schools educators acknowledged the fact that they were unfit to develop subject policies in spite of training they had received from subject advisers and frequent visits by the Superintendents to monitor their implementation of these policies and thereby to improve the academic performance.

The DoEC officials understood the educators' failure to cope with and implement the changes to indicate that they were reluctant to change, though in reality the causes were the speed with which change was implemented by the DoEC, and that educators were not given sufficient time to buy into the innovation programmes. Their reluctance to buy in was seen summarily as a resistance to change. The introduction of the OBE and its new instructional methodology raised the expectation in parents and the DoEC that this teaching methodology would improve and change the schools. But on the contrary, educators had not yet changed because they were still using traditional teaching methods of the apartheid era. They still used the old textbook methods of reading from the book when they taught a lesson, especially in content subjects. Reading from the textbook coupled with long and unorganised homework which was given as punishment to

learners, could have caused parents to think that educators were incompetent and thus have undermined their professional authority.

#### 7.6.1.3. Inertia

From an outsider's perspective, the educators seemed to lack energy to act or solve problems. They had a tendency to keep on postponing what they were supposed to address immediately. In some of the schools the situation was described as *laissez-faire*, because even the SMT seemed to fear to make decisions and implement them. Some of the SMT members were inhibited by lack of confidence and skills. When educators did not act, the perception was that they were a failure and resisting change.

#### 7.6.1.4. Competency

Educators were seen to lack competency in some area of their core functions. The DoEC officials' attitude to educators was negative. Educators felt that officials of the department did not trust them. In terms of focus groups emergent patterns, educators seemed to lack knowledge, strategies and skills to solve their professional and work related problems. However it can be argued that the educators' apparent resistance were to some systemic complexities brought about by the previous education system. Whilst they may seem to be the focus of resistance, they are caught between many tensions. For instance it has been mentioned in the second case study school that the Department did not seem to support this school (see section 5.7.7). Consequently the conflict and political tensions continued without being resolved, and the educators did not have the capacity to manage this conflict. The promotion system by the Department created tensions within the school (see section 6.8.14). The DoEC itself, used top down management approach which often disempowered educators in some areas of their function such as corporal punishment and matric intervention demands.

### **7.6.2. Factors that contributed to educators' and principals' attitude to initiating and implementing change**

I have stated already that apartheid education crippled the education of AmaZulu and created a culture of passivity and dependency which seemingly caused educators not to solve their problems, but to wait for an external agent to initiate and implement change. The state control was apparently about giving direction to African education, with close supervision which did not allow its participants the freedom to think.

The management approach of the apartheid education department was based on bureaucratic, instructional and paternalistic philosophy that apparently perpetuated the inherited passivity and dependency syndrome in educators. The result was essentially a genre of educators who were mostly mentally conditioned to perpetuate the dominant culture's philosophy of education. The result of this damage has manifested itself in a range of behavioural actions in these schools.

#### **7.6.2.1. Non-participatory approach**

The case study schools were characterized by a culture of non-involvement of school constituents. It surfaced in all focus groups that principals and educators were not used to involving other stakeholders when change had to be initiated and implemented. It was assumed that this attitude might have been learnt from the apartheid education philosophy. Principals did not involve educators and the latter did not involve learners in decision making which affected their lives. The non-participatory approach often caused misinterpretation of one another's actions. Consequently, any innovation introduced or initiated would not be supported. Also, mistrust of one another tended to dictate their behaviour and reaction to change.

The DoEC did not consult with the stakeholders because its management approach was top-down. This invariably affected principals' attitude and approach to educators. The principal and educators were not consulted when innovation was planned; it was often

pushed down their throats. The consequence of this instructional approach was lack of buy-in and hence resistance or rejection of change.

Educators and principals were therefore slow to initiate any change because they seemingly thought it was the prerogative of the DoEC to do so, and they thought it would be rejected when it came from them, as they believed it had always happened in the past. The principals, to a large extent, depended on instructions and guidance from the Superintendents, who also maintained that the DoEC did not consult them when decisions were made. Educators were then reactive to the external instruction and demands from the DoEC, and this arrested the processes of educational change.

#### 7.6.2.2. Time concept

Educators believed that time constraints were a factor which affected their change initiatives. Principals and educators equally, felt that they did not have sufficient time to implement change. According to them there was too much introduced within a short space of time. The massive pressure, with which they could not cope, seemed to cause a paradigm paralysis.

It also appeared as if educators' concept of time was contributing to their difficulties to cope because they appeared to separate school time and what they called their own private time. They were reluctant to allow any work to encroach what they called their own time. A series of events could not be accommodated within the school time because educators appeared to be unwilling to commit their time to what needed to be done outside school time. There was apparently lack of time management and reluctance to sacrifice time for the success of schoolwork.

#### 7.6.2.3. Professional freedom

Educators claimed that they were not given enough freedom by the DoEC to initiate change projects in the way they wanted. Seemingly everything was given to them cut and dried. The prescriptive approach by the DoEC appeared to stifle the initiative and creativity of educators. The DoEC reportedly prescribed the curriculum content, method and evaluation. The educators' role was simply to take what had been given and implement it. This prescription apparently inhibited and constrained educators and reinforced the perception that African educators could not function effectively on their own without being supervised closely.

#### 7.6.2.4. Lack of knowledge, strategies and skills

In some areas of educational change processes it became clear that both educators and the SMT members lacked knowledge and experience to draw on, in order to address some problems and initiate change. Instead of seeking ways to address these problems, they tended to apportion blame to certain individuals and things. The consequence of the blame culture was that they remained stuck in a non-productive cycle. Problems seemed to be so overwhelming that they invariably became helpless onlookers. The other coping mechanism educators and SMT used was putting off tasks with the result that problems worsened until it was too late to address them.

#### 7.6.2.5. Loss of influence

Loss of influence on stakeholders such as parents and learners probably lowered educators' self-esteem. Educators believed that the DoEC officials did not trust them due to the non-consultative top-down approach the DoEC used. They had a negative attitude about themselves and believed that they could not succeed because parents did not accept, respect and support them. Their non-acceptance and apparent rejection was attributed to racial factors. Educators also maintained that their white counterparts were advantaged by their past history of success, based on their colour.

#### 7.6.2.6. Resources

Lack of material resources was mentioned as one of the factors inhibiting initiation and implementation of change by principals and educators. Critical among these was lack of textbooks in almost all subjects in all case study schools. The lack of material resources was also compounded by the fact that even the few textbooks each class had, went missing, and could not be replaced. Parents refused to buy textbooks for their children because they maintained that when they voted in the government they were securing the free education of their children. Lack of these resources probably discouraged and made it difficult for principals and educators to initiate change.

#### **7.6.3. The approaches to leadership exercised by school principals**

The analysis of the data from the three case study schools seemed to suggest four leadership styles exercised by principals in their response to demands and pressure for change in their schools.

##### 7.6.3.1. Instructional approach

This was a role where the principal became a top-down instructor who did not consult with either educators or learners. This approach was apparently learnt and internalised from the apartheid education system, because it was thought to be the most effective approach. In the whole of the transformation process the educators were seemingly not involved in matters affecting their work, because the principal appeared to dictate terms to be followed by every person. Educators and learners alike, were not involved in the initial stages of any change process, but were only involved in the final stages - probably to legitimise the decisions taken by management. Reminiscent of the previous apartheid government, principals seemed to exercise representative democracy, whereby they selected a few individuals to consult and communicate their decisions, instead of inviting full participation of all educators.

Lack of time and communication breakdown often contributed to the non-consultation of educators and learners by principals. This was caused by the speed with which change was introduced. Also, after an introduction of change there was little time for follow-up, feedback and evaluation.

#### 7.6.3.2.Laissez-faire Leadership

In this type of role the principal did not interfere much with what was happening at school. The principal did not intervene to address any problem that cropped up, or any deviation from the behavioural norm. He probably feared to act against individuals who violated the school rules. It also appeared as if lack of negotiation and communication skills by the principal was a contributory factor. In one case study school educators were divided into two antagonistic groups, and the principal was a member of one of the groups. Consequently he could not intervene to give guidance to educators, learners were unattended, and the whole school fell into chaos. It can be concluded that the principals who used this approach were probably by nature soft, passive and slow in decision-making. They were not firm and decisive. One could say that their personalities were central to their leadership approach.

#### 7.6.3.3.Follower principal

In this approach the principal was neither instructional nor laissez-faire, but was dependent on the goodness of his educators. He seemed to listen to what they suggested and allowed them to carry it out. The difference was that he did not take the initiative; it was his educators who were proactive and visionary. One of the case study schools gradually improved their matric performance because of the educators, though the DoEC had excluded this school from the MIP programmes on the grounds that the school principal was a weak leader. His strength was in following his educators who happened to be dedicated to their work. I could say that this was a principal led by his staff and

prepared to cooperate, which paid dividends as long as his staff continued to be good and loyal.

#### 7.6.3.4. Resistant principal

The principal of one case study school appeared to resist changes. It was not clear whether this was a deliberate or unconscious act. The Superintendents and SGB members visited him and offered guidance and advice at different times. However, he did not implement any of these suggestions. When I conducted focus group interviews and discussions, SMT members expressed their opinions about his leadership style, which left me with the impression that he accepted those revelations, and would consider them and change. But this principal continued to act in his usual manner of running the school without any consultation with his SMT members. Consequently this school's learners suffered academically for more than five years. The Superintendents, subject advisers and I felt like giving up because there was nothing else that would be done to force him to change or leave the school. The bureaucratic red tape was such that it could not be easy to start the process without the backing of the Senior Management and SGB members who were not very concerned about the issue, except to keep on blaming the principal.

In general principals appeared to lack the skill of balancing their leadership style by not always being authoritative, consultative or participative, but all three at different times as the conditions warranted; though the most frequent style needed was clearly the participative one. They did not have the skill to balance their leadership and management roles.

#### **7.6.4. The roles played by parents and other stakeholders in schools, and how these may be improved**

The National Department of Education has raised concerns about the functioning of SGB members who represent parents and thus the role of parents. Fingers seemed to point at the SGB's dysfunctionality and the governance system which was said to be flawed and

destructive. People both inside and outside the Department of Education have questioned the effectiveness of the governing bodies. The question was whether there was any role SGB played to persuade parents to be involved in schools and in supporting learners and educators.

Parents work in schools through SGB members who are the only stakeholders that work directly with schools. Depending on the nature of problems to be addressed in a particular school, other stakeholders may be identified or formed such as Community Policing Forum (CPF), Safety, Security and Discipline Forum (SSDF) and Youth Forums. The SSDF and the CPF were formed in order to deal with community problems involving discipline and violence that impacted on the schools.

Through the SGB, parents are charged with the responsibility of school governance, running and support of the school, educators and learners. The SGB members stand in a position of trust towards the school. The SGB of a public school is expected to promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for learners at the school. Most importantly, the SGB is charged with developing the mission statement of the school, and supporting the principal, educators and other staff of the school in the performance of their professional functions.

Almost all the stakeholders in case study schools appeared not to have satisfied the National DoE and DoEC that they were performing their functions effectively. The non-involvement of parents in the education of their children is cited as one the biggest problems faced by both departments. What are thought to have crippled the functioning of SGB members are, among others, the following:

- The majority of parents are elected without the voters understanding the purpose of SGB members
- People elected usually do not understand their roles and responsibilities
- There are no guidelines as to the kind of person to be appointed as an SGB member

- For the success of participatory democracy in schools a majority of stakeholders should be actively engaged. But it is difficult to achieve this because poor attendance at parent election meetings limits the effectiveness of the election process
- Consequently, people who are usually elected are not high profile leaders who command respect in the community.
- The result is that these people are unable to mobilize the parents to support the school.

In all case study schools parents appeared to be reluctant to support learners and educators. This was shown by their non-cooperation with the school in many areas of the school. Over and above the seeming reluctance to participate in school affairs, SGB members lacked the capacity to enlist the support of the parents. The intensity of problems in all case study schools seemed far too great to be handled by the kind of parents who had few skills, especially in leadership, management and administration.

Members of the SGB and parents had little capacity to play a meaningful role in changing their schools because their systems were structurally weak. While educators were angry and frustrated, SGB members and parents seemed complacent and unmoved. The inertia of parents was attributed to the loss of value in education. Education was no longer seen to be offering the employment opportunities it offered in the past. But this again was different in two case study schools, which were politically active in the past and were aware of standing and fighting for their rights. In these schools parents were equally not with the DoEC, but with their children's moral promiscuity.

In different ways the community was angry with some of the parents who were involved in drug traffic. The whole social and moral fabric appeared to have broken down in and around all three case study schools. Therefore all the three case study schools did not appear to have the capacity to change on their own owing to these unsupportive systems.

In all three case study schools the SGB members played a minimal role. Probably this was due to the fact that members of the SGB members were not easily available because of their occupation with their community business. I managed to interview them only once in a full plenary session, then resorted to individual interviews, particularly with the chairpersons.

I am of the opinion that the SGB's and parents could not cope with the new approach in education whereby they are expected to play a significant role in the leadership and administration of the school. It seemed clear that they had not been prepared for this new and demanding role of being part of the leadership of the school, because they lacked leadership skills. The education policies and legislation were too complex to be analysed, interpreted and applied by the SGB in order to give leadership to the school. The SGB members did not have confidence in themselves. One reason for this could be their own low academic qualifications. This often limited their inputs in the running of the school. It was therefore difficult to improve the relationship between the school and parents on account of the poor self-esteem of parents.

The result of the apparent incapacity of the SGB members was that educators undermined them and parents they represented. Parents had little confidence in themselves and thought educators did not accept their school governance and ideas. They so undermined themselves saying that they felt rejected by educators. The consequence was that they refrained from taking any initiative in the affairs of the school; instead they waited to be led by the principal, who then usurped their powers and made decisions alone.

Training SGB members does not appear to have helped, because those who are trained seemingly do not have the potential to learn and develop, because of their level of education. In the rural areas this is exacerbated by the fact that the majority of learned individuals move to urban areas in search of employment. Therefore, the challenge to training is about stretching the illiterate SGB members beyond their capacity. But in urban areas this training has already started to yield fruits of success, because the

majority of SGB members are retired learned people who have leadership and administrative skills.

#### **7.6.5. The relationship between the schools and the circuit/ district officials**

The circuit/ district officials are charged with the management responsibility of ensuring that schools produce the quality of education as envisaged by the DoEC. Through their leadership skills, they are meant to empower and assist educators to discharge their duties. The officials of the DOEC are charged with the task of interpreting policy and legislation, whereas the schools implement policies, rules and procedures emanating from the DoEC policy and legislation.

In its execution of its function, the DoEC mostly used a prescriptive approach and the communication flow was invariably top-down. This type of leadership and management approach did not encourage participation and consultation with educators in major issues pertinent to the performance of their duties. This appeared to strain the relationship, because educators in the school felt that they were dictated to and forced to do their work in the way the DoEC wanted, and not in their own way as professionals. Schools were allowed very little opportunity of involvement in decision-making. The consequence of this was that they did not own most of the processes of change that took place in their schools. Educators and schools were not given the independence and freedom of thought and operation they needed.

The Superintendents themselves stated that they were not part of the DoEC decision-making process. One SEM described their role as simply *the conveyor belts* of the department; hence they could not do anything about the concerns of educators who complained of not being involved in the decision-making process. Therefore the Superintendents, like educators, were trapped in the middle of the crossfire. Educators saw them as implementers of the DoEC's non-negotiable top-down instructions, whereas the DoEC expected Superintendents to implement those decisions without any questions as if they came directly from them. This was an impasse that could be resolved by the

involvement of all DoEC stakeholders to overhaul the whole organizational structure and communication channels.

The perception of the educators by parents and DoEC officials were based on the history of apartheid education, and the educators' current professional conduct which left much to be desired. There were evident signs of passivity and inertia, that is, the perceived failure of educators to solve their problems.

The factors which contributed to educators' and principals' approach to initiate an implementation of change all appeared to have been inherited from the apartheid education system. The top-down approach, lack of freedom, knowledge, strategies, skills and resources were some of the examples to support the aforementioned statement. Leadership styles exercised by the principals of the case study schools showed deficiency in professional development.

Parents were not involved in school affairs and also did not support the schools and their children. There was no communication between them and the schools and between the school and the DoEC officials.

Chapter 8 makes these responses to research questions clearer when I discuss the conceptual framework which guided the formulation of these questions, together with the findings.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **Discussion**

In chapter two I discussed the theoretical framework of the study that guided my thinking and consideration of the design and questions to answer in the study. In this chapter I reconsider my conceptual framework in the light of my findings. I also discuss encouragement for change, limitations of this study and suggestions for further research.

#### **8.1. Consideration of findings in the light of theories.**

In this chapter I want to discuss the extent to which findings of this study refute or support theories on which this study was based. How do the theories help us understand the findings? The consideration of findings in the light of theories will also throw light on what could be done to encourage change. I shall also discuss what this study will not achieve, and what could be done to carry out more research in the field of educational change, particularly in IsiZulu medium schools where there is still a paucity of research.

##### **8.1.1. Systems theories**

According to Von Bertalanffy, the school, like all other social organisations, is an open system that allows constant and continuous inflow of and outflow of energy or information through the permeable boundaries as shown in figure 9.1. Schools appeared unable to maintain the balance of being open or closed as time and circumstances demanded. The schools did not change easily because their boundaries seemed too rigid, not allowing information or input to flow into the school in order to change. Schools were consequently too closed to allow information to permeate its boundary. Attempts to influence these case study schools to change through professional development advisors and Superintendents did not seem to have significant impact. The inputs from these people did not permeate the rigid boundaries. Consequently these schools accepted little input from other systems. To some degree these schools were fast losing their identities

when they were open to drug traffic and political fights. All three case study schools were apparently situated in hostile environments that demanded schools to be selective, that is, to close themselves in order to ensure their continuation and maintenance of their identities.

As general open systems, according to von Bertalanffy (1956), schools could not resist the influence of the cultural and ideological pressure of their hostile environment that included a new culture of drug traffic and substance abuse which produced physically aggressive learners and non-supportive and non-cooperative parents. Schools according to Katz and Kahn's (1978) view could only survive by being open to input and output, closeness and openness. On their own they could not selectively regulate this input-output process, that is, the ability to accept what could help them change, and reject what would cause them to lose their identity as schools of teaching and learning.

In terms of von Bertalanffy's general system's theory, systems must adapt to their environment and attempt to cope with external forces by ingesting them or acquiring control over them. These case study schools were too weak to resist the external forces in their environment because there were no supportive structures. In two case study schools a meeting of community leaders, councillors and parents was convened to address the problem of drugs. But very little came out of this meeting, because there was no action plan to implement decisions taken at this meeting. Apparently lack of capacity and skills to deal with the underlying socio-economic problems of the schools was a militating factor.

The schools did not appear to keep homeostasis and morphogenesis in balance. Openness to the environment was also necessary in order to have healthy growth and survival in their environment. They had to be open and at the same time closed enough not to lose their identities as schools. Change appeared to threaten educators and thus reinforce homeostasis and resistance to change. The principal of the second case study school (chapter 5) who did not delegate seemed to fear to lose power. According to Kolb et al.

(1979) he could not bear the cost of changing ( $x = \text{cost factor}$ ). Educators' tension in the third case study school regarding acceptance of educators promoted from outside the school is also a good example which illustrates this threat of morphogenesis.

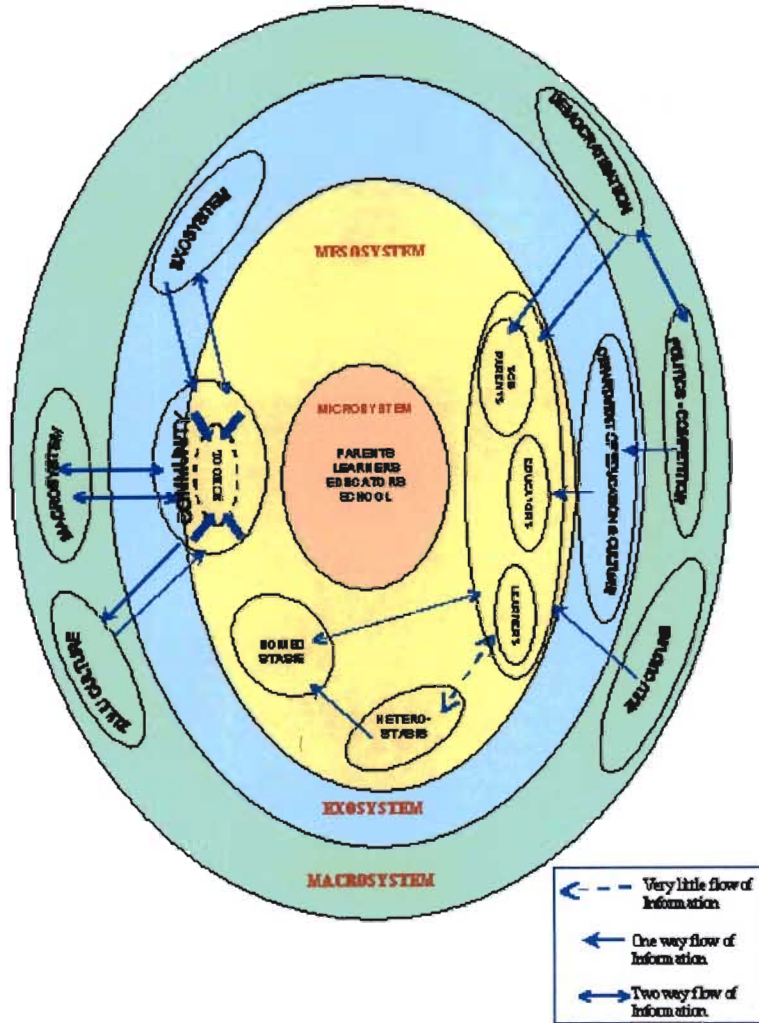


Figure 8.1: Communication process among systems

In terms of Bronfenbrenner's theory I will consider each layer from the outside inwards. In the figure arrows are also used to indicate the direction of communication. The outer layer of the system is the macro system. This outer layer contains ideologies such as democracy, politics or political parties and cultural values such as in this case, the Zulu culture. The ideologies had an impact on the DoEC, the community, the school and all its constituents,

through what appeared to be one-way flow of information and top-down instruction. Tension existed between politics and democratisation by the government because political power was used by the DoEC to mandate and expedite change, without allowing any process of consultation and negotiation with the school constituents. This negated and contradicted the DoEC's vision of providing education in a democratic environment. In fact a few DoEC officials wielded political power to dictate change in schools. The introduction of common tests without any consultation with educators was a good example of these power relations. The other example was an introduction of cut – throat competitiveness that set schools against one another. Schools did not have the power to oppose this introduction of academic competition against each other.

The macrosystemic ideologies had a great impact on the thinking of all schools' constituents, including the DoEC. This often caused unresolved conflicts, because each constituent was reluctant to shift its position. The deadlocks on corporal punishment and the top-down approach in introducing change are examples of this problem. The macrosystemic layer is the most important and influential layer where change needs to take place if the whole system is to change (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Evidently the DoEC and its officials still operated in the same paradigm as the apartheid Department of Education of the past. The parents and the educators, too, had not changed their cultural norms values and beliefs with regard to the nature of the child, discipline, the school and education. They did not value children and their education sufficiently.

The exosystemic influence of Government policies and legislation was making it difficult for educators and parents to decide on strategies to implement change in these schools. The schools were hamstrung by bureaucratic procedures that prevented them from recruiting and selecting timeously educators they preferred. Where policies were in place officials did not have the capacity to implement them because there were the following problems:

- The information took long to reach schools, especially those in the rural areas

- Most officials of the department were equally frustrated because of the top-down approach which forced them to implement policies they did not understand and agreed with
- The DoEC itself was not ready for change, because it lacked both human and material resources
- The DoEC was poor in co-ordinating the processes of change. The understanding of policies and legislation by the DoEC officials and the interpretations they sent to schools contradicted the very policies and legislation they were trying to implement

The exosystemic influence was probably the cause of the Department's prescriptive management approach that impacted very negatively on educators who were stressed and frustrated. Educators themselves were influenced by this system to the extent of confusion and contradictions. Educators were seemingly influenced by the unions to demand recognition and professional freedom from the Department of Education and Culture. On the one hand educators expressed the view that that they were not allowed to teach in the way they deemed fit. But on the other hand they demanded supervision from principals who believed it was not appropriate to supervise a professional closely. So principals themselves were probably influenced by other ideologies and exosystems of which educators were unaware. These contradictory perspectives stalled the process of implementing change and improvement at these schools.

Traditions of racism, sexism, political violence, totalitarianism, or cut-throat competitiveness were communicated throughout the apartheid influenced education systems and had deleterious effects on vulnerable educators who were still reeling from the damage of the past.

The processes described above influenced interactions between the exo- and mesosystems. The feedback from the DoEC to schools as clearly expressed in focus groups was negation, as an indication that the DoEC output in terms of its management of schools had reached undesirable maximum level. The DoEC would need to consider

reducing its inputs or dictation of terms of how schools should be run, if there was to be proper communication between schools and DoEC. Communication was improper in the sense that it was determined by power relations and hence was usually done on unequal terms. This one-way communication channel caused mistrust and conflict between DoEC and educators from the top which did not acknowledge educators professional rights. The consequence was a mismatch between what the educators needed to develop, and what the DoEC provided, because “a key problem of school reform is when the wrong strategies are applied to the wrong settings” (Slavin, Sand, Bricks and Seeds, 1998:1305).

The macrosystem impacted on the mesosystems as follows: The communities which live closer to the school were greatly influenced by the Zulu Culture which was not receptive to democracy, because it was seen to be Western culture and values. There was therefore tension between Zulu Cultural values and the representative democracy partly practiced by the DoEC. Much tension and conflict stemmed from Government’s banning of corporal punishment in schools, which left them disempowered because they knew of no other method of instituting discipline. The DoEC's view was that outlawing corporal punishment was done to protect the democratic and human rights of learners. Educators and parents’ views on the other hand were that they were deprived of their cultural right to discipline children in their cultural way.

Culture and ideology in the macro systemic layer were therefore very central to resistance to change. There was contradiction and confusion. This was said in defence of the principal who did not take action against educators who violated the school rules and deviated from the norms and standards. However, the same members of these focus groups who rejected harsh discipline on educators strongly supported corporal punishment on learners. It appeared as though educators were so obsessed with their culture as a defence against what they did not support, that they did not hear and understand that they were contradicting themselves. It seems therefore that culture had either conditioned educators not to see other perspectives, or it was used to hide behind.

According to both educators and SMT, Zulu Culture does not allow harsh treatment of colleagues. The principal and educators of one school had however accepted the banning of corporal punishment though it was seen as against the Zulu culture not to apply corporal punishment. It appeared therefore that educators alternately accepted what comforted them and rejected what discomforted them.

The division at the second case study school (chapter 5) was more than ten years old, but it was still very hard to resolve because it was reinforced by a strong political ideology. The fact that the slogan of *pass one pass all* was still applied at the school, though very secretly, was seemingly an indication of how the exosystem can indirectly impact on learners, though they do not participate in it, but educators in the learners micro-system do. The destruction of the culture of teaching and learning in one of the study schools, which dates back to the years of the political struggle for liberation, clearly illustrates the influence of the chronosystem. Two of the three case study schools were the sites of the struggle, where the slogan *Pass one pass all* was used to disrupt education. In one of the case study schools, educators' division and conflict was based on political differences and affiliation to different unions.

At a mesosystems level the interrelations among stakeholders of the schools were not positive, hence the schools did not function effectively. There was a deficient connection between microsystems, and in schools conflicts existed. The underlying cause of negative interaction was lack of communication and in most instances top-down flow of information. In all case study schools there was a miscommunication between educators, learners and their parents. The vicious cycle of homework policy is a good example of this miscommunication. Educators gave learners homework to do, and the latter did not do it because parents occupied them with household chores. On the one hand educators blamed learners for being stubborn and lazy, on the other, parents interpreted learners' occupation with homework to be an excuse to avoid household chores. Educators did not understand all the systems which impacted on learners, and the diverse immediate and distant systems within which they operated.

Educators themselves did not create an environment conducive to interacting with parents and learners. Verbal communication to parents through learners was seemingly misinterpreted or not received at all, probably because learners forgot to transmit the messages. This created problems which led to parents being perceived as not co-operating and supporting the school.

Educators were not interested in knowing their learners better in order to understand them and their problems. There was again a mismatch between learners' learning style and educators' teaching style. Educators did not give themselves time to listen and talk to learners.

Bronfenbrenner (1994) referred to studies that indicated that early patterns of children's reactivity and constitutional tendencies evoked counteractions from others which accentuated these initial dispositions. Through their behavioural disposition learners had elicited educator behaviour they wanted, which reinforced their own behaviour. For instance at the first case study school, learners requested educators to use corporal punishment, and would dictate when educators should stop using this type of punishment.

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) theories of bi-directional and reciprocal relationships between learners and adults were demonstrated in all three case study schools. The uncooperative learners and parents changed educator's attitudes and behaviour towards the former. Educators allowed themselves to be controlled by learners. Corporal punishment is a good example where educators openly admitted that learners requested it, and that educators acceded to this demand. Also, the principal controlled the SGB members because they did not have the necessary management skills to give direction to educators.

The quality of learners, their misconduct and non – co-operation reflected and supported this theory. It can be stated that learners are both products and producers of their environment. Learners were indirectly the producers of educators' behaviour that in turn produced learners' behaviour. At one case study school learners controlled educators when they demanded corporal punishment and instructed educators to stop when they felt

it was enough. Bronfenbrenner (1993) supported this view of learners' behavioural patterns when he proposed that children influence their own subsequent environment as well as their own subsequent biology.

In the mesosystemic layer there was little communication between the DoEC the microsystems and the school constituents, and among these constituents themselves. Parents were not involved in the education of their children at school. Educators did not show an interest in communicating with learners to identify their needs and address them.

The mesosystemic connections and interactions among microsystems were problematic in all case study schools. The schools had difficulties in relating with the homes of learners. Lack of positive interactions between parents and educators had a negative impact on learners. Consequently, learners' school life could not be carried over to home and conversely. Lack of interaction between the microsystems was explained by the mismatch that existed between educators' and learners' perceptions of their problems. There was very little input from within the schools such as educators' initiatives or from other microsystems such as SGB members and parents who did not seem to put pressure on schools to change.

One of the macrosystemic variables that seemed to have had far reaching effects on all three case study schools is the economic life of the communities. This impacted very negatively on the exosystemic layers of parents (their work or lack thereof). All three case study schools had very low average income per household, high dependency ratio per household, and very high level of unemployment. Parents' unemployment resulted in drug traffic in two of these schools. It also had negative impacts on learners. Unemployment and the resultant poverty in homes resulted in limited future prospects for learners. This indirectly influenced learner motivation and attitudes to schooling and achievement.

Dysfunctional family systems as microsystems variables, such as single parent families, children living with grandparents, and children who lived alone without any adult, were factors which the processes of educational change. This has contributed to abuse of

substance and dagga in two of the three case study schools. Some of the learners were involved in hard domestic work which contributed to high rate of absenteeism and hence failure. Educators were not aware of, and did not understand these systems which impacted on learners at home, and how learners themselves impacted on these systems. All these variables had an influence on the quality of learners' lives.

The microsystems had little resistance on their own against the hostile environment and strong culture of top-down communication and instruction. Two of the three case study schools are situated in environments that were similar in many respects. The social environments of these schools appeared to be hostile to change and their transaction as they operated as open systems caused them to lose their identities and functions as places of education. Katz and Kahn (1978) are correct in stating that living systems are acutely dependent on their external environment for their continued existence and function. The schools and their stakeholders in the three case study schools depended on environments that were socio – economically poor and not supportive. Poverty bred crimes such as substance abuse and the sale of dagga. Parents and community leaders were supposed to protect the schools from the negative outside influences of drugs and substance abuses. But the outside pressure of poverty and crime seemed too strong for the schools. According to general systems theory schools cannot change without change in their environments.

The theory of homeostasis that systems to seek stability was shown by the way the schools remained the same, rejected heterostasis and consequently continued to be unhealthy. Thus the culture of teaching and learning deteriorated to low levels. According to Becvar and Becvar (1982) there must be a balance between openness and closedness, depending on the idiosyncrasies of the system. In their view, the more input from other systems, the more it is an open system and conversely the less input the more closed. In two case study schools there were more corrupt forces from outside and seemingly little resistance from within. Also there was little input from within the schools, and only pressure from the Department of Education and Culture. My intervention from the DoEC was part of the inputs from the other systems in an attempt to cause the schools to change. However these inputs were unidirectional and consequently failed to induce enough pressure for change.

According to systems theory there was interplay of several intervening variables from the multi layered social environment militating against change. The schools did not have a constant contact with the learners' homes and vice versa. Unsupportive and what appeared to be negligent parents and educators negatively influenced learners in this layer. Parents were occupied with their community businesses to the neglect of their children. Educators were stressed by the management approach of the DoEC. This indirectly affected learners who were neglected or taught in ways that did not meet their learning style and pace. Also, educators' family situations and drinking clubs appeared to underlie their drinking habits and resultant absenteeism. It was therefore these other microsystems and their interaction with one another that contributed to producing learners who were not interested in their education.

### **8.1.2.Theories of change**

The pattern of strong top-down communication with very little flow of information from the bottom up probably emanated from the past apartheid ideology, and resulted in an ineffective feedback loop. The approach and communication direction supported Fullan's (1993) assertion that the top down approach is essentially a political process by which a powerful and dominant group imposes its values on the school.

Clearly from the above and from the empirical evidence from focus groups, the DoEC used Knowledge, Production and Utilization where the DoEC employed agents to identify problems and seek solutions, or the Department through senior management identified problems, sought solutions

Once the solutions were nicely packaged ready to be delivered to schools, the DoEC used power-coercive change strategies to obtain compliance from educators. The MIP with its imposed common tests strategies is an example in mind. I have referred to a few examples of MIP where decisions came from above without any consultation with educators, subject advisers and Superintendents. The DoEC imposed punishment for non-compliance, and

part of this was public reprimand at a meeting, where schools were asked to account for their schools' poor academic performance.

The DoEC's top-down and prescriptive management approach, which was demonstrated by the Departments' belittling of educators in setting them against each other through competitions, could be linked to Sergiovannis' (1998) constrained forces of change. The department, to motivate educators, used the application of rational choice theory linked to penalties for non-compliance and rewards for implementing change. The department linked what appeared to be rational choice theory to psychological rewards where schools that obtained quantitatively high matric results were publicly applauded at a meeting attended by high ranking officials of the Department, and those that obtained lower percentages were also publicly reprimanded and caused to write common quarterly tests by the Department. The manipulation of the educators, through reward and punishment, was a reflection of unequal power relations between the Department and the schools. The former used political power and authority to force change on schools. It therefore appeared clearly that the Department still used power coercive change strategies to enforce change.

Sergiovanni (1998) argued that unconstrained change forces embody democratic professional and cultural forces. According to the Department's stated and written vision, it was to provide quality education in a democratic environment however; it did the opposite, by employing a top-down prescriptive approach. The DoEC used a strategy in which the schools were involved only during the last stage of implementation of innovation. For example, educators maintained that the Department outlawed corporal punishment without their involvement and consultation. The DoEC seemingly coerced schools to comply with its instructions without any consultation with micro political structures, which did not in turn consult with the school constituents. Thus, these processes undermined democratic and professional forces.

It can be argued that the Department did not have time to introduce and encourage the process of participation in change because of its long and time-consuming nature, and therefore could not create and introduce the culture of democracy. The SEM I interviewed,

supported the statement above when he angrily stated that *every thing came from above, as Superintendents we have no power*. On the other hand, educators themselves were possibly not ready to accept democracy, or they did not yet understand democracy. However, educators also confused me because they used democratic principles for their convenience. They argued that they could not abandon corporal punishment because all school constituents decided democratically in favour of it. The Department was accused of being undemocratic. There was therefore a tension between the DoEC and the educators' perceptions of democracy and human rights.

Professional development is the other aspect of unconstrained change (Sergiovanni, 1998). Schwabn and Spady (1998) maintain that people cannot change unless they are developed and trained. The Department implemented a lot of attempted development of educators through workshops. However, these workshops for transformation did not seem to assist school constituents to change because there appeared to be a mismatch between what educators needed in order to improve teaching efficacy and what the Department thought they needed for transformation. It appeared again to have been a time factor that caused the Department not to give itself enough time to consult. The transformation process was consequently rushed, and educators could not cope with it. Also the cascade model of training the trainers, used by the Department appeared to be problematic. Those who attended the workshops did not transmit the information to their colleagues who remained at school. Focus groups at two schools raised concerns about not receiving information.

Sergiovanni (1998) also referred to cultural changes, which rely on psychosocial characteristics or community norms, values and ideas which, when internalised, speak to everyone in a moral voice. The psychosocial characteristics are pervasive in the community and the school, and bring about norms of interaction and collaboration in the change process. This was what appeared to be lacking in all Microsystems of the three case study schools. It seemed that parents, educators and learners were not motivated by felt obligations and norms that define the school as a conventional community. The non-cooperation of all school constituents to play their role was evident in all three case study

schools. It can be argued that lack of energy to solve problems at these schools was apparently due to lack of school culture and sense of self-esteem and belonging.

Both the past and present education departments may well have eroded this culture due to their instructional, top-down and non-consultative approach in education management. Schwabn and Spady (1998) maintain that the critical pillar of change is the feeling by members of the organisation that they can identify with and are part of what is going on. According to the authors above, it is this feeling of belonging, being connected, participating and contributing which is the motivational fuel of productive change. In all these schools this feeling did not appear to exist due to the prevailing culture of bureaucracy.

### **8.1.3. Action research, intervention and change**

The action research model applies the scientific method of fact-finding and experimentation to practical problems requiring action solution. It therefore allowed me to investigate to the problems of change in the case study schools. I also used the information gained in the pursuit of the solution as a contribution to knowledge and theory. I used this model to help collect, organize and use data for diagnostic planning and problem solving. I used the data as a tool in an attempt to aid the change process, not as punishment to enforce certain educator behaviour. Consistent with scientific method, data are used to make decisions on the basis of empirical facts rather than on the basis of power, position, tradition, or persuasion.

The weakness was that I was not researcher and practitioner, but researcher and observer to help diagnose the problem and leave decision to educators. If school organizations are to improve continually they must develop building and district based action research strategies that will allow them to determine if they are effectively meeting the needs of their learners.

The purpose of following principles of action research was to assist me and to enable educators to be aware of a sense of the process of change and to strive to account for that process. It assisted me to observe the impact of my interventions because I used action research for both research and interventions. It was also used to help educators to reflect on their practices and reaction to the intervention. I expected focus groups to look back critically at what had happened during focus group sessions. This reflection could teach them what to do in preparation for the future sessions. Action research also helped me as a researcher to understand what took place in the light of what I planned. Guided by the action research cycle, I did the following:

- Went to each focus group at each school with a standard question I had prepared to ask the focus groups;
- Used the question during focus group interviews and discussions and tape recorded their responses;
- Returned to my office to do a write-up of recorded responses, and reflected on the whole process;
- Then prepared questions based on the responses to explore areas that were not clear and clarity or explanation of some contradictions, in our next meeting.

I expected focus groups, particularly educators and SMT, to follow the same process after each session, that is, to reflect and consider what took place in the session: their reaction, what they learnt and what they were going to do with what they learnt during the focus group discussion. After each, I had done the write-ups and typed and produced copies for each case study school before the next session. I wanted them to read their responses to verify whether they were accurately captured. This would also give them an opportunity to consider changing some of their statements or decide to correct what they were not doing right. Therefore, in each session I started by referring to the previous session's discussion, by summarising it and giving them an opportunity to reconsider what they said, before moving on with the discussions. I used the beginning of the sessions to probe, get clarity on outstanding issues and challenge contradictions and resistance.

Following this cycle of action research and intervention assisted me to observe how educators dealt with issues of change. Educators and SMT focus groups of the first and second case study schools were consistent in their resistance to change. In a few cases they showed some slight shift of their positions when some members convincingly stated their opinions. But this did not cause them to process the information in such a manner as to change their attitudes and behaviour. For instance the first case study school took almost a year to develop a homework policy, which seemed to be the bone of contention between them and learners. Apparently they took so long to address this issue because I did not tell them to do so as I wanted to see how they took initiative to address their problems. Educators attributed this to the HOD members' fault that did not give them direction, while the SMT members blamed themselves for waiting for the principal to take the initiative to instruct them to act.

The slow progress of change and the time it took were suggestive of lack of knowledge, strategies and skills. This was later proved when the SMT eventually drew up a timetable and presented it to me, thinking it was a homework policy. This seemed to indicate that the resistance was not necessarily intentional, but may have been related to a lack of know how. The number of sessions I took with the SMT before they attempted to develop the homework policy and the time it took for them to make this decision indicated to me that change was financially and emotionally costly. I repeated the same cycle of action research with little or no shift of position, and this was very frustrating to both of us, educators and I, because I was anxious to see them change.

The SMT members' acknowledgement of their inertia and dependency on the principal to take the initiative was another example that suggested that educators vacillated between wanting professional freedom and close supervision.

The example of their approach to corporal punishment was the most difficult theme that showed the greatest resistance. Educators and SMT members showed reluctance to move their positions. I again repeated the cycle for several sessions without any significant success. In this regard resistance was based on cultural values and norms. However,

within and cross case comparison did not show that educators were consistent in resisting change in corporal punishment because of their cultural beliefs. It appeared to be used as an excuse for refusing to abandon an easy approach to discipline.

In the last case study school the action research cycle facilitated change, because after each session they met to discuss and implement the strategies that had emerged from the discussions.

Action research cycles not only helped me to follow the process – action research, intervention and change or resistance, but it helped me employ triangulation to facilitate change. Consequently in some instances I had to approach some members of the focus group to interview them separately or individually. I also asked for change to some focus group members in the RCL, to include more active members and release those who were passive, and this improved the quality of the discussion.

## **8.2 Recommendations for encouraging change**

Change does not take place in a vacuum but rather in a social context. A bigger picture must be seen first to identify variables that will influence the process. In this study, the whole environmental context as a factor. Schools may not change, unless the whole environment in which they exist changes. Schools are invariably a reflection of the society in which they are situated. This is a critical and most difficult variable to manipulate. But it could at the same time be argued that schools are potentially agents of change in their environments.

Addressing the problems of the community to enable the schools to function normally is the most challenging task. However it could be tackled by bringing on board all stakeholders in the community. In one of the case study schools representatives of community structures were organized and invited to attend the meeting where the SGB addressed them on the drug and substance abuse. The involvement of all stakeholders enabled the school to know whom they could contact about any drug related problems.

But the weakness of this meeting was that it did not appoint a co-coordinating committee to drive the process forward. Also, the DoEC or I as the initiator of the meeting through focus groups did not identify a person from the DoEC to be delegated to the project. This was a promising project for dealing with drug traffic because the collaboration of community structures could eventually uproot the problem and create a conducive environment for learners to study and learn effectively.

The principal has always been emphasized in much research, as the crucial figure in the school, and his or her role as the most central in bringing about change (Lashway, 1993). It was evident in this study that leadership and management styles are invariably deeply embedded in the personality of the person. The principals' idiosyncratic characteristics influenced change differently in the three case study schools. Some personalities are very difficult to deal with as was seen in one of the case study schools.

In terms of the situational leadership model (Hersey and Blanchard, 1993) the principal first needed a situational approach (S1), where the officials would provide specific instructions and closely supervise his performance. This model contends that strong direction with employees who have low readiness, that is, are unable, unwilling or insecure, and is appropriate if they are to become productive. The DoEC would have to be prepared to pay the price for the development of this principal, because frequent visits to the school to monitor implementation and progress would be necessary until the principal showed an increase in readiness. The increase in readiness would be rewarded by increased positive reinforcement and socio-emotional support.

The cascade model as used by the DoEC in their attempts at educator development, where there was the training of the trainers to cascade the training, seemed to have been a dismal failure for lack of a follow-up programme. This was because the DoEC was too ambitious to do everything in a very short space of time, and with little or no resources in some instances. Some of the case study principals were naturally slow to act and the process of behaviour change and leadership and management development would be very time consuming and costly.

The cascade model could be replaced by school-based in-service development and the problem solving approach. The change agent, in this case the government, would consult with the schools to find out about their needs and how they want to address those needs. The change agents could go to the individual schools to work out an intervention strategy together with the educators. This intervention programme could be preceded by SWOT analysis, followed by a school development plan spelling out the details of strategic planning elements with specific time frames and deadlines for individual tasks. The educators would decide on the deadlines and monitoring mechanisms. This model could enable educators to own the process of change and then become committed to it.

The demerit of the problem solving or educator-centred model is that it would be time consuming and costly. A few schools at a time would be selected and developed, while the others would be left to lag behind. However, the change that would result from this model has the potential to be consistent, gradual and permanent, because educators themselves could be transformed. Also, this change would follow educators' pace and they would become the controllers of it. The Department could address their stated needs and obviate mismatching.

This study supported findings of the study done by Wilson and Mc Pake (2000) on managing change in small Scottish primary schools. When principals were asked about their attitudes to change, fifty two percent identified change as problematic because of the pace of change and lack of time in which to achieve it. They complained of little time available to cover all the targets. In a similar way focus groups in this study complained of too much to be done within a short time. The solution to address this problem according to a district manager I interviewed, and one focus group member in one of the case study school, was to prioritise the initiatives. Schools needed to have the audacity to use Fullan's evocative phrase "practice fearlessness" so that once a school has established its own destiny and its plans for how to move forward. School leaders need to recognize that they cannot do all the things that the Government ask them to do.

Allowing schools to prioritise could also ensure meaningful change programmes imposed by the Department, but implemented step-by-step, and evaluated after each step. However, this option would have to be negotiated with the DoEC because it is strongly bureaucratic and prescriptive. One of the district managers I interviewed stated that schools could be allowed to choose change programmes they preferred to start with and could implement, and others could follow after they had successfully implemented and evaluated the first ones. He further revealed that English medium schools did not follow the DoEC transformation programmes. These schools' principals seemed to be assertive and bold to defend what they did, whereas Black African schools' principals were submissive. English medium schools refused to be externally controlled, hence they managed change in an orderly and systematic manner.

Time constraints and lack of strategies and skills appeared to be a factor that did not allow educators in case study schools to deal with numerous change programmes.

### **8.3. Limitations of this study**

The study of systemic processes of change, when understood and guided by the definition of systemic change, would require working with school systems in all the Provincial, regional, district and circuit offices in order to understand fully the processes of change. The very term systemic assumes that change must be practical, beginning with the existing bureaucratic structure, and include politics, legislation and lines of authority in the whole department and at each tier level. These aspects could not be covered in this study.

The other aspects of systemic change could have been to use both horizontal and vertical change structures to achieve change. A horizontal use of systemic change would mean carrying out the study in all schools, which would be impossible and unmanageable in terms of time and cost. A vertical use would mean also investigating finance, policies and relationships and lines of authority in addition to SGB members. To illustrate this point, in my study I did observe that policy formulation and implementation in schools were not

co-coordinated. In most cases policies were misinterpreted and in others not implemented at all, by DoEC officials. This could constitute a study of its own to identify the problems that affect policy implementation. The approach in this study limited me to using one tenth of the vertical structures.

When used horizontally, systemic would mean working with every school in a system such as all schools in a particular circuit or district office. But what could have been easier than studying the whole system in a circuit or district could have been the study of every aspect of one school system. This could have enabled one to consider the whole range of school aspects, beginning from the structure, personnel, policies and rules of the school, curriculum, learner assessment and promotions, finance and the whole range of other issues. There were numerous other aspects the study could not include because of their scope and my time constraints.

This study concentrated on only four school constituents and structures, namely: educators, SGB, SMT and RCL who were interviewed through focus groups. The concentration was more on the process of change, or how they went about dealing with change. This excluded a range of other factors I have already mentioned above, which could have yielded more information. The limitation in terms of the scope and inclusivity opened gaps that left some questions unanswered. For instance, it was evident in this study that the DoEC's officials played a major role in influencing the reaction of the three case study schools. But I could not easily set up focus groups of the officials of the department to get their views of the process of change, because this was not part of the study design, though I interviewed a few of them to clarify some issues in the process of the study. It could have been beneficial to hear the DoEC's response to educators' view that the department's leadership approach was prescriptive and top-down. I have a hunch that the DoEC would support the view that they had no choice but to use a top-down strategy because it was reportedly fast and effective in achieving results. Also, that the DoEC officials themselves had no choice but to carry out the instructions from head office.

The improvement needed in education is too extensive and vast to be done within the limits of four stakeholders of the school. Therefore, for meaningful improvement to take place in schools, fundamental changes affecting all aspects of all schools would be needed.

This study was a qualitative one based on the three case study schools. The purpose was to gain an insight into and understanding of the systemic processes of educational change in three IsiZulu medium schools. As a qualitative study that used focus groups it had inherent limitations. The fact that, according to Morgan (1977), focus groups are driven by the researcher's interests was perhaps a source of weakness. The successful collection of relevant and useful data depended entirely upon my qualitative research skills and knowledge. My limitations in some knowledge and skills in qualitative research methods, as a beginner, could have impacted on the quality of data I collected. I collected masses of data that I had to sift and transcribe. To know which data to use and which to leave out needs vast experience, which I did not possess when I started this research.

The focus groups themselves influenced the nature of the data they produced. The interaction of members with one another influenced what each contributed, or did not contribute. Some members of the focus groups, especially females, conformed to the group thinking or to kept quiet. It was only at one case study school that I had the opportunity to interview such individuals separately and found their views were actually different from those of the group. It seemed possible that if the study was based on individual interviews, rather than focus group, the data could have emerged differently. Also there was a tendency to polarization where some members expressed extreme ideas. For instance one focus group member in one of the case study schools exaggerated the corporal punishment issue. It seemed as if this member wanted to display his strong beliefs in a Zulu culture and its reportedly harsh discipline. This one individual in the group seemed to influence the thinking of the group and consequently the direction of the interviewing process.

The second language English I used with the focus groups could have been another limiting factor in this study. There were some educators who did not participate well in the focus group discussion. The majority of these were female educators. It was not clear whether full participation was hindered by the language difficulties or the gender factor related to being a Zulu woman, who was expected to be subordinate to Zulu men. If the IsiZulu language was had been used, the focus groups might have produced information, opinion and feelings more freely and profusely.

As a researcher I was also, to an extent, a limiting factor. Though educators generally accepted me because of my past supportive role in the school, some educators did not necessarily trust me. This was evidenced in one of the three case study schools where educators expressed their fear of opening up, because they thought the purpose of the study was to reveal educators' weaknesses. Therefore some of the educators might have been withdrawn due to this fear of the researcher.

The findings may not necessarily be generalised to all schools, because of the limited sample of the schools used. It is understood that a case study in qualitative research is used to understand the phenomenon, rather than to make generalisations. Also, the study was limited to IsiZulu medium schools, and may not be applied to other language groups of the African peoples.

The systemic processes were limited to the four stakeholders of the school, educators, SMT, SGB and RCL. It excluded other variables which combine to bring about change at the school. Factors such as learner to classroom ratio, learner to educator ratio and even the socio-economic factors in these communities were not adequately taken into account. The literacy level per household is a major factor that could have impacted strongly on change and improvement of the schools. It became evident how the literacy level affected the support parents offered to their children, and the input they made to SGB's. But because this variable was not included for further study I interpreted it as a category of non-cooperation with the school.

The limitations of the study, because of some of the variables that were excluded, made it difficult to answer some of the questions accurately. The family constitution such as the presence of father and mother figures of the learners in the case study school appeared to be critical, because it was evident that learners did not get support from their parents, and many of them were without parents.

The situation of the school in terms of comparison of rural and urban schools was not adequately researched as a factor influencing change. There is a belief in most cases, based on experience and observation rather than research that schools in the urban areas performs better academically than schools in the rural areas. My selection of the case study schools did not really take into account these differences, and whether they could impact differently on the process of educational change. A comparative case study between schools in rural and urban areas to find out whether their response to change was different or the same, could have helped shed more light in this study.

The size of the school is also an important variable that could affect school improvement. The size of the school refers to the number of learners the school can admit. The number invariably affects the number of educators. Numerous studies have been carried out to confirm the importance of the size of the school as a factor in school improvement and change (Gumede, 1989). However, this case study excluded the size of the school as an important variable in change. All my three case study schools were large schools. It can therefore not be concluded whether the large size of the school influenced the management process of the schools and the educator behaviour.

The study did not consider the quality and characteristics of educators in terms of their age, experience and qualifications. These characteristics of educators were identified by the focus groups as an important variable in change. The study did not consider the importance of educator characteristics in the selection of the schools. The educator characteristics could include qualities such as verbal ability, educational level and experience. Studies in the past (e.g. Gumede1989) have indicated that the educator characteristics accounted for more variances in academic improvement of the school,

than all other school characteristics, if learner characteristics were isolated and controlled. This study did not therefore focus on this variable as a factor influencing the process of change. The study could not establish which of the variables was most influential. It was therefore not possible to correlate their performance with any of their characteristics in order to identify where the problems lay.

#### **8.4 Recommendations for further studies**

One of the questions the study intended to answer was the leadership approach exercised by the principals. In all three case studies it was not clear enough whether they made a choice to be dominant or passive or whether it was a trait embedded in their personality. Very little explained the role played by all three principals. But there was a gradual improvement of academic performance in grade 12 at all three schools. It was not easy to establish whether the success was attributable to the principals' leadership. In fact this begged the question whether academic success in IsiZulu medium schools was a result of good leadership and teaching and learning. My hunch is that it may not simplistically be correlated with the performance of each school. There are other variables at work.

Exactly what are the most relevant factors which combine to produce a good and successful Isizulu medium school, given the factors that have been identified to militate against change in these schools? There is unsurprisingly, a paucity of studies relating to the underlying factors contributing to a good Zulu school. There is a need to identify those variables that characterize such schools.

The researcher who undertakes to do such a study could follow the same steps I have followed here, a qualitative study that could make use of the focus groups to collect data. Schools selected would have to be similar in terms of location, to the schools I have selected, that is one school in a deep rural area, one school in a semi-urban area and one school in a township. The schools would need to be the opposite of the schools I selected, that is, schools that have done well in matric academic performance, for instance schools that have attained a high pass rate.

The same number of focus groups, that is educators, SMT, SGB members and RCL could be asked the same standard question to account for their success compared to their previous years of high rate of failure. The data collected from the focus groups could be analysed to produce categories and patterns. Categories could then be compared with the categories produced in this study.

My experience in the Isizulu medium schools and what I have heard from the departmental officials support the view that the principal plays a central role in a school. Research in leadership from several authors such as Murphy and Beck (1995), Newton and Tarrant (1992), Gultig Ndlovu and Bertram (1999) have all supported the key role the principal should play to enable the school to change. However, what still needs to be researched is what personal qualities are needed to match the job demands of an Isizulu medium school that is situated in an environment similar to that of the three case study schools. Such an environment would need to be one where parents are not supportive, the community is affected by drug traffic, educators are not professionally committed to their work, and unemployment is high, causing earners to lose interest in their schoolwork.

The research process would need to identify a school that was once engulfed in such problems, and was transformed by a particular principal with specific personal qualities. Such schools do exist, and would be valuable sites for further study. The same research design and methodology could be followed, and focus groups could be used to collect data. Categories would be generated and patterns formed, as in this study. The results would be compared with the results of this study to establish to what extent the difference was due to the principal's personal qualities and other external variables.

All three of these case study schools improved their grade 12 performances, in spite of the reportedly existing problems. This performance, however, begs many questions: What is it that brought about change and improvement in these schools? How can quality education be operationalised? It seemed as if there was still no clear understanding of

what quality education is in IsiZulu medium schools. The DoEC officials themselves appeared to think of good academic performance in grade 12 as an index of quality education. The results of this thinking caused the DoEC to put pressure on schools to concentrate on grade 12 only as the window through which they were seen by the world. Good academic performance itself was still not well conceptualised, because it seemed to refer to quantitative measurement, and this was misleading. Therefore school improvement and change seemed to mean quantitative improvement in the number of learners who passed.

There appears therefore, to be a dire need for an appropriate conceptualisation of educational change and quality education. The research would need to start by conceptualising the type of learners the DoEC wanted to produce. The present outcomes based education system has some of these qualities in what is called critical outcomes. But the major question would be, what type of schools could produce the type of learners envisaged, and how could such schools be created?

Literature survey could be done, with special emphasis on studying those education systems in the world that are known to produce learners, youth and citizens with the type of qualities envisaged. Schools that are similar to the envisaged schools could be identified and further empowered to serve as resource centres for other schools.

Schools in the current study improved statistically without any change in pertinent variables that were central to the problems of the schools. Therefore, is better examination performance a reflection of a good school and quality education?

The persistence of racial vestiges needs to be investigated to establish whether it is not a reflection of the poor self-esteem of IsiZulu medium schools, when they compare themselves with White educators. Educators claimed not to be supported by both learners and parents on the grounds of being Africans. Could this be taken, as a reflection of the negative self-concept of all IsiZulu medium schools, or to what extent is their self-image affecting their self-efficacy? Also, an examination of the situation in both Black and White schools in South Africa in various provinces could assist policy-makers

to have a clear view of processes of educational change throughout South Africa. Such an examination could shed light on this study which was limited to IsiZulu medium schools of KwaZulu-Natal.

The focus groups tended to use defensive means to avoid taking responsibility for what they failed to do. Further research is necessary to find out the extent of damage done by the apartheid philosophy. It would be interesting to know after nine years of political freedom in South Africa, whether Africans have changed their ways of thinking about themselves and the white racial group in particular.

A qualitative study could be carried out where focus groups could be used to collect data. The group could be requested to respond to specific questions based on racial perceptions. The study could help develop assertiveness and self-concept improvement programmes.

The participation of female educators at one of the schools was minimal. Do African female educators still bear or carry imaginary oppression by men? Or was this characteristic of those females in the rural areas since the school is situated in a deep rural area compared to the other two case study schools which are in semi-urban areas. How do we separate their personality characteristics from their traditional submission as a sign of respect for men? What are the DoEC officials' perceptions of female educators? The statistics below seem to indicate that more male educators than female are favoured in promotions. What could be possible scientific explanation of this pattern? Research is needed to clarify these questions as well.

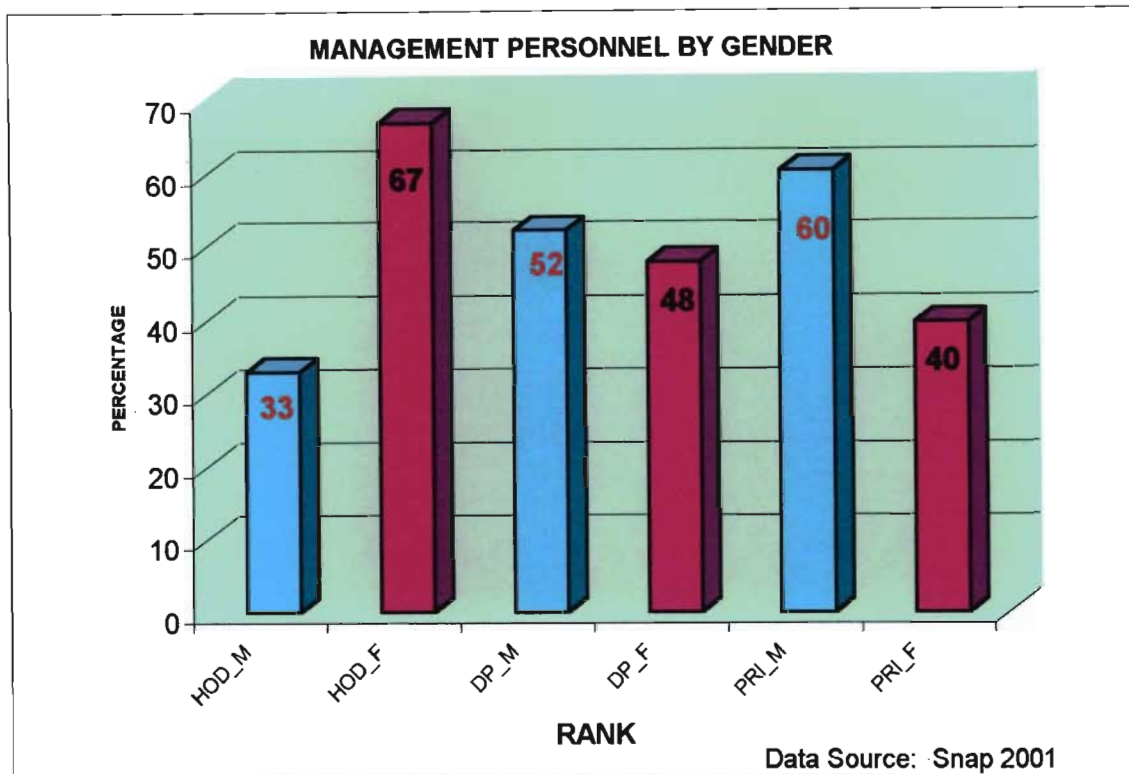


Figure 8.2 Trend of promotions between male and female educators in KZN DoEC

The questions above warrant further research into how female educators see themselves in relation to their male counterparts. In the past, and to an extent, presently, African females in general are not treated equally with males. They are not easily appointed to positions of principalship in high schools, as in primary schools possibly due to the beliefs that they do not have the required ability.

A qualitative study is called for, with regard to the apparent discrimination of male educators against female educators. The DoEC is still a male dominated organisation. It is questioned whether the Employment Equity Act is being implemented in this department.

## **8.5. Reliability and validity**

Reliability in this study may be considered by discussing the consistency, stability and repeatability of the informants' accounts and the investigator's ability to collect and record information accurately. The researcher needs to know whether the informants, if interviewed over time, would answer questions with essentially the same information.

### **8.5.1. Consistency**

The examination of the within case analysis and cross case analysis (tables 4.3, 5.3, 6.3, and 6.4) reflects this consistency of the responses given by the case study schools. When the responses of all three case study schools were compared with one another on a matrix (Table 6.4), they still showed that there was a greater consistency of information by focus groups, in different case study schools. Consistency of information could also be used as evidence from different sources, that the focus groups' responses produced valid and reliable information. I also tested my analysis of this information by peer debriefing where I asked my colleagues to give their opinions of the focus groups responses. Their opinions and understanding of the responses did not deviate significantly from mine.

### **8.5.2. Generalisation**

Though qualitative research may not be used, in the strictest sense, to generalise findings to other situations of the same nature, the consistency of the information given by focus groups in all three case study schools seemed to point to the generalisability of the findings to other similar cases. This seemingly indicated that the information given by focus groups in all case study schools was valid and reliable.

The generalisability of the study was strengthened by a clear description of how the study was carried out, a clear systems theory approach, as a theoretical framework on which the study was based, the limitation of the study to only four school constituents and

structures who were asked to respond to one standard question. The responses were tape-recorded and analysed using McMillan and Schumacher (1993) approach. The data collected is therefore available for scrutiny and comparison.

### **8.5.3. Triangulation**

This study was dependable because of the use of four focus groups in each school of the three different case study schools, to collect data to answer the research questions, though this did not include more methods and sources to gather data. The four sources of information, the process used, which was systematic and well documented, probably made this study reliable.

### **8.5.4. Pattern generation**

How objective the study was, is an important question to ask especially because this was a qualitative study, which could be prone to subjectivity. In qualitative research this question could be reframed to ask whether the study is confirmable, that is, whether enough has been given about the study and most importantly, whether the findings flow from the data.

McMillan and Schumacher's (1993) data analysis technique of pattern generation adequately answers this question. Pattern generation provided a process that forced me to go through the data thoroughly and repeatedly to identify categories from topics or themes whose relationships formed patterns. Therefore the categories and their patterns were based directly on the data, and this process can be independently followed and confirmed to be reliable.

### **8.5.5. Verification**

Verification of the data in this study served to test the reliability of the informants. I tape recorded the interview of the focus groups, transcribed tapes, typed and produced copies

which I took back to focus groups members for verification of what they said. The verification process helped to clarify issues that were confusing, the content as well as the verbatim terminology and also helped to expand on the information by clarifying unclear or incomplete materials and essentially validated that the material was correct. In rare cases, focus group members changed their opinions when they read what they had said. Through this process incorrect information was eliminated.

Direct observation of the school or educators in action also helped to verify the data. I verified the interview materials by direct observation of the situation in each school, and there was no observable discrepancy between the information given by the focus groups and the prevailing circumstances in the schools.

## CHAPTER 9

### CONCLUSION

The four decades of apartheid education caused systemic changes in South Africa in that all aspects of the education system were targeted. The DoEC aimed at changing management, governance, funding of education, curriculum, organisational structure and the infrastructure. It was however not clear whether there was a political will to shift from centralisation to decentralisation, because the restructuring of the DoEC has resulted in a bloated apex and more expensive structure. The aspects targeted appear to have compounded the difficulties of educational change.

The study of the three case study schools in a sample of traditionally IsiZulu schools has revealed that very little has changed at ground level in these three case study schools since the days of apartheid rule. The perception that IsiZulu medium schools resist change seemed to be confirmed during the research process. The challenge of this study was to investigate the factors contributing to their perceived resistance to change.

#### **9.1. Change is slow and difficult**

Seemingly very little has changed since the inception of apartheid education. The problems identified by the Eiselen Commission in 1950, Mdluli (1980) and Gumede (1985) were found by this study to be persisting. The provision of learning material and infrastructure may have been improved, but the ethos, climate and culture in the schools appear to be similar despite numerous efforts to inculcate the new culture of teaching and learning. It has been seen that ideological influence determines the approach to change. It seems that the political power of the few in the higher echelons of the hierarchical structure of the DoEC is still being used in an attempt to dictate the nature and pace of change.

It also became evident that even a modicum of change is very slow and frustratingly difficult. Multifarious factors suggested the underlying causes for this slowness and difficulty. The school is a microsystem in a complex system consisting of layers of systems. In the macrosystem there are still influence of the apartheid ideology, racism and subcultures that contributed to the development of policies and legislation governing the education processes. In the past these systems did not interact with one another, and this lack of communication seems to persist even during the new educational dispensation. Lack of communication still seemed to exist even between learners and educators, educators and the SMT and the SMT and the SGB. The influence and philosophy of the past educational ideology still largely characterize the ethos and culture of the schools, and especially the process of educating.

It will be a mammoth task, therefore, to bring about change at the macro systemic level, change that could permeate all other systems to influence thinking. The complexity and challenge of change in IsiZulu medium schools is the coordination of all layers in the macro-, exo-, meso and microsystems so that there is communication. This could enable schools to learn externally and internally. Smith (1984) made the following observation:

In terms of systems theory, change must begin at macrosystemic level and spread to affect all other layers. Given the past apartheid ideology and its effects on IsiZulu medium schools, the challenge for educators is to ensure that there is a constant action in all layers of the system because educators are change agents, and are part of the wider environment. If educators engage with all other systems' layers they will protect themselves from external imposition while at the same time causing disequilibrium within the school that might ensure constant change. I believe that it is only by educators taking action to alter their environment that there might be any possibility of deep educational change. However, the capacity by educators to be involved in all systems in order to effect change in schools is still an area to be investigated.

The DoEC's approach to education and the running of schools was a manifestation of this lack of interaction between the systems. The department has its political agenda, which it

follows at all cost, to the exclusion of others. Invariably the DoEC ostensibly imposed innovations in order to save time and expedite service delivery. On the other hand the school constituents were not aware of the intentions of the DoEC. This invariably resulted in a mismatch between what schools needed and what the department offered.

I should state that the DoEC appeared to use a top-down approach because democracy or involvement of all stakeholders is costly in financial terms, time-consuming because involving many people takes a lot of time, hence it delays the delivery of services and communication is usually problematic. Also, it depends on the powerful skills of negotiation and consultation by the principal. According to Harber and Davies (1997), the paradox of democracy is that it rejects the idea of right answers for all times, all contexts and all people. But democracy celebrates diversity within a system of rules agreed to through participation. This type of democracy would seem to be feared by the DoEC.

I want to agree with Hargreaves (1998) that people fear change not just because it presents them with something new, uncertain or unclear- but also because it has no obvious or common meaning for them. The agenda of education should be the greatest gateway to opportunity and powerful distribution of life chances. Attempts to change education in fundamental ways are ultimately political acts. They are attempts to distribute power and opportunity within the wider culture. Educational change is thus a moral and political struggle. It is the social and political dimension of educational change which causes it to flounder most.

Introducing, sustaining and assessing educational change are political processes because they inevitably alter or threaten to alter existing power relationships, especially if that process implies, as it almost always does, a reallocation of resources. Educational change can no longer be achieved, if it ever really could be, in a step-by-step, linear process.

"Change has usually been something done to teachers as opposed to something done with them" (Fink and Stoll, in Hargreaves et al. 1998:297). Angus and Loudon (in Hargreaves,

1998): 831) concur with the above mentioned writers in stating that “government want their way without having to convince the teaching profession that reform is in the teachers interests.”

Therefore there has to be a balance between the top down and the bottom approaches. According to Fullan (1993) neither centralization nor decentralization works: This means that system cannot change schools by mandate, and widespread school change cannot occur by school invention alone, without support and leadership from the policy system. “Centralization errs on the side of over-control and decentralization errs towards chaos. Top-down change does not work because one cannot mandate what matters.” (Fullan, 1993: 37). Neither a heavy-handed view of top-down reform nor a romantic vision of bottom-up change is plausible. Both local invention and supportive leadership are needed, along with new horizontal efforts that support cross-school consultation and learning.

I therefore concur with Newton and Tarrant (1992: 91) when they state that

successful heads—have not been authoritarian, consultative, or participative, they have been all three at different times as the conditions seemed to warrant, though most often participative. Their success has often come from choosing well, from knowing when to take the lead and when to confirm the leadership offered by their colleagues.

In this regard, Jackson (2000) would insist that the principal should take the initiative to offer leadership to educators, instead of only confirming what educators offer.

The solution to the problem of the top-down approach seems to lie in a management paradox - to control without controlling. Pascale (1990, in Fullan 1993:37) supported this statement in examining the Ford case, when he said, “Change flourishes in a ‘sandwich.’ When there is consensus above, and pressure, below things happen.”

Top-down is a management system that controls employees' behaviour. It was shown in this study that the DoEC used this method to manage schools. I therefore concur that the solution to change and for turning this situation around, is to concentrate on "improving the quality of thinking, the capacity for reflected and team learning and the ability to develop shared visions and shared understanding of complex business issues" (Fullan, 1993:37)

What I have observed in my case study schools confirms what Fullan (1993) calls the cardinal rule of change, that you cannot force people to think differently or compel them to develop new skills. Marris (1975, in Fullan 1993:23) describes this problem of forcing people to change this way:

When those who have the power to manipulate changes act as if they have only to explain, and when their explanations are not at once accepted, shrug off opposition as ignorance or prejudice, they express a profound contempt for the meaning of lives than their own. For the reformers have already assimilated these changes to their purposes, and worked out a reformulation which makes sense to them, perhaps through months or years of analysis and debate. If they deny others the chance to do the same, they treat them as puppets dangling by the threads of their own conceptions.

The internalisation of the values of the dominant culture by educators has seemingly reinforced their inherent subordination and passivity of the past. This is probably the cause of educators' lack of energy to take initiative to solve problems. A new type of leadership is needed to unleash the educators' potential for creativity and problem solving. A democratic atmosphere, conducive to this release of potential and growth, is necessary.

The culture of blame that appeared to be a major factor in all case study schools, served to provide ego protection because educators either lacked skills or know how or feared the unknown that would be brought about by change. Almost all "educational changes of value require new skills, behaviour, and beliefs or understanding" (Fullan, 1991:22). If

change requires skills, creative thinking and committed action, then educators doubted whether they had this capacity. For many decades they had been made to depend on others such as the department, for change and improvement of their schools. The attempts by the DoEC simply to transfer knowledge and skills to educators invariably stifled initiatives to change and fostered a culture of blame and dependency.

The inertia characteristic of all case study schools is common in most organizations faced with the complexity of change processes. This is because according to organizational change theories, human systems seek homeostasis and equilibrium. There are difficult paradoxes which appear to be irreconcilable problems, seemingly intractable dilemmas which often paralyse managerial action in a school. The DoEC is faced with the problem of involving all stakeholders in the development of education policy and legislation, whereas at the same time it must silence and discipline those stakeholders who are critical of what the department does. The DoEC seems to have difficulties in addressing this problem, because it needs powerful negotiation skills to deal with critics. Educators appeared to lack the capacity to deal with the paradox of change, whilst maintaining continuity. Change was expected to be done with least the disruption. But allowing educators to attend workshops and meetings during school hours was unavoidable. Educators needed new skills, which they needed to learn by attending workshops and meetings.

There are usually many variables which are concomitant with change. The multiplicity of variables involved in change compounds the problem because the variables are so interconnected that change in one has a ripple effect on others. One manager explained her frustration in dealing with the extensive interconnectedness of factors in change in her organization by using the following pair of analogies:

I used to think that our organization was like a string: tug on one end of it, and the other end simply moves in the direction you pulled. However, it turned out that the string was really just a thread in a complexly woven fabric: pull on the single thread, and you run the danger of unravelling the whole thing (Miller and Dess, 1996:331).

Because of the interconnection of factors, changing a number of overlapping and related issues simultaneously is justified. This view above seems to negate the educators' view, and what I recommended earlier on that attempting to change many aspects of education in one short time is counterproductive. However, this seems to suggest that while you tackle one, observe and check also the ripple effects on others.

## **9.2. Change cannot be mandated**

I concur with Harris and Hopkins (2000:12) that the DoEC has to learn that “policy cannot mandate what matters, that variability is the rule and that local implementation dominates outcomes.” The DoEC is a centralized education system inherited from the apartheid education system. Also, schools must add value to their learners by reinventing themselves as centres of inquiry. They must make inquiry into teaching and learning their key developmental priority. The intent is to make all schools learning communities for staff as well as students – making use of the most powerful models of learning with both groups. I again agree with Sayer (1989:38) that “attempts by government to improve change on school systems are as unrealistic as attempts made by schools to impose behavioural change and learning on pupils” because it is tantamount to imposing the will of the dominant group on the weaker group.

The interface of Western democratic values with those of Africans appears to have complicated the processes of educational change. Western democracy is supported by the prevailing culture of openness and audacity to challenge and differ with anyone irrespective of status. However it has been implemented here only as representative democracy, instead of active democracy, where there is a full participation of all stakeholders and individuals. A few individuals are often consulted at the last stage of the innovation in order to legitimise the process.

African democracy or how Africans conceptualise it has an inherent complication because it has valued the hierarchical structure with inherited positions. This often confused African educators themselves, who believed, only when it suited them, that certain people were heirs to certain positions. They also believed, that directions and instruction had to come from top. This thinking could have suppressed their initiative. However, when it suited them educators challenged the prescriptive approach of the DoEC.

I therefore concur with Harber and Davies (1997) that democratisation is an integral part of development and changes. Schools such as ours do not provide suitable classes for the development of democratic citizenry. The continuing authoritarian relationships, and cultural patterns of childbearing in traditional AmaZulu homes, often reinforce the polarisation between African and Western cultures, and confuse both educators and learners when they encounter these cultures in schools.

It is consequently not surprising that IsiZulu medium schools have always been perceived as resistant to change. The democratic and cultural values in their society seemed not yet ready to support a process of change that is invariably based on a fully democratic value system. Educators themselves are not yet free to exercise their professional skills to map the road to change. The DoEC officials themselves are seemingly not yet free to relinquish control of educators, who are consequently not able to formulate the character of their teaching and evaluate its effectiveness.

It is still maintained that the outcomes of school effectiveness are examination or results driven, and are less often assessed in terms of social behaviour, employability and survival of learners. Therefore, the examination driven education system seems to be one of the major stumbling blocks to change, because it is dictated by a top-down leadership style, which is wrongly believed to accelerate the process of change, when many changes are thought to be necessary within a short space of time.

Democracy provides for solution of disputes and conflicts, and must be developed as a way of life in schools. In a democratic school structure the principal, staff and learners determine matters within the broader guidelines laid down in the constitution of the school, the Act which guides the governance of the school and the policy of the department. Within this democratic atmosphere educators are encouraged to take initiative and exercise responsibility and give learners a greater say in school management. Consequently, the rules democratically agreed on by both learners easily obey educators and all, and communication in the school is improved through regular discussion. In this sense, school improvement and change is a process of democratisation because of its involvement of all stakeholders.

### **9.3. Multi-level leadership**

Jackson (2000) has proposed a multi-level leadership built around values. In my opinion this is the type of leadership needed to address the traditional hierarchical structure of leadership that is common in IsiZulu medium schools. This view of leadership is not hierarchical, but federal, grounded in the learning richness of the school context itself.

This is a dispersed leadership for school change, which is not perceived as being inextricably linked to status or experience. The hierarchical structure should be broken down and instead, leadership capacity should be extended to all, through coaching and mentoring, designed to support individuals and to enable the school educators to research their own practice and generate their own knowledge. "In such settings leadership provides a context for adult learning focussing on helping staff to confront, make sense of and interpret the emerging circumstances of the school" (Jackson, 2000:71).

Of particular interest in this model of leadership is that effective school leaders are facilitators, who delegate and empower teachers to invent solutions to their problems. This is made possible because multi-level leadership is descriptive of a school culture involving collaborative learning. Collaborative work has been found to increase the involvement, engagement and affiliation across all staff.

It is maintained by Jackson (2000) that teachers are motivated through seeing their professional skills valued. They appreciate being offered opportunities to share with and to lead others by having their capacities continually expanded, and by feeling that their school is making a difference to the lives of learners.

It was clear in the study that the processes of educational change are so multifaceted and complex that solutions for a particular setting cannot be known in advance. This was made worse in the case study schools, because schools were under pressure to change many aspects of education within a short time. In addition, for educators coming out of the past apartheid system, there is fear of venturing into the unknown. This has led to their struggle to maintain the status quo even though it yielded unsatisfactory results.

So-called resistance to change can be used to tell us more about our staff and help us develop staff development programmes:

Often those who resist have something important to tell us. They can influence us. People resist for what they view as good reasons. They may see alternatives we never dreamed of. They may understand problems about the minutiae of implementation that we never see from our lofty perch (Hallinger and Kantamara, 2000:189).

Senge (1990) has concurred that resistance is a natural by-product of the change process. He maintained that leaders must learn to look for and use resistance.

It can be concluded by concurring with Hallinger and Kantamara (2000), that successful implementation of change in IsiZulu medium schools requires sophisticated leadership. A futurist Kemichi Ohmar has observed:

The contents of kitchen and closets may change, but the core mechanisms by which cultures maintain identity and socialize their young ones remain untouched. Schools were never designed with the goal of rapid change, and transformation of traditional schools into 'modern' organizations will require a long term perspective and persistence (Hallinger and Kantamara, 2000: 202).

This is because according to Fullan (1991), schools must be recultured in order to transform the habits, skills and practices of educators and others towards greater professional community which focuses on what learners are learning and what actions should be taken to improve the situation.

Retiming tackles the question of how time can be used more resourcefully for both educators and learners. Reculturing and retiming should drive restructuring because we already know that they make a huge difference on learning, although they are very difficult to change. (Fullan, 1991: 226).

This is the leadership of experts who understand the dynamics of leadership, situational leadership and strategic management, and know the context within which they operate. This knowledge is relevant and needs to be interpreted into programmes for change. education system.

#### 9.4. Final comments

With hindsight, it was possibly naïve to launch this research project hoping to assist the processes of change in schools. What became apparent, as the project progressed, was that the change processes will take a long time and that the energy required at all levels will need to be focussed on particular aspects of change, with far greater buy-in at the school level.

De Jong (1995:117) refers to five factors that impacted on the sustainability of change processes in some Western Cape schools:

- teacher morale
- rigidity of management
- time constraints
- lack of commitment, responsibility and accountability of educators

It would seem that the above factors have also played a role in the current study. This study, though, has enabled a deepened understanding of issues contributing to the

existence of the above factors, through consideration of ecosystemic understanding. Fullan (1991) emphasises that change is linear and takes time (up to a decade). Change is also dependent on a consistent and insightful leadership both from the Department and school principals. Furthermore, Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) emphasise the need for communities to value what education can offer, hence placing pressure on schools to change.

From a psychological perspective, Fullan (1991) also notes that change provokes anxiety. Therefore, there is the need for resources to be available to support educators, to reassure them, and to provide ongoing assistance. The focus group approach could hold much promise in this regard, but this methodology needs to be consistently available, possibly on a bi-weekly basis, to groups of stakeholders committed to change. Facilitators of each group could harness group energies, enable realistic and achievable goals to be worked towards, and encourage transformation where it matters most – amongst educators, learners and parents. Whilst this might seem resource intensive for a period of time, there is no doubt that as change processes gradually evolve, less attention may be needed as educators gain confidence, and the facilitator(s) may then move on to other settings. This may be a vision for the work of educational psychologists in our schools, supporting an ecosystemic and health promoting role as suggested by de Jong (1995).

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