



**Factors contributing to school effectiveness in a disadvantaged community in  
the Western Cape: A case study**

**by**

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**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree**

**DOCTOR OF EDUCATION**

**in the Faculty of Education and Social Sciences**

**at the**

**Cape Peninsula University of Technology**

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**Mowbray**

**November 2014**

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## DECLARATION

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**Date**

## ABSTRACT

Educational inequality still exists in South Africa and permeates lower socio-economic communities. Improving the situation in schools serving poorer communities is essential. Intense interest in school effectiveness through research and policy could provide impetus for school improvement. The study aims to understand what makes a school effective within a disadvantaged community. To address school ineffectiveness, the study proposes a substantive theory developed from within a disadvantaged community. The study further focused on determining the effect of the social conditions on the effectiveness of the school. Disadvantaged communities are characterised in the study by aspects such as weak socio-economic conditions, poverty and high unemployment rates.

The theoretical underpinnings of general systems theory (von Bertalanffy, 1950) and the theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1977) were used to conceptualise the study. The conceptual constructs of these theories were used as analytical tools in the study. The research study was based within an interpretive paradigm. The study made use of qualitative approaches as part of a case study research methodology. The case study is a high school in a poor community with black learners on the periphery of Cape Town. The sample used in the study included the school management team, school governing body, teachers, alumni and current Grade 12 learners. The data collection process involved interviews, both semi-structured and focus group interviews with the principal, the SMT, teachers and parents. Data was collected from learners by means of closed and open-ended questionnaires.

The results of the research study have identified five critical factors that contribute to the effectiveness of the school in a disadvantaged community: effective leadership, cross-collaboration and communication, high expectations, effective teaching and development, and supportive learning field. The study further found that cross-field factors have a major influence on learners and schools in becoming effective. The cross-field factors refer to the influence of leadership and teachers on the learners.

The study contributes to existing knowledge of school effectiveness, but particularly

in the context of disadvantaged communities in the Western Cape. The substantive theory on school effectiveness was developed within a relevant context to address ineffectiveness. The study concludes with recommendations pertaining to leadership, collaboration, expectations, teaching, the learning environment and motivation of teachers. Recommendations were made to improve the practice of making schools effective in disadvantaged communities.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All the honour and praise goes to my Almighty and Heavenly Father for his grace and strength bestowed upon me to complete this thesis and blessing me with so many amazing people I wish to acknowledge below.

First, my esteemed supervisors: Professor Rajendra Chetty and Dr Agnes Chigona.

My heartfelt appreciation to Professor Chetty, my supervisor, colleague and friend. Thank you for your guidance, love, patience and sharing your infinite wisdom on this doctoral journey. Your prompt, critical and constructive comments in each submission have helped me develop considerably.

I want to express my deepest thanks to my co-supervisor Dr Chigona for your insightful opinions, invaluable advice, support and our many discussions during the period of study. Your virtue of humility will always be admired!

Second, the staff in the Faculty of Education and Social Sciences, CPUT – Mowbray and Wellington.

It is necessary to acknowledge colleagues and friends for their love and support on this incredible journey: Dr L Sosibo, Mrs S Pather, Dr H Steyn, Mr V Feltman, Dr C Hattingh, Mr A Hoek, Dr C Mosito, Mrs M Sadeck and Prof J Condy. The following individuals for the exceptional administrative assistance and support Mrs L Adonis, Ms A Diedericks, Ms P Campbell, Ms L Sylvester and Ms N Williams.

A very special thank you to Dr M Curr for the meticulous editing and insights provided.

The engagement and interaction with participants of the post-graduate seminars have been critical in the development of this study, thank you to all who participated.

Third, the participants of the research study.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the principal, the school management team, teachers, learners and parents who participated in this research study. For reasons of ethics and confidentiality their names may not be mentioned, but they can be assured of my gratitude.

Fourth, I am humbled to acknowledge family and friends.

For your guidance, motivation, and moral and unselfish support, I thank you all. Support received from aunts, uncles and cousins in my developing years are unrivalled, thank you. A special thank you to my parents and brothers for their prayers, continuous support, motivation and sacrifices made to help me reach this milestone. I sincerely appreciate and thank all my friends and spiritual leaders for their support in the different aspects of my life.

Last and most certainly not least, my wife and daughters.

I appreciate your unending support, encouragement and patience on this journey. The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without your (Enrica) support. Enrica, thank you for being the mother and father at times. My loving daughters, Nikita and Cassidy, thank you for inspiring me and being there for moral support. You deserve all my attention but you understood when I could not give it all to dance with you.

## DEDICATION

**This academic study is dedicated to:**

My parents, Rev. and Mrs L Potberg for always believing in me and providing me with the opportunities to achieve my goals.

My daughters, Nikita and Cassidy. May this inspire you to achieve what you desire and always aim to do YOUR best.

*“Satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment,  
full effort is full victory.”*

*- Mahatma Gandhi*

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## GLOSSARY

<b>Acronyms/Abbreviations</b>	<b>Definition/Explanation</b>
ACE	Advance certificate in education
ANA	Annual national assessments
ASSET	Association for educational transformation
CEMIS	Central Education Management Information System
CPDT	Continuing professional development of teachers
DBE	Department of Basic Education
EER	Educational effectiveness research
EFA	Education for all
EMS	Economic management sciences
GST	General systems theory
HoD	Head of department
IQMS	Integrated quality management system
ISTOF	International system for teacher observation and feedback
L.O.	Life orientation
LRC	Learner representative council
MDG	Millennium development goals
MST	Mathematics, science and technology
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NSC	National senior certificate
NSES	National study on school effectiveness
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality

SBA	Standards based accountability
SER	School effectiveness research
SES	Socio-economic status
SGB	School governing body
SMT	School management team
STATSA	Statistics South Africa
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USA	United States of America
WCED	Western Cape Education Department

# CHAPTER ONE

## ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction

Formal education is considered a major enabler in South Africa for social change. An effective education system is essential in ensuring educated citizens and therefore, socially responsive economic and political systems should maintain human development (Modisaotsile, 2012). The South African school system is characterised as consisting of two different functioning sub-systems separated financially and in terms of quality of education (Fleisch, 2008; Van der Berg, 2008; Taylor and Yu, 2009). One sub-system refers to schools in more affluent areas and the other sub-system refers to schools in weaker socio-economic conditions. The South African Department of Basic Education (2011: 66) states that the country's greatest challenge lies in improving the situation in schools serving poorer communities where poverty, high unemployment rates and criminality is rife. This implies government's commitment to school effectiveness through research and in policy which constitutes a substantial impetus for school improvement. Sammons (2006:4) posits that the interest in school effectiveness research and school improvement is an attempt to raise educational standards particularly in impoverished areas. Bosker (2011) contends that a major methodological development is the new interest in the use of randomised field trials in school effectiveness research.

The focus of this study was to determine how certain schools are effective in the competitive arena of education while unequally positioned due to social and financial circumstances. The ministerial report on '*Schools that work*' suggests that matriculation results provide an indicator of the functioning of the schooling system with reference to schools and learners (Christie, Butler and Potterton, 2007: 8). Christie, *et al.* (2007: 12) argue that matriculation results are a public barometer of systemic performance. It was implied that



high schools' performance in the National Senior Certificate<sup>1</sup> (NSC) examinations is used as a measurement of their effectiveness. Christie, *et al.* (2007) indicate that schools which achieve the average level and above are regarded as effective and functioning schools. Assessing the case study school of this research project according to this public barometer indicated that the school was effective and functioning. Jansen and Taylor (2003) argue the use of an integrated systemic thinking approach would lay open to question whether the National Senior Certificate examination is an adequate indicator of quality schooling or should there be an investigation of other facets within the school as a whole.

This thesis arises from personal experiences as a teacher in disadvantaged communities where schools often appear dysfunctional. The study was undertaken to determine what makes a school effective despite the gruelling socio-economic circumstances it faces daily. The school under examination in this research project and its disadvantaged community demand particular attention because there were other schools in the same community not performing as well.

This introductory chapter is structured as follows:

- Section 1.2 – the research context and aims of the study;
- Section 1.3 – the research questions;
- Section 1.4 – the significance of the study;
- Section 1.5 – an overview of the methodology;
- Section 1.6 – the limitations of the study; and
- Section 1.7 – the structure of the thesis.

## **1.2 Research context, theoretical underpinnings and aims of the study**

The South African Department of Education has increased its focus on improving the quality of education; its chief objectives are to enhance the

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<sup>1</sup>The NSC is a school-leaving certificate at level 4 on the National Qualifications Framework in South Africa. This certificate is commonly known as the matric certificate.

performance of learner achievement and school improvement. The Education Department pays particular attention to school improvement but it is uncertain how many schools are in fact becoming effective. There are pockets of effective schools succeeding against the odds. Such schools produce high matriculation pass rates. It is essential to determine what factors contribute to the effectiveness of these schools so that these factors can be used to raise standards at similar schools in similar areas.

### **1.2.1 Concern for school effectiveness**

Since 1994 there has been an increase in policy formulation aimed at improving the quality of education in South Africa. Harris (2000: 1) indicates that this increase in educational reform was specifically focussed on school improvement. School improvement contributes to the effectiveness of the school. School improvement approaches often encapsulate system changes which include the internal dynamics of the school. When organisations accomplish specific objectives, the organisation is regarded as being effective when measured by standard, orthodox educational outputs such as matriculation results (Beare, Caldwell and Millikan, 1989). Schools are allocated resources by the Education Department according to their quintile<sup>2</sup> ranking. Schools ranked as quintile one, two or three are regarded as schools in weaker socio-economic contexts and are seen as existing in disadvantaged communities.

Wolk (1998) argues that, in the poorest communities, failing or dysfunctional schools are often found where the learners are predominantly black or, immigrants from elsewhere in Africa with English as their second or third language. He states that there was little positive leadership in such schools and they were usually mismanaged or used their resources inefficiently. However, Wolk's (1998) findings may not be valid in all cases, especially when compared to the case study school's matriculation results over the past few years (2009 to 2013). In challenging Wolk's (1998) statement, a high school in a poor community with black learners in Cape Town has attained a pass rate

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<sup>2</sup>South African public schools are categorised into five groups, referred to as quintiles. The quintile poverty rankings are determined nationally according to the poverty of the community in which the school is located.

of above 90% in the Senior Certificate examination since 2010 compared to the average pass rate of the Senior Certificate examination at national level and provincial level. Table 1.1 below indicates the school's level of success in the NSC examinations over the past five years as compared to the national and the Western Cape's provincial averages.

Table 1.1 – Case study school's matriculation pass rate over the past five years

NSC % Pass Rate					
Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
National Average	60.7	68	70,2	73,9	78,2
Western Cape Average	75.7	76,7	82,9	82,8	85,1
Case Study School	77	96	91	93	92

In pursuit of characterising effective schools, this study identified critical factors that contributed to the effectiveness of the selected school in a disadvantaged community.

### 1.2.2 Contextualising the disadvantaged community

Mokoena (2006: 11) paraphrased Nefcorp's (2005) definition of disadvantaged communities as consisting of 'black individuals who were, by design, socially, economically, educationally and otherwise, underprivileged and deprived' by the South African Apartheid government. Disadvantaged communities referred exclusively to black people, comprising of Africans, Coloureds and Indians. In the context of this study, schools in disadvantaged communities face social concerns within poor communities which lack resources. Disadvantaged community schools are expected to render educational services similar to schools in more affluent communities without access to the same resources. This study has determined that the case study school is located within a

disadvantaged community which is characterised by aspects such as weak socio-economic conditions: poverty, high unemployment rates and criminality.

### **1.2.3 Theoretical underpinnings of the study**

The focal points of the study are the characteristics of an effective school and the phenomenon of such effectiveness against the background of a disadvantaged community. The school relates to a system and the disadvantaged community is associated with social concerns. This study draws on, and depends upon the theoretical underpinnings of social systems theory (Bausch 2001; Bowen, 2007) which is derived from the general systems theory of Von Bertalanffy (1950) to conceptualise the school as a system. The theoretical underpinnings of Bourdieu's (1976) theory of practice are relied upon to conceptualise the social aspects of the school and the disadvantaged community.

Byeon (2005: 223) remarks that there have been increased attempts to apply theories of organisational change to analysis of human organisations. This can be associated with theories being applied to schools. A systems concept allows schools to be viewed as constantly interacting with their environment. The school's environment comprises a set of relations between agents or stakeholders and other factors that may be beyond the immediate control of the school (Mason, 2007: 10). The environment of the school includes the community and its socio-economic status as well as other contextual factors.

A school in a disadvantaged community can be perceived as a complex social system. Boulding (1956) created a hierarchical framework of systems in which he arranged the systems in a hierarchy of complexity (Martinelli, 2001: 74). The hierarchical approach classifies systems into nine levels according to increasing levels of complexity in terms of their characteristics (Sullivan, 2004: 48). Martinelli (2001: 72) maintains that each new level introduces a different relation as well as involving those at previous levels. This study is linked to the eighth level (social) which refers to a group or organisation as a system. Martinelli (2001: 73) reports that, at this level, the organisation as a system is more complex than an individual system and open to its own unique,

circumambient environmental influence. He indicates that the social system is capable of adapting to circumstances because of collective experiences and a reserve of skills such as roles, perceptions and status (Martinelli, 2001: 73). Boulding's general framework can be applied to school systems, but any single level incorporates characteristics from all previous levels (Martinelli, 2001: 77).

#### **1.2.4 Aims of the study**

This study focuses on the investigation of critical factors that contribute to school effectiveness in a disadvantaged community. The aims of this study are twofold: the first aim is to understand what enables a school in a disadvantaged community to be effective. The second aim of the study is to develop a substantive theory on efficiency of schools which can be transferable to ineffective schools in similar conditions to achieve effectiveness.

#### **1.3 Research questions**

There are numerous high schools in disadvantaged communities not producing the expected outcomes in comparison to the pockets of effective schools performing well in similar conditions. Analytical concepts employed in this study provide the means to identify and comprehend critical factors that contribute to school effectiveness in a disadvantaged community. Principals and school management teams of these ineffective schools should be provided with guidelines to assist them in improving quality of teaching and learning.

In considering the motivation and aims of the study, the following research questions were posed:

- What are the critical factors contributing to school effectiveness using matriculation results as the yardstick, in disadvantaged communities?

- To what extent do cross-field factors contribute to the effectiveness of a school in a disadvantaged community?

#### **1.4 Significance of the study**

Initial school effectiveness research studies were based fundamentally upon quantitative input-output approaches in educational production functions (Marzano, 2000: 2). Such studies attempted to determine the effect of inputs such as resources and learner background characteristics upon school outputs. This study evolved out of a concern for school effectiveness given the inequalities in the South African education system. This study contributes to existing knowledge on school effectiveness specifically in the context of a disadvantaged community in the Western Cape. The study develops a substantive theory on school effectiveness in disadvantaged communities.

It is necessary to develop a substantive theory from within a relevant context when trying to determine the main causes of effectiveness within South African education. Research exploring the critical factors contributing to school effectiveness can inform school leaders, teachers and policymakers about issues which enable some schools to be effective in disadvantaged communities. Findings of this study can assist stakeholders and lead to the improvement of academic achievement in disadvantaged communities.

#### **1.5 An overview of the methodology**

Henning, van Rensburg and Smit (2005: 23) contend that researchers approach social issues in, and through, their research in order to comprehend their research concern. The study made use of a qualitative approach incorporating case study research methodology, set within an interpretive paradigm.

The case was selected on the basis of consistent performance in the National Senior Certificate examination. The school selected has performed well and is

regarded as a school that 'works' according to a scientific definition of that term in Christie, *et al.* (2007). The case study is a high school in a poor community with black learners on the eastern periphery of Cape Town. The peri-urban area borders the rural community of Klapmuts and the urbanised area of Kraaifontein, approximately 40km from Cape Town's central business district. The area was an informal settlement until 1998 when the government started building houses as part of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (Sarfat, n.d.).

This study made use of purposive sampling to select the school based on the characteristics that the school is a functioning school in a disadvantaged community. Spaul (2012) reports that, in South Africa, 75% of schools are dysfunctional irrespective of their socio-economic context.

The sample represented stakeholders associated with the school and included:

- The School Management Team (SMT):
  - The principal;
  - The deputy-principals; and
  - The heads of department.
- School Governing Body (SGB-parent component);
- The teachers;
- Grade 12 learners of 2010 and 2011; and
- The current Grade 12 learners (2012, at the time of data collection).

The study made use of a variety of data collection techniques.

Data collection in this research project involved interviews: both semi-structured and focus group interviews with the principal, the SMT, teachers and parents. Data was collected from learners through the use of closed and open-ended questionnaires.

The study was located in an interpretive paradigm and interpretation was achieved through the data analysis process. Data analysis and interpretation constitute a critical stage in the research process which allows the researcher to construct dense descriptions, identify themes, generate explanations of thought and action evident in the case and theorise the case (Rule and John, 2011). Data analysis involved understanding data and deciding what information it conveyed in relation to school effectiveness.

Conducting research in an ethically defensible manner enhances the quality of research and establishes its trustworthiness (Rule and John, 2011: 111). The research was scheduled to be performed in a public school: permission to enter the research site was obtained. Approval from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) was given as well as from the Ethics committee of the University.

Validity of the data collected was established by taking the transcripts of the interviews back to the respondents. They were requested to check transcripts and ascertain whether it was how they intended to answer the various questions. All respondents indicated that they were content with what was said during the interviews. Data was further validated through triangulation. White (2005) describes data triangulation as supporting the findings of the research by using data from different sources. Triangulation was undertaken by analysing how the findings from the different respondents contributed to answering the research questions.

## **1.6 Limitations of the study**

The case study sample is a school situated in a disadvantaged community on the periphery of Cape Town in the Western Cape. The study was consciously undertaken within difficult socio-economic conditions, therefore its findings cannot be generalised to other socio-economic contexts. It is not the intention of the study to make generalisations from this sample to *any* context. The findings are *specific* to a disadvantaged community in the Western Cape.

Research was conducted as a singular case study of a school in a disadvantaged community; therefore it should be noted that the findings are not compared to other schools in other disadvantaged communities. The research concern could be investigated over a time period to measure change and stability of the effectiveness of the school; however, this is not a longitudinal study considering the time frame of the study.

## **1.7 Structure of the thesis**

The study is presented across seven chapters.



**Chapter one** describes the overall orientation of the research study and defines its concern: school effectiveness in a disadvantaged community. The research context is outlined by the aims of the study. This chapter provides the rationale for the research and research questions that guided the study as well as the significance and possible limitations of the study.

**Chapter two** outlines the conceptual framework of this study. This chapter describes the theoretical underpinnings of general systems' theory (von Bertalanffy, 1950) and the theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1977). The chapter explains the conceptual constructs of the study and how such constructs are operationalized in the study.

**Chapter three** reviews related literature on school effectiveness and defines school effectiveness in developed countries and developing countries such as South Africa. The characteristics of effective schools and schooling in the South African context are discussed.

**Chapter four** outlines the research design and methodology adopted in the study. It provides an in-depth discussion of the sample selection and instruments used for data collection. The chapter highlights the data analysis process and reports on ethical considerations, reliability and validity.

**Chapter five** is a descriptive report on the findings from the school management team and teachers. It reflects their role in school effectiveness and assists in answering the research questions.

**Chapter six** outlines the findings from learners and parents. This chapter provides a perspective on their role in achieving school effectiveness in a disadvantaged community.

**Chapter seven** is the concluding chapter of the study. The findings presented in chapters five and six are synthesized to produce valid conclusions. The chapter further presents recommendations and suggestions for future research.

# CHAPTER TWO

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Introduction

This research study aims to identify the particular elements and characteristics that enable a school to be effective within a disadvantaged community. In order to understand what makes a school effective, it was necessary to look at the critical factors that contribute to the effectiveness of the school. It was necessary to employ the constructs of systems theory and the theory of practice to apprehend the critical factors of effectiveness, in particular, a school in a disadvantaged community. The works of two theorists were used to develop the conceptual framework of the study, in order to assess the effect of agency and to answer the research questions. This included the works of:

- Von Bertalanffy's (1950) general systems theory;
- Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice.

In an attempt to understand what renders a school effective within a disadvantaged community, it is necessary to explain the role and contributions of the different stakeholders in the school. The general systems theory of von Bertalanffy (1950) forms the basis for understanding social systems theory and the conditions suited to, and required for, focussing on the school as an organisation. The school can be seen as a system and its stakeholders as the elements of the system. Systems theory helps to identify different elements of a system. These elements are social beings which are influenced by social aspects. Systems theory, however, does not provide insights into the social practice of becoming effective. Therefore, to understand and explain the process of effectiveness, it is necessary to draw on the theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1977) to complement systems theory within an analytical perspective. In understanding the focus on what makes an organisation effective, the construct of practices and concepts of Bourdieu's (1977) theory regarding the process of becoming effective, is rendered reliable. The theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1977) attempts to link social interaction with systemic

processes and therefore applies to this study. Ortnier (1984: 148) outlined theory of practice as it “seeks to explain the relationship(s) that obtain between human action, on the one hand, and some global entity which we call 'the system' on the other.” The reliability relates to questioning the influence of the system on the process of effectiveness and the impact of effectiveness on the system.

The chapter presents the conceptual framework as follows:

- Section 2.2 is an overview of systems theory;
- Section 2.3 discusses Bourdieu’s theory of practice;
- Section 2.4 discusses the school as a social system; and
- Section 2.5 is a summary of the chapter.

## **2.2 Systems theory**

General systems theory was first promoted by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in 1940 but assumed prominence only in the 1960’s. General systems theory is focussed primarily on the ways in which systems work and integrate a variety of sub-systems by naming and identifying patterns and processes common to all of them (Bausch, 2002: 421; Capps and Hazen, 2002: 309). Dubrovsky (2004: 112) states that systems theory is a concept that originated from biology, economics and engineering to explore principles and laws that can be generalised across various systems. General systems theory (Von Bertalanffy, 1950) is deployed as a way of perceiving the school as a social system: the different elements of the system can be examined in an objective and valid manner. Bowen (2007: 61) regards schools as a specific type of social construct that sociologists label as a formal organisation. Schools as social systems provide the opportunity to examine the functioning of schools in the community in which they are positioned and the environment in which they are positioned (Bowen, 2007: 61). This integrative process involves a precise understanding of the interaction between school and community. Through a critical view of the integrative process, this study can interpret the effect of such interaction between school and community.

Bausch (2001) defines social systems theory as an application of a general systematic view of humans, individuals, or groups of individuals in interrelation based on Von Bertalanffy's (1968) definition of a system. Bowen (2007: 62) exemplifies a social system as an existing school to achieve objectives through the collective effort of individuals and groups in the system. Learner achievement is reflected in the results as major purposeful objectives of schools when perceived as social systems (Bowen, 2007).

Over the past few decades, systems' thinking has evolved through various schools of thought, derived from two primary philosophical roots, namely: cybernetics and General Systems Theory (Sterling, 2003: 396). A school can be seen as a system consisting of various parts which are what make a school function: effectively or ineffectively. These various parts may be referred to as the principal and the school management team, teachers, learners, school governing body, parents and the community in which the school is situated. Figure 2.1 below indicates the school as a system: effective dependency of the elements upon each other enables the system to work.

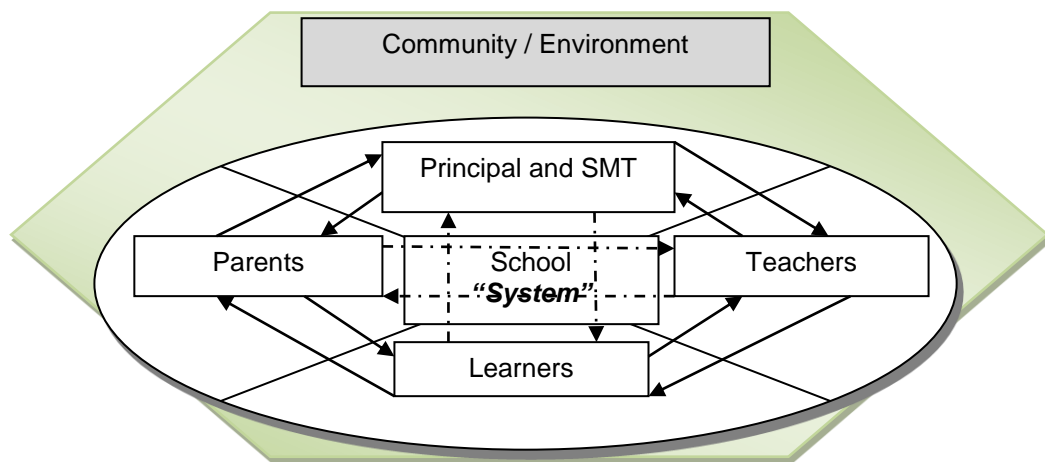


Figure 2.1: Elements of the system (school)

The degree of efficiency to which these various parts interact determines the degree to which the system functions efficiently. Senge (1990: 68) explains the meaning of systems thinking as a context for seeing wholes. Senge (1990) further implies that system thinking is a framework for identifying interrelations rather than objects and for identifying patterns of change or exchange rather than static 'snapshots'. The interrelations that exist are among social beings

who are influenced in turn by social aspects. However, systems theory does not provide insights into specific social practices for becoming effective. For this, it was thus necessary to draw on Bourdieu's theory of practice.

## **2.3 Bourdieu's theory of practice**

In order to reveal the dynamics of power relations in social life, Bourdieu (1977) pioneers investigations into terms such as habitus, capital and field. These terms form the constructs of the theory of practice (Bourdieu, 2000). These concepts are associated with the agents within a practice or activity. Bourdieu (1976) refers to agents as individuals having the capacity to act independently. Agents can be referred to as the elements of the system and are seen as individuals or a group of individuals. Different agents in the school system interact with each other yet remain inherently independent. Agents may be regarded as different stakeholders in the school. Constructs of practice, habitus, the various capitals and field are explained in order to define them and explain their relevance to an effective school.

### **2.3.1 Practice**

In Bourdieu's *Outline of a theory of practice* (1977), a foundational concept is that of social practices which refer to the practices of everyday life such as the study of meal customs, marriage strategies, visiting art museums or, even, conducting scientific research (Rawolle and Lingard, 2008: 730). The concept of practice can be interpreted as the socialisation process. Applied to this study, it is regarded as the process of making schools effective. Rawolle and Lingard (2008: 730) claim that Bourdieu constitutes the concept of practice to be an open category for activities with a social character and meaning.

Thompson, Hall and Jones (2013: 157) argue that the notion of practice emanates from a particular 'non-structuralist' approach to social theory. Reckwitz (2002: 250) describes practices as the routinized ways in which 'bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated and the world is understood'. Practices reveal a type of pattern. The notion of practices is

important because practices are routinized rather than random acts, they are coherent and thus comprehensible and codifiable (Thompson *et al.*, 2013).

In his book, *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1984: 101) presents the formula for practice as: [(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice. Crossley (2001) interprets the formula of Bourdieu as an attempt to be all-inclusive of the fundamental theoretical constructs of an analysis. Bourdieu (1984: 101), however, indicates that it would show 'the structure of the life-style characteristics of an agent or class of agents, that is, the unity hidden under the diversity and multiplicity of the set of practices performed in fields governed by different logics and therefore inducing different forms of realisation.' One could question whether the text above adequately or fully recognises all practices in a field or only one practice in a field. Warde (2004), in a discussion paper, argues that Bourdieu's formula implies that there are practices performed in fields and that many diverse practices and fields are part of a process whereby profits are realised. In this study Bourdieu's formula is read as an indication that there are diverse practices taking place in a particular field as part of the process of building an effective school.

The concept of practice is used to identify a coherent entity being formed around a particular activity such as teaching or uniforms. This usage suggests the notion of *Praktik*: a co-ordinated, recognisable and institutionally supported practice (Bourdieu, 1984). These co-ordinated entities refer to 'areas of practice' that Bourdieu observes where the generative schemes of habitus are seen to apply (1984: 170). He names practices such as sports, games, entertainments, sporting practices and tennis as having symbolic significance. An activity could therefore be comprehended as having some history and reputation.

Bourdieu's work or theories are generally contained philosophically within the context of class reproduction and debates on class inequalities in educational attainment in capitalist societies.

### 2.3.2 Habitus

Bourdieu (1977) defines habitus as a set of dispositions, reflexes and forms of behaviour people acquire through acting in society. Bourdieu's structuralist approach regards habitus as the rules of society which are better understood as the social processes within a society (Nash, 1990: 433). These rules are what influence, constrain and control the behaviour and thinking of people. Reay (2004) critiqued Bourdieu's explanation: habitus, to him, is how the body is present in the social world as well as the social world present in the body. It can thus be said that habitus is the way people act which is reflective of the social order and the process of development of the person and their actions. Bourdieu (1990) states that habitus is a product of history which in turn produces more history, reflective of the theory of reproduction.

Dispositions can be regarded as habits, beliefs, values, tastes, bodily postures, feelings and thoughts that Bourdieu (1990) argued were socially produced. Johnson (2006) argues that dispositions are formed predominantly by history; that they are made and not inherent. This implies that dispositions are embodied and internalised in the person's view of the world such as ways of moving and acting in the world. In such a view, the greatest development of dispositions takes place through the childhood years when children listen and watch those surrounding them, normally the family.

Reay (2004: 434) argues that, although habitus reflects the social position in which it was constructed, it has the ability to transcend the social conditions in which it was produced. This is an indication that the habitus can be reproduced and reconstructed to reflect a different social condition. Bourdieu regards himself as a 'class defector': he grew up in a poor, rural, farming community but was able to take advantage of opportunities in order to create a new habitus for himself (Reed-Danahay, 2005: 27). This is comparable to the case study where it is possible for students from a disadvantaged community to change their *habitus* and improve their living conditions.

An implication of habitus for school effectiveness can be related to the notion of Nash (2002: 28) by which certain learners want to be educated more than others and possess an effective habitus that generates practices in



accordance with that desire. Swann (1999: 266) highlights, 'the human would-be learner is motivated not only by a desire to do something; she or he may also be spurred into action as a consequence of wanting to know.' The concept of education is understood as an element of the habitus and is explored through concepts of literature, social responsibility, self-discipline, and relevant practice (Bhaskar, 1993). Harker, Mahar and Wilkes (1990) state that Bourdieu's interests are peculiar to the sociology of education as they assist in promulgating the relations of social domination reproduced from generation to generation.

It is important to note that Bourdieu's definitive statement on habitus implies that dispositions function within structures (Bourdieu, 1990: 53). In understanding structures such a definition could be related to schools. There is a fixed manner in which things occur: learners tend to follow the rules of the institution.

### **2.3.3 Capital**

Capital was defined by Bourdieu (1986) as a core factor in defining positions and possibilities of various agents in any field. A common assumption is that capital is limited to the sense of financial capital from a Marxist viewpoint. But capital can refer to resources beyond the materialistic (Martti, 2000). This study focuses on four forms of capital within the theory of practice, namely: cultural, social, economic and symbolic. These forms of non-material and material capital frame constructs of a theoretical framework for effective schools. In this study the forms of capital are aspects in a social structure being the school. These capitals are applied within this study as analytical tools to understand the influence they have in school effectiveness. Bourdieu (1986) asserts that these four forms may be exploited to apprehend social inequalities more fully. Bourdieu (1986: 241) explains that capital is accumulated labour (in its materialised form or its embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private basis by agents enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of living labour. Capital takes time to accumulate and has the potential to produce profits and reproduce itself in identical or

expanded forms. Evidently, any form of capital can be expanded or reproduced. Each of the four forms of capital is discussed below with its implications for effective schools.

### **2.3.3.1 Cultural capital**

Bourdieu (1986) explains that cultural capital can exist in three forms: the embodied, objectified or institutionalised state. The embodied state exists in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body whereas the objectified state refers to forms of cultural goods such as pictures, books, dictionaries and instruments. The institutionalised state is a form of objectification: it refers to transferring properties onto cultural capital such as educational qualifications. Cultural capital is used in this study to denote an analytical tool with which to assess how an effective school contributes to the development of its learners. Contributions relate to the influences of teachers on the behaviour and motivation of learners.

The properties of cultural capital pertain demonstrably and inarguably to the body and therefore presuppose embodiment (Bourdieu, 1986). Accumulation of cultural capital in the embodied state is a process of inculcation and assimilation which involves the committed time of the parent or guardian. Taken further, it is also a process of self-improvement where it is the work of acquisition; improvement of oneself (Bourdieu, 1986). According to Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital is acquired to a varying extent and dependant on the time frame, through society and social classes.

Bourdieu (1986) refers to objectification of cultural capital in terms of academic qualifications. An academic qualification is a certificate of cultural competence which confers upon the person a conventional, legally-guaranteed value. Bourdieu (1986) argues that, by conferring institutional recognition on the cultural capital possessed by any individual, makes it possible to compare academic qualifications.

Cultural capital, as identified and explained by Bourdieu, should be compared to other theories about social inequality. A prominent theory which examines

the role of society and its institutions in shaping race relations and increasing inequalities is that of Critical Race Theory. Yosso (2005: 76) criticises cultural capital as a phenomenon that promotes white normativity: white, middle class culture is prioritized unilaterally as the standard therefore all other forms of 'culture' are judged in comparison to this 'norm'. Yosso (2005: 77) indicates that there is a need for a broader understanding of capital and its forms with a focus on the cultures of 'Communities of Colour'. She identifies six forms of capital that make up what she deems cultural wealth: aspirational, familial, navigational, social, linguistic, and resistant capital.

### **2.3.3.2 Social capital**

Social capital is defined by Bourdieu (1986) as actual or potential resources linked to the possession of a reliable and dependable network. Such a network could be institutionalised relations with common associations and recognitions thus implying memberships in a group. Bourdieu (1986) adds that such groups provide members the backing of a collectively-owned capital. Social capital, in this sense, is guaranteed by the application of a common name such as a family, class, school or group of people which constitute a set of acts. Blunden (2004) implies that social capital indicates connections needed to make use of one's cultural or educational capital. It can be deduced that all forms of capital assist in developing social capital or interpersonal networks. Bourdieu (1986) emphasizes that the volume of the social capital possessed depends on the size of the network of the connections that the person can effectively mobilise and the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed.

The term 'social capital' is employed in this study as an analytical tool to locate and define social networks that exist in an effective school. The effects of social capital on the development of a disadvantaged community and vice versa are crucial interrelations in this study. Social capital may be regarded as an approach rather than a concept: the notion of social capital combines various strands of research that distinguish the nature and composition of social order (Castiglione, 2008: 183). Blokker (2005) contests that

conceptualisation of social capital comprises three aspects: sociality, sociability and social embeddedness. Sociality refers to motivational drives of human behaviour and action within social contexts; sociability is concerned with people's tendency to affiliate with others or within groups. Social embeddedness relates to mechanisms of social integration or reproduction (Blokker, 2005).

Coleman (1988: 97) suggests that social capital enables social action in so far as it consists of social structures which facilitate certain actions. Coleman states that social capital is not inherent or restricted to singular agents or physical goods; it is part of the necessary structure of relations between agents and among agents which includes organisations. Social capital can take a variety of forms provided it manifests a distinctive action such as cultural ties, organisational linkages or civic culture (Coleman, 1988). Putnam (2000) affirms that social capital consists of social organisations such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit. Social capital can be divided into five key dimensions related directly to the study of school effectiveness within a disadvantaged community. The five key dimensions conceptualised by Putnam (2000) are:

- Groups and networks –the collections of individuals that promote and protect personal relations which improve welfare;
- Trust and solidarity – elements of interpersonal behaviour which foster greater cohesion and more robust collective action within the group;
- Collective action and co-operation – the ability of people to work together toward resolving communal issues;
- Social cohesion and inclusion – mitigate the risk of conflict and promote equitable access to benefits of development by enhancing participation of the marginalised group; and
- Information and communication–breaks down negative social capital and enables positive social capital by improving access to information.

These five dimensions of social capital assist with the analysis of data collected from the different agents relating to social capital.

### **2.3.3.3 Economic capital**

Economic capital is synonymous with financial capital and resources. In terms of Marxist political economy, capital is money or financial resources used to buy something in order to sell it again for the purpose of making a profit (Encyclopaedia of Marxism, 2008). This study adopts a similar understanding although professionals and academics challenge the efficacy of economic capital as the principle of dominance. As an analytical tool, the effectiveness of a school in a disadvantaged community disclaims the primacy of economic capital.

Bourdieu (1986) claimed that economic capital is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalised in the form of property rights. This indicates that, to Marx, capital exists in the process of economic exchange and the abundance of possessions that is accumulated out of the exchange and the abundance of possessions accumulated in these exchanges. According to the Encyclopaedia of Marxism (2008), this, for Marx, forms the basis of the economic system of capitalism.

Bourdieu (1986) explains that economic theory allows a definition of economy of practices to be imposed on it: tantamount to the historical invention of capitalism. Bourdieu (1986) further states that economic capital is reproduced and creates the opportunity for class structures: he refers to the '*world of bourgeois man*'. Blunden (2004) asserts that the greater the economic capital possessed, the greater the dominance. Bourdieu accepts that economic capital is a dominant force within a capitalist society; however, the efficacy of economic capital as a principle of domination is constantly under threat from other sub-groups of the dominant class such as professionals or academics, who are relatively poor in economic capital but rich in cultural or social capital. They strive to contest the materialist form of capital as the chief and single means of domination (Blunden, 2004).

### **2.3.3.4 Symbolic capital**

Bourdieu (1984) explains that, in order to understand its influence across cultures, symbolic capital should be understood within the context of cultural

and historical frames from which it originated. Symbolic capital can be referred to as the capital or resources available to a person based on honour, prestige or recognition. Lawler (2011) indicates that symbolic capital is often glossed as honour or prestige although it is important to emphasize that honour and prestige are the outcomes of the conversion of other forms of capital. Symbolic capital is used in this study to analyse the extent to which capital is transmitted and converted into symbolic power. As an analytical tool, the study analyses which dominant capital, cultural or social, contributes to most significantly to symbolic power.

Bourdieu defines symbolic capital as 'the form that the various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognized as legitimate' (1989: 17). Symbolic capital cannot be a different form of capital but should be seen as a recognised form of capital. For Bourdieu, any capital may undergo a process of conversion so that it is recognised as legitimate 'currency' or assets (Lawler, 2011; Blunden, 2004). This is supported by Bourdieu (1986) who states that social capital is governed by the logic of knowledge and acknowledgement: it could function as symbolic capital. Within the context of this study, symbolic capital would reflect how learners or teachers are judged by their community which could, in turn, include the amount of social honour given to the person and be regarded as the amount of prestige within the community especially within a disadvantaged community.

Cultural capital is more dominant than economic capital in determining how hierarchies of power are reproduced across societies (Bourdieu, 1979). Status and economic capital are both necessary to denote and maintain dominance in a system, rather than just ownership of the means of production. Symbolic capital is thus closely related to power which is supported by Foucault's notion of power. The genealogical approach formulated by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and *The History of Sexuality* (1978) is appropriate to the argument and concerns of this thesis in terms of emphasis placed on the limits of history (*the marginalised not being able to achieve success*) although it is contradictory to the archaeological approach which sought to find regularities. Foucault (1971) understands a society or civilisation with regard to its system of exclusion, rejection and limits. Genealogy can be regarded, not as the

search for origins, but the contradiction of what the past indicates and how power can influence a process. Foucault's (1977, 1978) theories on historical power are represented in a genealogical pyramid.

Foucault (1989) implies that power shapes the subject. It is power, however, that subordinates the subject. These processes occur through discourses. Both shaping and subordination happen simultaneously. This relates to positions of power within the school. A principal is a figure of power just as teachers are within a classroom. In understanding the greatest influence on the school, Thompson, *et al.* (2013: 156) imply that the Foucauldian notion of discourse is used less in leadership than in other areas of educational research. This is evident in arguing that leaders of educational institutions are a key to the success or reform of institutions (Oplatka 2003, Hargreaves and Goodson 2006, Fullan 2009). Leadership promotes positive behaviour within the school, teachers and learners, resulting in positive outcomes for the school (Mahembe and Engelbrecht, 2014). On the flip side of the coin, it is valid that poor leadership would result in an ineffective school where the inappropriate application of power is practiced.

#### **2.3.4 Field**

One of the key concepts used by Bourdieu in the theory of practice (1986) is that of 'field'. Maton (2006: 687) claims that the concept of 'field' forms the centre of Bourdieu's relational sociology and the notion of 'autonomy' is its keystone. 'Field' is a setting in which people and their dispositions are located. Setting and environment exert a major influence on the habitus (Gaventa, 2003: 6). Navarro (2006: 18) clearly explains Bourdieu's theory with reference to 'field' as being a structured network and specifically applicable to this study as a nexus of educational relations. The position of an agent is a result of interaction between the rules of the field, habitus and capital. The concept of field can be defined as a social arena in which people skilfully move and strive to achieve required resources or capital. A field can be any structure of social relations (King, 2005:223). It is constituted by conflict created when individuals or groups compete to establish what comprises valuable and legitimate capital

within that space. For Bourdieu (1986), each social field provides a way of accumulating and distributing field-specific forms of capital: social, cultural, symbolic and national capital and mechanisms for the conversion of capital between fields.

Thomson and Holdsworth (2003: 382) argue that a field is a 'field of power': it is an area of class struggle which favours powerful elites embedded in corporate offices or significant political and bureaucratic positions. To a certain extent, this may be valid due to promotion of equal education in South Africa. It may not be valid in terms of elitists who have a separate education. It becomes valid when political and bureaucratic positions subtly persist in marginalising groups of people. Bourdieu (1991: 169) indicates that the field of power consists of interconnected and overlapping smaller spaces (fields). Smaller fields have some degree of autonomy. They are able, however, to influence each other at specific times and in relation to specific issues. This can be related directly to the field of the school structure: different classrooms are a smaller field having a certain degree of autonomy. In the classroom teachers maintain a certain degree of power and are responsible to address issues at hand. Ultimately teachers are responsible in ensuring that the field is conducive to effective teaching and learning. The same notion is applicable to the family structure at home. The role of the parent at home assumes one of power and influence on their children. With relation to the study, parents can influence learners in relation to academics and discipline which can be regarded as an extension of the school's field.

Bourdieu (1991: 169) argues that each field is a terrain of class struggle. There is a general patterning of activities and relations across fields which work together to reproduce a larger field of power. This relates to the concept of cross-field effects. The concept of cross-field effects was developed from research into the mediatization of policy (Rawolle 2005, 2007). Rawolle (cited in Rawolle and Lingard, 2008: 733) explains that cross-field effects were developed as a way of grouping together effects that illustrate the influence of the field of print journalism on policy practices, and the influence of the field of policy on journalists' practices. Rawolle and Lingard (2008) emphasise that creation of the concept of cross-field effects is methodological. It is developed



to identify and study a group of policy effects that are not easy to describe. In this study, the use of cross-field effects is used to explain the effect of transference of various capitals brought in from different fields outside the school. Fields are understood to be systems of social positions structured internally in relation to power relations such as in a school where there is a distinction in status and power between the principal and the teachers.

## **2.4 The school as a social system**

General systems theory indicates that there are open and closed systems. In closed systems, the main features of an organisation are its internal elements whereas an open systems approach regards the organisation's interaction with the external environment as important for the organisation's success (Shafritz and Russell, 2005: 241; Wang 2004: 396). The school, as an open system which interrelates with its environment would relate to such theories. Some studies have used general systems theory and social systems theory framework in education. These include studies by:

- Bowen (2007) which adopted a general systems theory perspective on schools as social organisations;
- Molnar (2009) reviewed learning organisations and general systems theory in education; and
- Lunenburg (2010) discussed elements of social systems and an open systems view of schools.

Through consideration of the work of these theorists, the above aspects and their influence on a school's effectiveness can be assessed. The understanding of the theories contributes foundationally in establishing the conceptual framework of this research project as a whole and can be diagrammatically represented as follows in Figure 2.2:

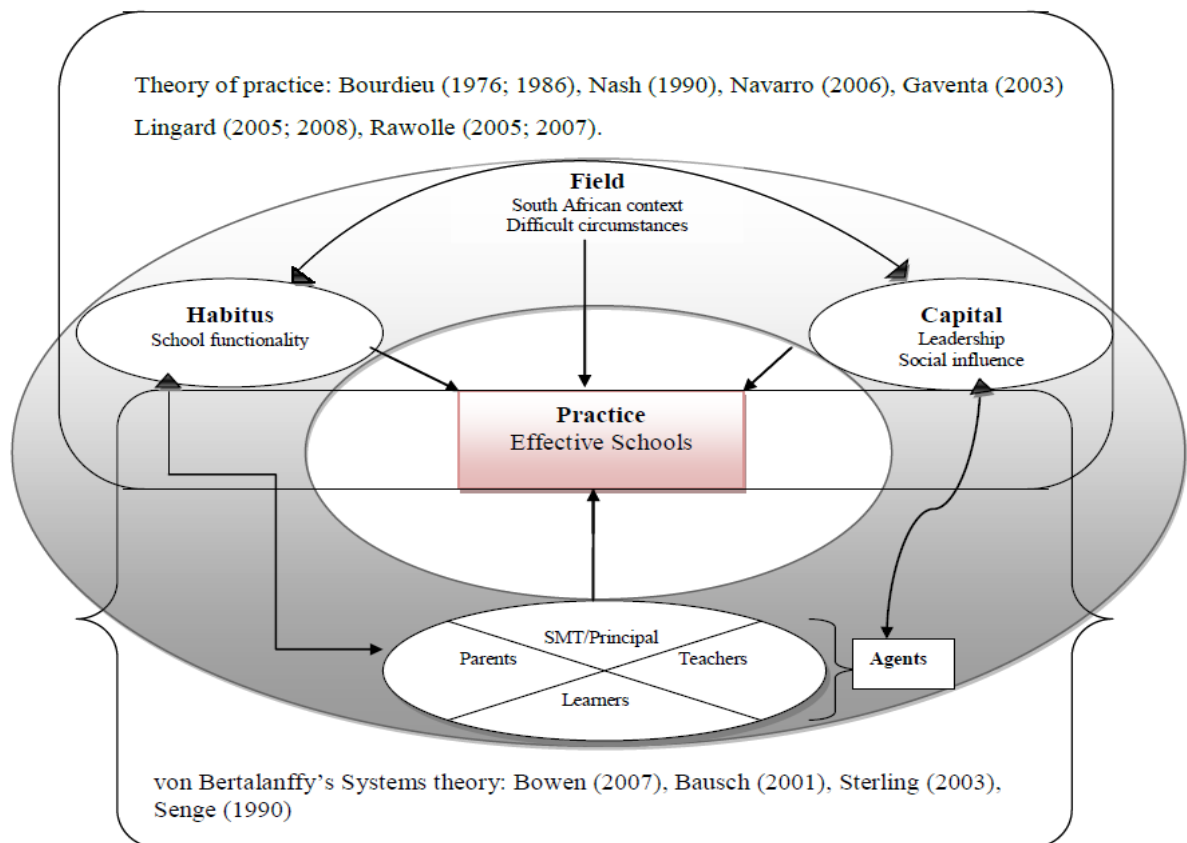


Figure 2.2 Conceptual model representing interrelations in the process of school effectiveness

The conceptual model represents interrelations and the process of effectiveness taking place within a field. It demonstrates how constructs of social systems theory and the theory of practice impact on the process of effectiveness. In Figure 2.2, the common aspect within the two lenses is the practice of effective schools. The theory of practice is foundationally associated with the social actions of agents. Agents are primarily the linkage of the school as a system and the social practice of effectiveness. As illustrated in the figure, the process of effectiveness takes place within a particular environment (field) which is the disadvantaged community and school. The constructs of habitus and capital are interrelated and influenced by each other and agency which ultimately results in the efficacy of the school (practice). Therefore, Figure 2.2 reflects the influence of the constructs on the practice of effective schools. The conceptual model informed the data collection process of this research project by identifying respondents for the study. The constructs of the conceptual framework assisted in analysing data. Systems theory and theory of practice each offer conceptual lenses with which to view school effectiveness; both are linked through agency. This linkage

provides a valuable explanatory tool to understand the school as a social system.

Since schools are complex systems, the school is able to 'learn' or draw knowledge from its community and change its internal processes and functioning over time, thus being able to make itself, the school, effective. The disadvantaged community when observed as an external environment is generally beyond the control of a school or any organisation. Factors which render an environment disadvantaged include the economy, socio-cultural demographic factors, political-governmental aspects, technology and the natural environment (Capps and Hazen, 2002: 310). Social systems theory enhances appreciation of how each sub-system of a school interconnects: sound interaction between the various components results in effectiveness. Sub-systems in schools include amongst others, systems such as the feeding scheme, the classroom system, parent-teacher communication systems and systems that exist within the learner body at the school. Yoon and Kuchinke (2005: 17) advise that such knowledge of social systems can help school leaders plan how to obtain resources such as funding, information and technology and how to transform the resources to produce better results.

## **2.5 Summary**

The effect of critical factors in school effectiveness within a disadvantaged community is the particular focus of the study. Two theoretical positions were discussed in this chapter.

The school was first examined as a social system: based on the General Systems Theory (GST) of von Bertalanffy (1950). Social systems theory is regarded as an application of GST and further developed by Bausch (2001) and Bowen (2007). This was helpful in designing this study based on a process integrating school and community.

The work of Bourdieu's *Theory of Practice* (1977) incorporated the activity of effectiveness as a practice. Other constructs from the *theory of practice* included: *habitus, capital and field*. Four forms of capital were focussed on: cultural, social, economic and symbolic. These forms of capital with the

habitus are constantly interacting within the field and contribute to the practice of effectiveness.

In Chapter Three the review of related literature is presented which is followed by the research design and methodology in Chapter Four.

# CHAPTER THREE

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 3.1 Introduction

The Coleman Report (1966) concludes that the home background as well as social class and economic status have a greater influence on learners' development than the school they attend (Teddlie and Stringfield, 2007: 138). Weaker socio-economic conditions make it difficult for learners to respond to the influence of the school. Reynolds, Sammons, De Fraine, Townsend and Van Damme (2011) report that researchers (Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore, 1995; Lockheed and Verspoor, 1991; Teddlie and Reynolds, 2000; Sammons, 1999; Townsend, 2007) agree that schools differ in circumstances. In order to understand the influence of learning in these differing circumstances, it is necessary to determine the difference between the effects of the family and the effects of the school that learners attend on learning. Discourse and educational debates after the release of the 1966 Coleman report gave rise to the School Effectiveness movement. This study focuses on the effectiveness of a school within a disadvantaged community: it determines and defines the effect of the social conditions on the effectiveness of a school.

This chapter reviews the literature which explicitly deals with school effectiveness and the characteristics of effective schools. Literature is reviewed from an international perspective and then focussed on the South African context. The review further discusses social conditions and influences of schools in difficult circumstances.

The chapter presents the literature review as follows:

- Section 3.2 – defining school effectiveness;
- Section 3.3 – historical overview of school effectiveness;
- Section 3.4 – characteristics of effective schools;
- Section 3.5 – schools in difficult circumstances;
- Section 3.6 – schooling in the South African context; and
- Section 3.7 – summary of the chapter.

### 3.2 Defining school effectiveness

An effective school is defined consistently as a 'good' school in terms of a specific definition (Scheerens, 2000). There are different perspectives on how effectiveness is defined. Beare, Caldwell and Millikan (1989: 11) argue that the concept of 'effectiveness' refers to an organisation having to accomplish specific objectives. Botha (2010: 606) characterises school effectiveness as when 'a school accomplishes its objectives.' The primary objective of a school is to ensure that learners become responsible citizens of the country and have passed a school leaving examination. The work of Edmonds (1979) and Brookover and Lezotte (1979) refer to school effectiveness as good educational results of schools (Lockheed and Levin, 1993: 4).

Scheerens (2000: 18) specifies school effectiveness as the level at which schools achieve their goals in comparison to other schools equal in terms of learner performance in the matriculation examination. A school is effective when compared to other schools with similar learners or conditions. Thus, Scheerens (2000: 18) delineates school effectiveness as the '*performance of an organisational unit called school.*'

A definition of school effectiveness is affected by the orientation of the study which may change the results of the study (Stoll and Fink, 1996: 28). This study adopts the definition based on the orientation of the study using the matriculation results as a yardstick to measure effectiveness. For the purpose of this study, a school is effective if the progress of the learners is beyond what is expected of them given their achievement and background factors (Mortimore, 1991:9). Reference to what is expected from them is the comparison of the school's results with Provincial and National matriculation results. This explanation affects the methodology for this study which is associated with the sample selected for responses.

Researchers such as Reynolds, Bollen, Hopkins, Stoll and Lagerweij (1996) and Stoll and Fink (1996) are of the opinion that school effectiveness is dependent on people and the resources available. This relates to agency in the environment and the accessibility of economic capital. Hoy and Miskel (2001: 290) argue that a school is effective if the outcome of its activities

meets or exceeds its objectives. An effective school promotes high levels of learner achievement for all learners in the school (Murphy, 1990). Using the matriculation results as a yardstick is regarded as an acceptable means of measurement. Al Waner (cited in Saleem, Naseem, Ibrahim, Hussain and Azeem, 2005) agrees that academic emphasis and frequent monitoring of student academic progress is an important correlate of an effective school. Cuttance (1985: 13) implies that schools are effective if their learners perform at a higher level than an average school. This relates to the case study school achieving above the Provincial and National results. It is interpreted as the ability of the school to achieve its objectives and reflects the learners' academic ability.

Saleem, *et al.* (2005: 242) state that earlier studies on school effectiveness emphasise conditions of schooling and output measures more focused on the achievement of learners. Conditions of schooling include contextual variables such as teaching, learning, management, learner motivation and community involvement. Studies by Rutter (1983) and Sammons *et al.* (1995) reject the view that school effectiveness focuses on academic achievement alone, but should include factors such as classroom behaviour, learner participation and attitudes toward learning.

In South Africa, the concept of school effectiveness is regularly associated with learner achievement (DBE, 2009). The discussion on school effectiveness relates to matriculation results at high schools. Schools with good matriculation results are generally assumed to be more effective when compared to schools with poor results. The South African understanding of school effectiveness relates to output measures, generally learner achievement. This is consistent with Scheerens' (2004) analogy of a system: school effectiveness indicates the input effect on throughput and the resultant output of the education system.

As interpreted from the literature, the definition of school effectiveness differs from researcher to researcher. Some researchers focus on academic achievement; others are concerned with schooling conditions. For the purpose of this study, school effectiveness is delineated as the ability of the school to achieve its objectives of acquiring academic excellence utilising all available

resources irrespective of the lack of resources in the disadvantaged community.

### **3.3 Historical overview of school effectiveness**

In presenting a historical overview of school effectiveness research, the literature is divided into two parts in this section. The first part covers school effectiveness research in economically developed countries and the second part discusses school effectiveness in developing countries with a focus on research in Africa and South Africa.

#### **3.3.1 School effectiveness in economically developed countries**

To acquire a comprehensive understanding of school effectiveness and its origin, it is necessary to have a broad perspective from international literature. Beneficial information is gained from this perspective in order to determine what is and what is not applicable to the South African context. It is widely believed that the Coleman Report (1966) was the trigger to the development of school effectiveness research. Reynolds, Creemers, Stringfield, Teddlie and Schaffer (2002) postulate that the first generation of school effectiveness research was started after the release of the controversial Coleman Report (1966). In this report Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld, *et al.* (1966) conclude that schools have little or no effect on student achievement when the effects of family background variables are taken into account. Yu (2007: 3) contends that the majority of school effectiveness research studies have traditionally come from the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK) and some continental European countries such as the Netherlands. Literature on school effectiveness has had different systematic reviews since school effectiveness research took shape. Sammons *et al.* (1995: 1) comment that the number of empirical studies which focus directly on the characteristics of effective schools is exceeded by the number of reviews of the area.



There are different ways of grouping school effectiveness research. Clark, Lotto and Astuto (1984) group the literature into two principal lines of inquiry: instructionally effective schools and school improvement. Literature on instructionally effective schools focuses on measuring student achievement. Literature on school improvement focuses on the extent to which a school adapts to change. Purkey and Smith (1983) identify four groups within school effectiveness research: case studies, outlier studies, programme evaluations and other studies not within the realm of the first three groups. In an earlier study, Scheerens (1992) distinguishes between five areas of research pertinent to school effectiveness: (i) research into equality of opportunity and significance of the school, (ii) economic studies of education production, (iii) evaluation of compensatory programmes, (iv) studies of effective schools and evaluation of school improvement programmes and, (v) studies of effectiveness of teachers and teaching methods. Different conceptual and methodological approaches were used in these five types of school effectiveness research.

There were numerous major studies on school effectiveness, mainly in the USA and the UK. A study which contributed to the classic American 'five-factor model' was that of Edmonds (1979) in which he confirmed that instructionally effective schools for poor children did exist. The processes of effective schools he identified contributed to the five-factor model. Edmonds (1979) identifies the characteristics of effective schools as (a) strong educational leadership, (b) a climate of academic expectations, (c) an orderly, quiet, and conducive atmosphere, (d) an emphasis on acquisition of basic skills, and (e) frequent monitoring of learners' progress.

Brookover, Beady, Flood and Schweitzer (1979) have undertaken case studies on low socio-economic status schools in an urban area. Their study produced a list of significant processes at successful schools which included: most time was spent on instruction; little differentiation among students in their instructional programmes; high academic expectations of students indicating that students had high expectations for themselves and control over their academic work; students believed that teachers cared about their academic

performance; students were encouraged and rewarded; and principals were involved in teaching.

In the United Kingdom, Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore and Ouston (1979) studied urban secondary schools in London for more than 4 years where they observed classes, coded and recoded activities of teachers and learners. The *Fifteen Thousand Hours* study confirmed that effective schools existed within deprived areas: this was reflected in higher achievement levels and fewer behaviour problems (Rutter *et al.*, 1979). The study identifies the processes of effective schools as:

- A school-wide academic emphasis and high expectations for academic success;
- Staff consensus on the goals and values of the school;
- A higher proportion of the school week devoted to academic tasks;
- The establishment of principles and guidelines for student behaviour;
- Classroom management;
- Frequent rewards and praise;
- Assigning responsibilities and duties to students;
- A clean, comfortable, and pleasant working environment; and
- Showing concern for individual students' welfare.

The results of early school effectiveness research appear to converge around the 'five-factor model of school effectiveness'. Reynolds *et al.* (2002) contend that in the mid-1980s there was a second generation of school effectiveness studies that were carried out. With the use of more complex research methods and data analysis tools, Mortimore, Sammons, Stoll, Lewis and Ecob (1988) distinguished between twelve characteristics of effective schools and classroom practices. This covered a range of facets in the life of a school such as: (a) purposeful leadership; (b) involvement of deputy head; (c) involvement on the part of teachers; (d) consistency among teachers; (e) structured sessions; (f) sharp focus within sessions; (g) intellectually challenging teaching; (h) a work-centred environment; (i) maximum communication between teachers and pupils; (j) record keeping; (k) parent involvement; and (l) a positive climate. Lists of characteristics of effective schools provided by researchers of initial studies were followed by reviewers of their studies who tended to offer similar lists of characteristics (Ornstein, Levine, Gutek, Vocke, 2013; Barnett, 2011; Reynolds, 2010; Thomas and Collier, 2002; Teddlie and

Reynolds, 2000). The different characteristics of effective schools are discussed in section 3.4.

The Louisiana School Effectiveness Study (Teddlie and Stringfield, 1993) places the emphasis on the socio-economic status (SES) of student bodies and identifies different processes for effective middle- and low socio-economic status schools in the following six areas:

- Promotion of educational expectations. Effective middle-SES schools promoted both high present and future educational expectations, while effective low-SES schools promoted high present educational expectations;
- Principal leadership style. Principals in effective middle-SES schools had good managerial abilities and they emphasised teachers' self-management of teaching. In effective low-SES schools, principals monitored classrooms and provided overall instructional leadership;
- The use of external reward structures. Effective middle-SES schools downplayed visible external rewards for academic achievement, while effective low-SES schools emphasized rewarding high-achieving students;
- Emphasis in the school curriculum. Effective middle-SES schools expanded curricular offerings beyond basic skills, while effective low-SES schools primarily focused on basic skills;
- Parental involvement. Parental involvement was encouraged in effective middle-SES schools, while principals and staff in many low-SES schools created boundaries to buffer the school from negative influences; and
- Experience level of teachers. Principals in effective middle-SES schools hired more experienced teachers, while effective low-SES schools had less experienced teachers. (Teddlie, Stringfield and Reynolds, 2000: 168-169)

Reviews from the 1990s provide a comprehensive description of factors of effectiveness in economically developed countries. A review by Sammons *et al.* (1995) summarises the processes of effective schools to include professional leadership, shared vision and goals, a learning environment, concentration on teaching and learning, purposeful teaching, high expectations, positive reinforcement, home-school partnership, and a learning organisation. Levine and Lezotte's (1990) summary of the processes of effective schools include outstanding leadership, effective instructional arrangements and implementation, focus on student acquisition of central

learning skills, productive school climate and culture, high operationalised expectations and requirements for students, appropriate monitoring of student progress, practice-oriented staff development at the school site, and salient parental involvement. These two reviews of significant processes at effective schools were refined by Teddlie and Reynolds (2000) into nine areas: (1) effective leadership, (2) effective teaching, (3) focusing on learning, (4) a positive school culture, (5) high expectations for all, (6) student rights and responsibilities, (7) monitoring progress at all levels, (8) staff development, and (9) parental involvement.

According to Teddlie *et al.* (2000), studies in the early to mid-1990s address five types of context variables: the socio-economic status of student bodies, community type, grade phase of schooling, school governance and country. It was determined that the community significantly influenced the effectiveness of schools (Reynolds and Teddlie, 2000). The studies showed that the impact of communities on school effectiveness varied across different countries. It was argued that interaction between the variables of community type and country was an important consideration (Reynolds and Teddlie, 2000).

The field of school effectiveness research has become more internationalised. Teddlie and Reynolds (2005: 5) summarise the evidence for this new movement from a variety of sources:

- Since calendar year 2000, the Journal *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* has contained articles about school effectiveness research from a variety of settings.
- Various scholars have described aspects of the increasing internationalisation or globalisation of school effectiveness research, for example, Mortimore (2001) and Reynolds (2000).
- Two international educational effectiveness studies have been conducted: the International School Effects Research Project (ISERP) (Reynolds *et al.*, 2002) and the International System for Teacher Observation and Feedback (ISTOF).

Teddlie (2004) emphasises the importance of the continued internationalisation of school effectiveness research so that more voices can be heard from the developing countries. This may generate results different from those in the literature and invigorate the field once again.

It can be concluded that the primary objective of most school effectiveness research in developed countries has been to create, sustain and investigate learner achievement. School effectiveness research has become a widely researched discipline; common peripheries of effectiveness of schools and education are being crossed. Reynolds, Sammons, De Fraine, Van Damme, *et al.* (2014: 198) contend that research has advanced beyond the school and the classroom. The focus has shifted in educational effectiveness studies to embrace all realms of education.

School effectiveness research in South Africa was adopted with the same focus: to improve learner achievement. The South African context of schooling differs considerably in comparison to economically-developed countries. However, it is important to consider the methodological approaches used in developed countries and its applicability to the South African context. Schooling in South Africa is discussed in Section 3.6. Reynolds *et al.* (2014: 197) suggest that future research need to renew its focus upon the education of the disadvantaged which was the original focus of the school effectiveness research discipline when it began. This revival of socially responsible and demonstrably accountable research relates closely to this study which focuses on the effectiveness of a school in a disadvantaged community.

### **3.3.2 School effectiveness in developing countries**

Jansen (1995: 190) argues that findings of school effectiveness research in economically developed countries are applied to developing countries with the assistance of international funding agencies such as the World Bank and international research associations such as the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement. Studies by the World Bank have been influential in educational policy systems of developing countries. Jansen (1995) divides school effectiveness research in developing countries into three periods:

### **3.3.2.1 The first period**

The early to late 1970s were regarded as the first period of school effectiveness studies in developing countries. Simmons and Alexander (1978: 355) aimed to identify factors that promoted student achievement in developing countries. Schools had minimal influence on students' achievement especially in the lower grades. Factors such as higher quality teachers and expensive facilities which were seen as essential for better education did not seem to improve achievement in the lower grades; however removing students from their home environment into a school environment produced marked improvements (Simmons and Alexander, 1978).

Twenty-six studies in developing countries were reviewed by Schiefelbein and Simmons (1981) of which five were conducted in Africa. The characteristics of these studies were summarised as follows by Jansen (1995):

- These studies adopted the methodologies of the Coleman study using national survey data, employed multivariate statistical techniques, and adopted the concept of the educational production function;
- These studies generated results consistent with the studies conducted in the USA: student backgrounds greatly affected their achievement; and
- These studies were all designed and funded in the USA (with a minor contribution from the UK), and transferred to developing countries by individual researchers and research institutions from economically developed countries.

### **3.3.2.2 The second period**

The second period occurred in the 1980s. Studies in this decade suggest that schools have a greater influence on student achievement than proposed by studies carried out in the 1970s (Liu, 2006). Liu (2006: 34) states that the most significant finding from research during this period was that of school factors such as textbooks and resources as well as teaching quality which contributed to student achievement. Heyneman and Loxley (1983) conclude that the poorer the country, the greater the impact of the school and teacher quality on achievement of students. Mwamwenda and Mwamwenda (1987: 235) argue that resources at schools are important in improving academic performance. This conclusion was in contrast to findings that indicated that school facilities

have little or no impact on student achievement as determined in studies in economically developed countries.

Lockheed, Vail and Fuller (1986: 390) explore the effects of textbooks and other factors on student achievement. This study confirmed that textbooks contribute significantly to student learning in developing countries. Vulliamy (1987: 219-220) drew the following conclusion:

The argument in the First World literature that levels of resourcing and of physical facilities are unrelated to student achievement does not seem to be applicable in the Third World context...The lack of the most basic facilities in many third world schools...not only depresses staff and student morale but also acts as an impediment to effective teaching and learning.

The findings from Vulliamy's (1987) study support the findings of Heyneman and Loxley (1983) that effects of school are greater in developing countries than in developed countries.

### **3.3.2.3 The third period**

The third period in school effectiveness research emerged at the end of the 1980s. Studies such as those of Lockheed and Longford (1991) found that family background exerted more influence over student achievement than school factors. In a study by Baker, Brain and Letendre (1999), the relation between national wealth and large school effects as examined by Heyneman and Loxley in the 1980s determine that family factors were more important predictors of academic achievement than school factors in most countries irrespective of national levels of wealth. Thus, Baker *et al.* (1999) concluded that socio-economic, home-life conditions had a powerful effect even in developing countries.

Harber and Muthukrishna (2000) argue that school effectiveness is to be understood within a context. There are differences between resources and ideological contexts of schooling. This observation was based on the issue of whether the characteristics of an effective school are universally valid. The

study of Harber and Muthukrishna (2000) was undertaken in the context of South Africa. Their conclusions implied that it was difficult to apply a set of school improvement strategies from developed countries to South Africa where schools are so diverse in their needs and resources.

Willms and Somers's (2001) study was conducted in Latin American countries and concluded that effects associated with school-level variables indicated that effective schools had the following characteristics:

- Availability of resources which included a low pupil-teacher ratio and teaching material, a large functional library, and well trained teachers;
- The school did not have multi-grade classrooms and learners were not grouped according to their abilities;
- The children should be tested on a regular basis;
- There should be a high level of parental involvement in the school and classroom;
- Classrooms should have a positive atmosphere and good classroom discipline.

There is little consensus as to how schools contribute to learners' achievement in developing countries. A review of school effectiveness studies by Fuller and Clarke (1994: 127-132) states that three factors are important: first, availability of textbooks and supplementary reading material; second, teacher characteristics such as teacher knowledge of the subject and verbal proficiencies; and third, contact time and work demands placed on students. Scheerens (2001: 356) comments that there are different characteristics for school effectiveness in developing countries as opposed to developed countries.

Recent studies of South African education include the Ministerial Task Team Report on the implementation of Mathematics, Science and Technology (DBE, 2013a), the National School Effectiveness Study (Taylor, 2011), the Ministerial Report on Schools that Work (Christie *et al.*, 2007) and a study on Standards-based accountability in South Africa (Taylor, 2009). These studies emphasize strong internal accountability. The Mathematics, Science and Technology (MST) report (DBE, 2013a: 4) asserts that the most critical priority in South African education has to do with teachers and teaching-related issues. Taylor (2011: 10) concludes that strong internal accountability should be directed within a co-ordinated focus on teaching and learning by school management,



teachers and parents. He states that systems which enhance performance in South African schools are time-management, curriculum-planning, systematic use of assessment to focus on teaching and learning, and procurement and retrieval of books.

Other South African studies on school effectiveness include Botha (2010), Makoelle (2011) and Botha and Makoelle (2012). Botha (2010) proposes quantitative measuring for school effectiveness whereas Makoelle (2011) proposes an index of school effectiveness and improvement which entails regular review of the school by all its stakeholders. Botha and Makoelle (2012) identify factors, apart from academic results, that make a school effective, such as good management, strong governance, a healthy school environment, good infrastructure and motivated learners with good teachers. In a recent video research project on '*Schools that Work*', Jansen (2013) asserts that effective schools are marked by a deep sense of care and compassion for learners. There was a distinct relation between love and discipline. The historical overview of school effectiveness in economically developed and developing countries often highlighted different characteristics of school effectiveness. The following section will discuss different characteristics of school effectiveness.

### **3.4 General characteristics of effective schools**

The general characteristics of effective schools are acquired from the perspective of developed and developing countries. Characteristics are selected according to the applicability to the South African context. Based on the historical overview, research on school effectiveness has presented a variety of factors that relate to learner achievement. Scholars such as Edmonds (1979) and Lezotte (1991) find that effective schools have a number of characteristics in common. Makoelle (2011: 54) lists characteristics of effective schools that are applicable to South African education: vision, mission and expectations; teaching and learning; management and leadership; assessment of learners; school-home relations and relations with other schools. Creemers and Reezigt (1996: 200) argue that consistency in the findings could be a reliable indicator of these factors. Creemers and

Reezigt (1996: 200) state that similarities might be due to the same literature being reviewed continuously and that the similarity of the findings may 'point at a research artefact because these factors were supposed to influence students' achievement as they were studied over and over again, and were found to influence students' achievement from time to time'.

Shannon and Bylsma (2007: 3-4) have defined nine characteristics that were most common in effective schools and derived from various studies such as Levine and Lezotte (1990), Sammons *et al.* (1995) and Reynolds and Teddlie (2000). The nine characteristics of Shannon and Bylsma (2007):

1. A clear and shared focus;
2. High standards and expectations for all students;
3. Effective school leadership;
4. High levels of collaboration and communication;
5. Curriculum, instruction and assessments aligned with standards;
6. Frequent monitoring of learning and teaching;
7. Focused professional development;
8. Supportive learning environment; and
9. High level of family and community involvement.

No single characteristic has led to school effectiveness. Most studies identify combinations of five or more of these characteristics (Shannon and Bylsma, 2007). The study has reviewed and refined the nine characteristics in order to isolate and identify overlapping features or common traits. Table 3.1 lists six revised characteristics used as a framework for an effective school in this study and are discussed in detail below. The characteristics are not listed in order of priority.

Table 3.1: Revised list of characteristics of effective schools

Characteristic	Features
1. A clear and shared focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core purpose of organisation</li> <li>• Creating a shared vision</li> <li>• Unity of purpose</li> </ul>
2. High standards and expectations for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on learners</li> <li>• Focus on staff</li> <li>• Responsibility for achieving success</li> <li>• Active role of stakeholders</li> </ul>
3. Effective leadership and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship of leaders and followers</li> <li>• Instructional leadership as an approach</li> <li>• Transformational leadership – involvement of others</li> <li>• Reviewing and refining of processes</li> <li>• Provide feedback</li> </ul>
4. Collaboration, partnerships and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teamwork – joint efforts</li> <li>• Effective partnerships</li> <li>• Positive influence due to parental involvement</li> <li>• Consideration of family circumstances</li> <li>• Communication is fundamental</li> </ul>
5. Effective teaching and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best practices in teaching (quality)</li> <li>• Teacher effects in the classroom</li> <li>• Learning opportunities for teachers</li> <li>• Purpose to improve learner achievement</li> <li>• Ensure suitably qualified teachers</li> </ul>
6. Supportive learning environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School climate</li> <li>• Emphasis on academics</li> <li>• Link between classroom practices and learning outcomes</li> </ul>

### 3.4.1 Clear and shared focus

A critical element of an effective school is the identification of its core purpose as an organisation. Newmann, Smith, Allensworth and Byrk (2001) emphasise that an effective system has strong programme coherence: practices within the system are consistently and tightly connected. A sustained and accurate focus is more likely to improve student achievement than fragmented, uncoordinated systems. A clear and shared focus is synonymous with the

attainment of a healthy school culture. Schein (1985:6) defined the culture of an organisation as:

... the basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organisation, that operate unconsciously, and that define in a basic taken for granted fashion of an organisation's view of itself and its environment.

School culture can be defined as the context and setting of the school, its internal processes and the sense of core purpose by which staff members regulate and arrange their working environment (Holly and Southworth, 1989: 100). These definitions imply that having a clear and shared focus is an organic function of energies in the particular system.

Sammons *et al.* (1995) and Reynolds *et al.* (1996) believe that a shared vision and goal provide unity of purpose, consistency of practice, collegiality and collaboration amongst staff. In order for schools to improve, an important first step is to establish a clear, shared focus on learning (Knapp, Copland, Ford, Markholt, McLaughlin, Milliken and Talbert, 2003). Rosenholtz (1989) explains that a shared focus in a school provides direction and purpose for teacher collaboration: it creates an increased certainty with reference to teaching practice. This assists in aligning activities for a school to become effective. According to Shannon and Bylsma (2007), a clear and mutually determined focus creates a vision that captures the imagination and enthusiasm of members of an organisation as well as specific goals which concentrate attention, effort and resources. Effectiveness, therefore, entails a collaborative process of analysing information with regard to a specific target in the school: this process is agreed upon between school management and all other stakeholders.

### **3.4.2 High standards and expectations for all**

Mortimore (1993: 295) and Moore (1998: 247) assert that learners tend to perform at a level consistent with teacher expectation. Learners tend to perform better, and are more competent, when teachers set high expectations and hold learners responsible for achieving success by challenging them.

Mortimore (1993: 295) explains that these findings are referred to as the self-fulfilling prophecy or Pygmalion effect introduced by Merton in 1986. Increasing student learning requires that students as well as their teachers believe in their ability to achieve high academic standards (Shannon and Bylsma, 2007: 33). The ability to change beliefs is often associated with changing actions. According to Fullan, 'We can act our way to new beliefs' (in Saphier, 2005: 105). Saphier (2005: 86) believes that all students can undertake rigorous academic work at high standards: teachers who incorporate this belief in their practice are not unrealistic about the goals they and their students can achieve.

An important aspect within school effectiveness is the extent to which learners feel that they are expected to learn and the extent to which, and ways in which, such expectations are reinforced. Mohiemang (2008: 38) posits that expectations can be either positive or negative: teachers communicate expectations and reinforce them differently. For example, teachers tend to ask low achievers closed or convergent questions while open, divergent questions are reserved for high ability students (Mohiemang, 2008: 38). Moore (1998: 245) suggests that teachers communicate expectations to students implicitly: low achievers are called on less often to answer questions and given less time to answer questions. This is an unspoken indication that low-achievers are not expected to answer the question. Furthermore, low-achievers are criticized more frequently for incorrect responses and praised less frequently for correct responses (Moore, 1998: 245). Pedagogically, the reverse should apply: low-achievers should be encouraged and affirmed more.

Harris (2001a: 89) contends that negative expectations exacerbate poor performance in schools in any area, but particularly in disadvantaged communities. Low expectations can lower underachievement by demoralising a learner. Learners start to internalise the teacher's negative expectations which, in turn, stifle the learner's self-esteem and motivation. Muijs and Reynolds (2001: 65) suggest ways of overcoming this problem:

- Teachers should remember that all learners can learn and this should be communicated to students;
- Teachers should ensure that all learners have the opportunity to participate in classroom activities such as questioning and discussion;

- Teachers should be aware of potential differences in their response to learners; and
- Teachers should monitor how they distribute rewards and punishment to learners.

High expectations correspond with a more engaged, active role for teachers in helping learners to learn. Low expectations place learners in a passive approach to teaching. Mohiemang (2008: 39) explains that high expectations are more effective when they are part of a school culture that places demands on everyone in the school. If the principal has high expectations of the teachers, this positive attitude filters through to the school management team and school as a whole. Sammons (1999: 207) describes the situation where a school has high expectations for their learners: teachers provide intellectually challenging material for learners in all lessons. High expectations alone, however, can do little to raise achievement. It is more effective when combined with a strong emphasis on academics; teacher efficacy; a conducive learning environment; and the monitoring of progress (Sammons, 1999: 207). These are the determinable and sustainable characteristics of effective schools.

### **3.4.3 Effective leadership and monitoring**

Effective leadership and monitoring are discussed at the school management level. Burns (1978: 19) defines leadership as the influence of persons to achieve goals held mutually by leaders and followers through the use of institutional, political, psychological and other resources. The goals referred to represent the values and motivations which could be interpreted as the aspirations and expectations of both leaders and followers. It can further be deduced from Burns's (1978) definition that effective leadership is dependent on relations between leaders and followers. Hallinger (2007: 2) and Stewart (2006: 1) argue that student outcomes are substantially affected by school management teams and teachers in the way leadership is exercised. They further indicate that two conceptual models emerged which focus on educational leadership namely, instructional and transformational leadership.

Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999: 8) define instructional leadership as an approach that emphasises behaviour of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the development of learners. The responsibility of the principal to enhance the school's teaching and learning activities emerged in the 1980s as an area of emphasis from the effective school's research and was termed instructional leadership (Mohiemang, 2008). Hallinger (2007: 3) notes that the focus on the improvement of teaching and learning is the result of instructional leadership. Principals are not always welcome unannounced in teachers' classrooms: they are not necessarily experts in every subject area. This makes instructional leadership a challenge in high schools. Thus principals often distance themselves from it. However, it is required that monitoring takes place to ensure that there is a practice of effective teaching and learning.

Schmoker (1996:6) broadly defines monitoring as analysing what is done against results being obtained. He explains that monitoring requires regular reviewing and refining of processes that 'directly contribute to the designated results' (Schmoker: 1996: 7). Southworth (2004: 60) states that monitoring involves visiting classrooms, observing teachers at work and providing them with feedback. The purpose of monitoring is to provide feedback to the teacher and learner as well as other stakeholders who are responsible for ensuring that effective teaching and learning take place. This is supported by Southworth (2004: 60) who concludes that leadership is stronger when it is informed by data which is used by different levels of leadership. Shannon and Bylsma (2007: 86) explain that monitoring teaching and learning requires paying attention to both student learning and the effectiveness of the school and classroom procedures. They indicate that learning is monitored by tracking a variety of assessment results whereas teaching is monitored by school management teams and teacher evaluation programmes.

The conceptual model of transformational leadership is the involvement of others in the process of leadership. Leadership is dependent on others and the relations they sustain. Transformational leadership is similar to that of distributive leadership according to Shannon and Bylsma (2007). They explain that the concept of distributive leadership acknowledges and promotes

leadership that already exists latently throughout the organisation. Elmore (2000: 15) argues that leadership cannot reside only in designated leaders because the tasks of teaching and learning are too complex. He suggests that most of the improvement should come from those directly responsible for instruction and not from the management of instruction. Leadership should be distributed based on individual predispositions, interests, knowledge, skills, and roles (Elmore, 2000: 15). Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004: 7) postulate that successful leaders develop, and depend on, a spectrum of acknowledged talents and skills in the organisation. When teachers lead, principals extend their own capacity and therefore teacher leadership benefits school as well as classroom. Teacher leadership can be seen as the role of checking attendance in class, implementing departmental and school policies, monitoring learner progress and implementing action where necessary. Leithwood and Jantzi (2000: 114) explain transformational leadership in schools along six dimensions:

- Building the school vision and goals;
- Providing intellectual stimulation;
- Offering individualised support;
- Symbolising professional practices and values;
- Demonstrating high performance expectations; and
- Developing structures to foster participation in decision making.

Harris (2003: 18) asserts that these behaviours encourage teacher collaboration, increase motivation and improve teacher self-efficacy. Schools enhance learner achievement if they integrate and align such processes.

#### **3.4.4 Collaboration, partnerships and communication**

Strong teamwork among teachers across all grades and with other staff members is essential. Stakeholders in a school should connect and involve each other including parents and members of the community. Collaboration is defined as working jointly with others or together especially in an intellectual endeavour (Merriam-Webster on-line dictionary, 2014). Shannon and Bylsma (2007: 54) explain that collaboration is a term often used to describe a variety of joint endeavours in school improvement.



Johnson (1998) describes collaboration across four dimensions: co-operative work among teachers is one dimension; shared participation in school governance is another; partnerships among schools and businesses for financial support form a third and collaboration among schools and other public agencies to provide social services is a fourth. Learners, parents, family, teachers, school staff and the community in general have a mutual responsibility for the education of learners. Such a responsibility goes further to include businesses, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and universities. Responsibilities may include demonstrating the importance of education, showing support and encouraging learners to learn.

Rosenholtz's study (1989) of teachers' work environment emphasises the importance of collaboration for teacher efficacy and student achievement. Rosenholtz (1989: 210) identifies 'moving' and 'stuck' schools: where moving schools are characterised by consensus of goals, teacher sharing and mutually helping one another. According to Barott and Raybould (1998: 29), collaboration requires interdependence and could be perceived as a loss of autonomy and discretion. Schmoker (2005: xii) argues that schools that continuously work together to seek and share learning often form close-knit communities of continuous inquiry and mutual improvement. The right kind of continuous, structured teacher collaboration improves the quality of teaching and student learning with improved professional morale in virtually any setting (Schmoker, 2005: xii).

Partnerships and communication are essential in the broader context of school and community. It is clear that collaboration amongst stakeholders leads to effective schools. There should be effective communication amongst stakeholders. Regular and clear communication is fundamental in effective schools: student learning is enhanced when schools, families and communities share goals, demonstrate mutual respect and trust, and join in partnerships to promote the well-being of students (Shannon and Bylsma, 2007: 59). This is an indication that parents and communities should participate in school affairs at different levels such as governance, planning and implementation. Research has shown that family involvement is a key factor in a student's improved academic performance: the relation between

family and school pertains across all economic, racial and educational backgrounds, and between students of all ages (Henderson and Mapp, 2002: 24). Students benefit through improved student achievement, better attendance, behaviour and social skills (Griffith, 1996: 39; Henderson and Mapp, 2002: 25). Constantino (2005: 7) supports this argument by stating that children have advantages when their parents support and encourage school activities.

Epstein (2001) developed a framework for school, family and community partnerships which included six types of involvement for effective partnerships: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and community collaboration. She further indicates that family and community involvement do not necessarily require adults to spend time at the school building. Wagner (2002: 147) indicates that the first step toward effective communication is recognising the importance of 'listening to the public and creating dialogue'. Schools and communities need to join together to increase 'social capital' which is necessary to help students and families meet the joint challenges they face (Wagner, 2002). It is important for schools and parents to communicate regularly and clearly about information related to student success.

Constantino (2005: 152) argues that schools should inform parents about standards and how they relate to the curriculum, learning outcomes, methods of assessment, school programmes, discipline codes, and student progress. He suggests various means for implementing and enhancing communication: newsletters, handbooks, conferences, open days, home visits, hotlines, email, and voice mail. One-on-one contact and telephone calls are most effective for reciprocal understanding and communication to take place.

In the context of this study, which is based on a disadvantaged community, building partnerships with families can be equated with finding common ground with parents. Darling-Hammond (1997: 174) confirms that mutual understanding reduces the sort of cultural conflicts that create competing psychological incentive structures for students. In diverse communities such as those under consideration in this study, family involvement includes family circumstances, provides choices, validates the family's culture and values, and

explicitly emphasises the importance of family support of learners' learning (Shannon and Bylsma: 2007). Henderson and Mapp (2002: 34) conclude that all families can, and often do, have a positive influence on their children's learning.

### **3.4.5 Effective teaching and development**

Effective teaching focuses primarily on objectives in order to achieve effectiveness. Attention on schools in school effectiveness research has diminished: the classroom is receiving more emphasis than before (Creemers and Reezigt, 1996: 198). Various studies conclude that effective schools are only as effective as effective teachers at the school (Rowe, Holmes-Smith and Hill, 1993; Wright, Horn and Sanders, 1997; Muijs and Reynolds, 2001). Rowe (2004: 13) asserts that teaching has a direct relation to student achievement. His research results indicate that there was more variation within schools than between schools implying that the quality of teaching and learning was the most salient factor responsible for variation in student's achievement in their final schooling year. It can be interpreted that such findings indicate that it is at classroom level that learning takes place: there may be differences in the progress made by learners in different classes within the same school but teachers make a crucial difference in the classroom. This argument is supported by Christie *et al.*, (2007) who indicate that their influence within the classroom determines the learners' achievement level. Individual teachers at schools have a potent effect on the success of the school (Christie *et al.*, 2007). Studies by MacBeath and Mortimore (2001), and Townsend (2001) have shown that what happens in the classroom contributes to the effectiveness of the school.

The Ministerial Task Team Report on MST (DBE, 2013a: 2) recommends effective teaching as an important objective to be met. The Education Department attempts to increase and enhance human resource capacity to deliver quality education as a response. Effective teaching can occur when teachers are developed, exposed to new strategies and refreshed on subject content. Teacher development covers a wide range of learning opportunities

and is generally regarded as on-the-job, in-service and staff development training.

Shannon and Bylsma (2007: 96) assert there is growing consensus that continuous, job-embedded professional development is the best hope for changing teaching to improve student learning. Hawley and Valli (1999: 128) confirm that conventional staff development strategies for making substantive improvement in instruction have been ineffective: Hawley and Valli (1999) support the adoption of different ways to facilitate professional learning. The evaluation of effectiveness of professional development stands in relation to its effect on student learning and improvement of teaching performance. It does not merely reflect the levels of participant satisfaction (Guskey, 2000).

According to Lieberman and Miller (2001: ix), teacher development that is effective reflects the following common themes:

- The importance of explicitly linking teacher and student learning;
- Supporting professional collaboration and collegial accountability with time and opportunity for conversation, joint action and critique;
- Associate teaching and assessment practices;
- Encouraging the development of a common language through oral and written communication;
- Developing and using structured tools and protocols to guide discussion; and
- Using real-life events of teaching as the source of professional development.

In South Africa, the national policy framework for teacher education and development is an attempt to articulate the need for suitably qualified teachers (South Africa, 2007: 5). The policy framework focuses on two sub-systems: initial professional education of teachers and continuing professional development of teachers (CPDT) (South Africa, 2007: 2). Steyn (2008: 19) postulates that the policy framework is a reform initiative aimed at changing the quality of teaching in South Africa. Its success, however, cannot be guaranteed unless its potential to lead to teachers' professional development has been considered.

How does one know whether effective teaching has taken place? There are different variables to be considered, and associated with, effective teaching.

The importance of a structured pedagogical approach to teaching has been endorsed by school effectiveness research. In a structured pedagogical approach, the lesson is introduced to afford learners a glimpse of what is expected. The content to be learnt is presented in logical steps with clear, detailed explanations and active learner participation after each step. It is expected that throughout the lesson, the teacher checks for understanding and comprehension by asking questions and providing activities where possible. The effective teacher should conclude the lesson with a summary of what was done in the lesson (Creemers, 1996: 52). Time management of lessons contributes to effective teaching: starting and finishing lessons on time; preparation of lessons in advance; and adapting lessons to the appropriate level of the learners (Reynolds and Teddlie, 2000; Muijs and Reynolds, 2001).

#### **3.4.6 Supportive learning environment in schools**

Shannon and Bylsma (2007: 107) define a supportive learning environment as a school culture of reasonable expectations regarding behaviour; consistent and fair application of rules and regulations as well as a caring responsive relation between teachers and students. They further contend that in a supportive learning environment, children are valued. Their heritage and background are valued as assets. This appreciation leads to mutual respect and trust at the heart of a supportive learning environment.

Reynolds and Teddlie (2000: 147) posit that in a supportive learning environment, focusing on learning includes academic emphasis and maximum use of available learning time which have been shown to be the core elements of effective schools. An academic emphasis is seen through factors such as homework which is not only a way of checking learners' understanding but contributes to maximising learning time.

There are several arenas in school effectiveness research that are relevant to creating and maintaining supportive learning environments:

- Edmonds (1979: 22) reported that effective schools research provided characteristics of safe and orderly school environments that are orderly

without being rigid, quiet without being oppressive, and conducive to the instructional business at hand.

- Research on small classes and small schools describes personalised learning environments that increase students' sense of belonging and opportunities to participate actively in the school (Molnar, Smith, Zahorik, *et al.*, 1999; Nye, Hedges and Konstantopoulos, 2001; Fidler, 2001).
- Research and professional literature (de Frondeville, 2009) suggest classroom and teaching models that engage learners emotionally, intellectually and socially.
- Research that supports the benefits of culturally responsive pedagogy in creating positive classroom environments which impact student learning. Researchers emphasise the importance of teachers' recognising the frames of reference of their students from every background (Gay, 2000).
- Several research studies on classroom management and discipline identified practices that contributed to productive learning situations (Brophy, 1986; Duke, 1989; Luke, 1989; Ornstein and Levine, 1981; Evertson and Weinstein, 2006).

Hopkins and Reynolds (2001) maintain that effective schools and effective teachers understand, and pay serious attention to, the link between classroom practices and students' learning outcomes. Such teachers devote more time to academic activities and provide learners who encounter difficulties with the guidance they need to succeed.

### **3.5 Schools in disadvantaged communities**

With the emergence from a dysfunctional state of schooling under apartheid, the South African education system could not be transformed into an equitable and socially just system overnight (Christie, 1998). The majority of schools in difficult social circumstances are still distinguishable from schools in more affluent areas. Hoadley and Ward (2009:4) note two aspects in respect of schools in disadvantaged communities: first, the school faces social pressure from poor school communities and, second, schools have scarce resources. Schools in poor communities are required to provide the same services as any other school. These schools do not have access to the same resources as schools in more affluent areas.

There is significant literature on schools in difficult economic circumstances. According to Christie, *et al.* (2007), these schools are identified as at 'risk' in the USA, 'disadvantaged schools' in Australia, 'challenging circumstances' in the UK and schools on the 'edge' in Scotland. This study defines 'difficult circumstances' and 'disadvantaged schools' as suffering the effects of poverty, deprivation of teaching and learning material and disruption of communities.

Malcolm, Keane, Hoohlo, Kgaka and Ovens (2000), in their research on disadvantaged schools in South Africa that succeed in Mathematics and Science, concluded the following were aspects of classroom success:

- Competent use of traditional methods;
- Belief that disadvantages can be overcome;
- Recognising the school as a vital modern institution in a depressed and deprived environment;
- The key to teaching and learning is the subject knowledge of teachers;
- Promoting hard work and discipline is important;
- Motivation on the part of the principal, head of department, teachers and learners play a positive role; and
- Positive ethos is critical – even more than physical resources.

The above aspects refer to the classroom, and clearly affect success of disadvantaged schools as systemic entities. The aspects should not be restricted to schools in difficult circumstances, but in all schools. In the recent MST investigation by the ministerial task team (DBE, 2013a: 51-52), the conclusions were that:

- Systemic problems exist at all levels in education;
- There is a lack of administrative skills and subject competence;
- A lack of resources at all levels and
- A lack of support from each hierarchical structure.

Considering international literature on schools at risk, caution should be exercised as to the context of these schools. These schools are often the minority group schools that are at risk in comparison to schools in South Africa that are in difficult circumstances (Christie *et al.*, 2007). The landscape of South African schools is that the majority of schools are black schools in poor

socio-economic conditions. These schools do not possess the physical resources needed to promote effective teaching and learning (Christie *et al.*, 2007).

### **3.6 Schooling in the South African context**

The transition to a democratic country in 1994 is a turning point in the history of South Africa: a new constitution entrenched the universal right to basic education. Education was regarded as a political tool by the former apartheid government to entrench inequalities. These inequalities influence the ability of schools to perform at expected standards. The functioning of schools in South Africa continues to be hobbled by the inherited ills of colonialism and apartheid (DBE, 2009). This implies that inequalities in education still pervade despite the changes introduced in 1994. StatsSA (2013) provides a general overview of schooling in South Africa since 2002:

- Enrolment rates increased from 96.7% in 2002 to 98.6% in 2009;
- The functional literacy rate rose over the past decade from 88% to 92.7% in 2011;
- Primary education completion rates increased from 89.6% in 2002 to 93.8% in 2009 and 94.7% in 2011; and
- Progression through the school system indicates that children in South Africa complete primary schooling at an older age than expected.

In an earlier report, StatsSA points to persistent inequalities remaining within the education system:

In general, the quality of teaching in schools in different areas of the country requires further examination. As would be expected, children are moving through the education system at differing rates, which vary noticeably by population group. In particular, some black children in the more rural provinces are moving through the system rather slowly. Some coloured children are also moving rather slowly through the system. The quality of education in schools, especially those in the former homelands, requires further research (2005:62).

Taylor, Muller and Vinjevold (2003) reviewed questions of effectiveness and efficiency as the South African Education system changed. This was done against the backdrop of the racial ranking of schools, where white schools were regarded as most effective and black schools least effective. Van der



Berg, Wood and le Roux (2002) emphasise that inequalities in South African black education remain profound:

The problem does not lie in the performance of black learners from better socio-economic backgrounds, which was still not particularly good compared with children of other race groups. Rather, it lies in the abysmal performance of the largest part of the former black school system and its failure to improve educational outcomes rapidly among the poor so as to overcome the legacies of the past. Policy makers appear to be insufficiently aware of this (2002:305).

It is clear from the above that the terms 'equality' and 'quality' need to be defined and understood within the South African schooling system. Van der Berg (2010: 16) asserts that there are differences in the quality of education received by members of different race groups. The implication is that educational quality is a concern for labour market outcomes (2010: 16).

It is evident from public spending on education in South Africa that the government is committed to an improvement in outcomes nationally and that they wish to establish equality and equity within the schooling system. Investment in education in the post-1994 period has resulted in improved access to education in South Africa generally, but has not yet provided the desired improvement in outcomes (DBE, 2010: 12). The Department of Basic Education (2010) argues that, despite the high financial investment in education, South Africa is still performing poorly in national and international studies of learner achievement. Attempts to meet concerns are reflected by the allocation of 20% of the country's budget to education, which is the largest sector allocation of the budget (StatsSA, 2013: 37).

Issues of quality are well demonstrated by South Africa's performance in national and comparative international tests. Tests referred to are amongst others:

- Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) test on mathematics and science proficiency (2011);
- The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) III study administered in 2007
- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Monitoring Learner Assessment (MLA) tests.

- The Grade 3, 6 and 9 Systemic Evaluations
- The Annual National Assessment (ANA) test (2012)

StatsSa (2013: 49) reports that South Africa achieves below international standards as measured through TIMSS, although there is some improvement in comparison to previous years. According to Christie *et al.*, (2007), such tests show a worrying bifurcation: the best results are achieved by historically privileged schools. There is a significant gap between these and previously disadvantaged schools.

The second Millennium Development Goal (MDG) shows that there is a desire from the Department of Education to intensify educational improvement initiatives in order to ensure effective schooling for the citizens of South Africa.

### **3.7 Summary**

This chapter reviewed literature related to the study on school effectiveness in disadvantaged communities. The majority of literature is from an international perspective; however there has been a clear indication of literature on school effectiveness in developing countries. Researchers lack consensus on what constitutes school effectiveness. I have therefore reviewed literature to best define school 'effectiveness' with reference to this study.

In this chapter I provided a historical overview of school effectiveness research in economically developed countries. I have discussed these characteristics with reference to this study. I have provided a review of schools in difficult circumstances and a general overview of schooling within the South African context.

In Chapter four I discuss the research design and methodology employed in this study to collect and analyse the data for this thesis.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Introduction

The Department of Basic Education has increased its focus on improving the quality of education: it expects to improve learner achievement and overall school standards (DBE, 2013b: 7). It is not clear whether all schools are becoming effective and successful schools. Nevertheless there are pockets of effective schools succeeding against the odds by producing high matriculation pass rates (Moloi, 2010). Factors that contribute to the effectiveness of such high-performing schools in challenging circumstances need to be identified. This thesis is set in an interpretive paradigm and aims to ascertain factors that contribute to the effectiveness of a school in a disadvantaged community. In order to understand the interconnectedness of the relations between participants and to answer the research questions, I have collected primary data using qualitative research approaches.

Yin (2009: 63) argues that the use of a mixture of research methods is effective in collecting a rich and reliable array of data as opposed to a single method alone. The use of qualitative research methods can assist in resolving complex research questions. Combining methods and mixed methods research are the same thing according to Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003). Although there is some opposition to mixing methods, there is a strong argument that such a combination can be used in cases where there is a need for determining deeper meaning in the data. Mouton (1996: 39) postulates that the use of multiple methods and techniques is one of the best ways to improve the quality of the research. Furthermore, Bless and Higson-Smith (2000: 38) argue that:

There are advantages and disadvantages to both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The skilled social researcher carefully chooses the most appropriate approach to a particular problem. In nearly all cases the line between quantitative and qualitative methods is somewhat blurred. In fact a comprehensive study will use both methods.

In pursuit of attaining a holistic understanding of school effectiveness within a particular case study, collecting and analysing qualitative data was required. Case study research attempts to understand the case in its natural state and context (Rule and John, 2011: 61).

The aim of this chapter is to outline research design using qualitative research methods. In order to gain a clear understanding of the interconnectedness, and varying relations between the participants, this chapter shows the appropriateness of the research design used.

This chapter covers the following aspects:

- Section 4.2 – research design;
- Section 4.3 – an in-depth discussion of the sample selection within the case study. Data collection method used for each participant;
- Section 4.4 – instruments used for data collection;
- Section 4.5 – the process of data analysis and why it was adopted;
- Section 4.6 – ethical considerations;
- Section 4.7 – validity of the data collection process;
- Section 4.8 – the demands of the process of the data collection; and
- Section 4.9 – summary of the chapter.

## **4.2 Research Design**

The research is set in an interpretive paradigm. The use of qualitative approaches was deemed to be appropriate to acquire a deep, rich array of data. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) assert that the interpretive paradigm has become firmly entrenched in the field of education considering the emergence of mixed methods research. Mixed method research is defined as a class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches and concepts into a single study (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This study made use of a mixture of research techniques within a qualitative approach. Data was analysed qualitatively as being influenced by theoretical orientations of the study.

#### 4.2.1 Qualitative Research

In using a qualitative approach, rich deep data is obtained which, according to Mouton and Marais (1994: 205), the researcher can interpret from the perspective of the subjects of the investigation. The qualitative method on its own is a systematic and empirical strategy for answering questions about people in a social context (Locke, Spirduso and Silverman, 1993: 99). This can be associated with respondents' descriptions and understandings of their experiences. Respondents indicate their perceptions in a qualitative form.

When participants express their feelings, beliefs and explanations such responses can be treated as a valuable reality. In this study, views of the principal, school management team (SMT), teachers, parents and alumni are surveyed and explored in the qualitative data that they provide. Interview transcripts, field notes and documents are primary forms of information in qualitative data according to Locke *et al.* (1993). As my site visits continued, field notes were taken in order to maintain a fresh memory of observations made and my own experiences recorded while doing the study.

Locke *et al.* (1993: 99) argue that qualitative research is naturalistic: the researcher enters the world of the participant as it exists and obtains data without any deliberate intervention designed to alter the setting. In this study, participants were approached in their natural environment to ensure their surroundings could allow the most authentic responses to emerge naturally without any alien elements intruding. The principal as well as the deputy principal were interviewed in their offices. The SMT and the post level one teachers' focus group interviews took place in the school library. The parent component was interviewed at venues they chose themselves. Some parents chose to be interviewed at home: others preferred to be interviewed at their place of employment.

In applying qualitative research, there is the advantage that probing can take place which results in a wealth of detailed information when using semi-structured interviews. This enhances the depth of data and reliability for thorough analysis and interpretation. Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2005) characterise qualitative research as understanding and in-depth inquiry.

### **4.2.2 The case study**

Rule and John (2011: 4) explain that a case study is systematic and an in-depth investigation of a particular instance in its context in order to generate knowledge. In this study, the researcher investigated the practice which makes a school effective within a disadvantaged community. Thomas (2011: 3) indicates that the case study method concentrates on one institution, group, person or event, examining it in detail and not seeking to generalise from it. In the case of this school, I scrutinise the uniqueness of the school and what makes this school effective in spite of its financial challenges. Swanborn (2010: 2) defines this method of case study as an intensive approach: it provides a focus on one specific instance to be analysed in-depth. This is opposed to the extensive approach where information is collected from a large number of instances (Swanborn, 2010).

Yin (2009: 4) postulates that the case study method allows investigators to retain holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events such as individual life cycles, organisational and managerial processes, neighbourhood change and school performance. This study aligns well with the claim made by Yin: how to attain a holistic view of the characteristics that makes the school effective. A common concern of singular case studies is whether one can generalise from them; the answer is not simple (Kennedy, 1976). I did not attempt to generalise from the case study or indicate that the results are applicable to all schools that are effective irrespective of social conditions. The results are applicable to schools in similar disadvantaged communities. Support for this statement is derived from Yin's (2009) claim that case studies are generalisable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes.

### **4.2.3 Case study selection**

While in the process of identifying and selecting the case study, I considered certain selected factors. I used Rule and John's (2011) guidelines for identifying and selecting the case. The factors included:

- What to include and exclude in my study?
- What is my case study a case of?
- Why am I selecting the particular case?
- What intrinsic interest do I have in the case?

In considering the factors mentioned above, I have decided to include all the stakeholders of the school associated daily with the school such as the principal, SMT, teachers and learners as well as parents of the learners. I have excluded the Education Department: for the reason that the role they play serves all the schools in the community. The case study school receives the same support from the Department as any other school as is required from the Department. In answering the question, 'what is my case study a case of?' it is a case of school effectiveness which can be simplified as indicating it to be a case of an institution.

The case was selected on the basis of consistently high performance in the National Senior Certificate examination over the past five years (2009-2013). The school has performed well and may be regarded as a school that works according to Christie *et al.* (2007) based on the fact that it achieves above the national and provincial averages in National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations. The intrinsic interest I have in the case is that I have been involved in teaching and management of schools for several years. It interests me that a school in a disadvantaged community tends to outperform schools in more affluent areas. I was interested in what the school was doing differently to other schools in the same underprivileged community or under similar conditions. The title of the study can be used to answer pertinent questions regarding case studies as illustrated in table 4.1:

**Table 4.1 Pertinent questions with regard to case studies**

<b>Title</b>	<b>What is the case?</b>	<b>What is the focus within the study?</b>	<b>What is it a case of?</b>
Factors contributing to school effectiveness in a disadvantaged community in the Western Cape: A case study	The effectiveness of schools	School effectiveness in a disadvantaged community in the Western Cape	Factors contributing to school effectiveness

In the conceptualisation stages of the study, I had difficulty deciding how many cases to choose for this study across disadvantaged communities in the Western Cape. This meant having to compare the disadvantaged conditions in communities and ensure similarity. The case was selected on the basis that it was performing well academically compared to schools in the same disadvantaged community. It was then decided to do a singular case study in which I could undertake a more intensive study of the case. There are advantages and disadvantages of choosing to do a singular case study. Rule and John (2011: 21) provide an indication of the advantages:

- The case is a good example of its kind;
- It can be studied in great depth;
- The researcher has easy access to the case; and
- The researcher has experience of the case and 'insider knowledge'.

The disadvantages of selecting a singular case study are:

- The findings cannot be generalised to other cases with coherent academic conviction;
- There is no comparative dimension in the study; and
- The bias of the researcher might restrict or distort the findings.

In considering the advantages and disadvantages of selecting a single case study, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. The issue of bias is considered on ethical terms and influences the validity of the data.

The case study is made of a high school in a poor community with black learners and situated on the periphery of Cape Town. The school has attained an above 90% Senior Certificate pass rate in 2011 and 2012 compared to the average pass rate (see table 4.2) at national and provincial levels. There are six high schools in the surrounding disadvantaged community and they are not achieving the same results. One of the schools is less than 1 kilometre from the case study school. Table 4.2 below indicates the school's level of success in the NSC examinations since 2009 compared to the national and the Western Cape's (provincial) averages.



Table 4.2 Case study school's level of success in the NSC examination

	NSC % Pass Rate				
Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
National Average	60.7	68	70,2	73,9	78,2
Western Cape Average	75.7	76,7	82,9	82,8	85,1
Case Study School	77	96	91	93	92

### 4.3 Sample

The sample consists of a single school. The school was selected using purposive sampling. Richards and Morse (2007: 195) indicate that purposive sampling occurs when the researcher selects a sample because of its particular characteristics. The school was chosen, according to the public barometer of systemic performance (Christie *et al.*, 2007): it is a high functioning school within a disadvantaged community. The conceptual framework guided the selection of the sample for the study. Social systems theory refers to the view of individuals or groups of individuals standing in interrelation (Bausch, 2001). The sample was representative of each group standing in interrelation in the school which included:

- The School Management Team (SMT),
  - the principal
  - the deputy-principals
  - the heads of department
- School Governing Body (SGB-parent component),
- The teachers,
- Grade 12 learners of 2010 and 2011 and
- The current Grade 12 learners (2012, at the time of data collection).

Data was collected from the sample of groups using a variation of techniques. This can be seen in table 4.3 which provides an overview of the methodology.

**Table 4.3-Methodology overview table**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Data aspects to be covered</b>	<b>Type of analysis</b>
School Management Team	Entire population – 10	Focus group interview	Leadership; School functionality; South African context	Management; Leadership; Strategic planning; Monitoring	Thematic
School Governing Body – Parent component	Entire population – 8	Semi structured interview	Social Influence; Difficult circumstances	Home-school partnership; Governance; Social issues; Parental involvement	Thematic
Teachers	Entire population (33) Teachers per F/Group indicated by the department they taught in.	Focus group interviews x 7 groups (dept.'s)	Difficult circumstances; Social influence; Leadership; School functionality; Discipline	Teaching/learning environment; Classroom practice; Purposeful teaching; Motivation	Thematic
Grade 12 learners of 2010 and 2011	14 learners	Questionnaire – open ended	Social influence; Leadership; Difficult circumstances	Purposeful learning; Support; Discipline; Hard work	Thematic
Current Grade 12 learners	Entire population – 165 learners	Questionnaire – closed	Expectation/ Motivation; Difficult circumstances; Social influence; Leadership	Rights/responsibility; Expectations; Hard work and discipline; Learning organisation; Social issues; Parental and school support	Thematic

### **4.3.1 Respondent descriptions**

#### **4.3.1.1 The School Management Team**

The SMT includes the principal and teachers at post level 2 and 3: the Heads of Department (HoDs) and deputy principals. Within the sample of the SMT, I referred to all the ten SMT members of the school. The ten members were the principal, two deputy principals and 7 HoDs.

##### **4.3.1.1. a) The principal**

The principal serves as head of the institution and is accountable to the school. The principal is the academic head and expected to ensure that outcomes are achieved and sustained as set out by the Education Department. A further role played by the principal is that of administrative head. This has to do with effective management and sound leadership of the school. Data was collected from the principal through the use of an interview schedule. The interview schedule consisted of a one-on-one semi-structured interview for the principal (Appendix I). The interview took place in the principal's office at the school. The principal is an Indian male originally from Kwa-Zulu Natal in his mid-fifties. His qualifications include a BA degree, Higher Diploma in Education, Bachelor of Education (Honours), Advanced Certificate in School Management and Leadership, and Masters in Education. He has been principal at the school since 2003 after serving as a deputy principal at a school in rural Kwazulu-Natal. In 2008, the principal was seconded to the education district office serving as Institutional and Governance Manager.

##### **b) The deputy-principals**

The school has two deputy principals, one a black female and the other a coloured male. The female deputy assumes the role of academic head under the leadership of the principal. The second deputy principal has the role of administrative head under the principal. The instrument used for the deputy

principals was the semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix II). This was used in a one-on-one interview.

### **c) The heads of department**

HoDs are regarded as subject specialists and control the different departments at the school. There are seven heads of department at the school. Among the seven HoDs, there are four males and three females, one coloured and six black. The seven departments are as follows: Economic and Management Sciences, English and Afrikaans, isiXhosa, Life Skills, Mathematics, Sciences, and Social Sciences. All seven HoDs participated in the focus group interview that was conducted with an interview schedule (Appendix IV).

#### **4.3.1.2 The school governing body - parent component**

The SGB maintains the role of governance which includes representation of the parent community of the school. The parent component of the SGB was selected using purposive sampling for interviewing. For the purpose of convenience it was easier to make contact with these parents. The school had eight parents on the SGB. They were representative of the parents of learners. There were five male and three female parents on the SGB. Convenience sampling was considered because some learners' parents are in the Eastern Cape. Some learners live with guardians or relatives such as aunts, uncles, grandparents. Other households are headed by children. I interviewed only five parents: the other three parents were unavailable. Three female and two male parents were interviewed. The interview was conducted using an interview schedule (Appendix III).

#### **4.3.1.3 The teachers**

Teachers spend the most time with learners at school and play a pivotal role in ensuring that learners are able to achieve success. They facilitate the learning process and, from a school perspective, have the greatest first-hand, understanding of learners and their conditions. I made use of the entire

population of the post level one teachers in order to acquire rich, deep data within focus group interviews. There were 33 teachers at the school on post level 1. I decided to make use of focus group interviews to collect data from them. Focus groups were conducted with different departments in the school: thus I conducted seven focus groups with the teachers. This approach was convenient: I did not have to divide teachers into groups. The principal assisted in identifying the teachers of each department who needed to report for an interview. The interviews were conducted with the use of an interview schedule (Appendix V). Focus group sizes varied from three to five teachers in a group.

#### **4.3.1.4 Alumni**

To obtain a holistic view, it is necessary to acquire the voice of learners as well. In this respect I made use of convenient sampling of alumni of 2010 and 2011 to participate in focus group interviews. The school had the contact details of learners so that I could contact them to participate. I sampled 16 learners which were 10% of the learners who were in matric in 2011. Some learners of 2010 came to the school to assist as tutors in preparation for the National Senior Certificate examination. The learners were seldom available at the same time or a convenient time to conduct the interviews. As a result, I decided to make use of open-ended questionnaires for past learners (Appendix VII).

#### **4.3.1.5 The current Grade 12 learners**

Grade 12 learners form an important facet of each school. They are seen as the yardstick by which schools are measured for effectiveness. These students have progressed through each Grade and have a holistic view of what happens at the school compared to Grade 8 or Grade 9 learners who are reasonably new to the school. The entire component of the current Grade 12 learners was invited to complete the questionnaires. The anticipated population was 165 learners. The questionnaire was completed in different

classes during the Life Orientation lesson. The questionnaire was administered by the Life Orientation teacher who was selected by the principal to assist. I provided clarification so that the questionnaire could be completed correctly.

The return rate of the questionnaires completed was high: 100% of the questionnaires were completed. There was a 100% return rate, but not a 100% response rate to all the questions. The total number was 165 and 147 questionnaires were completed. The explanation provided for the shortfall of 18 questionnaires was absenteeism of learners. The questionnaires were not distributed on the same day: not all classes have Life Orientation on the same day. Table 4.4 provides an overview of response rate of learners.

**Table 4.4 Overview of learner’s response rate**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Total population</b>	<b>Number of questionnaires returned</b>	<b>Number of absentees</b>	<b>Response rate – Percentage returned</b>
Grade 12 learners	165 (99 girls, 66 boys)	147 (87 girls, 60 boys)	18	100%

#### **4.4 Data collection methods**

Data collection involved collection of data through interviews, both semi-structured and focus group interviews with the principal, school management team, teachers and parents. It was further supplemented through the use of questionnaires, closed and open-ended questionnaires with learners. These methods are supported by Rule and John (2011: 63) who indicate that data collection methods commonly used to gather data are interviews (individual or group), questionnaires and story-telling. The following section discusses the use of these instruments and why they were selected as suitable for the study.

##### **4.4.1 Interviews**

Interviewing is a common method used in qualitative research: it accumulates information pertaining to the subject’s experiences, perceptions and motivations (Seidman, 1998; Cohen *et al.*, 2000; Henning *et al.*, 2005; Rule and John, 2011). Interviews can take the form of one-on-one discussions or

groups: they can be either structured or unstructured. Rule and John (2011: 64) indicate that interviews require preparation, interpersonal skills and communicative competence. In conducting good interviews there are guidelines that a researcher should consider according to Rule and John (2011: 64):

- Establish a relaxed atmosphere for the interview;
- Explain the nature and purpose of the study;
- Allow interviewees to ask questions about the study: and confirm willingness to participate before commencing the interview;
- Inform participants of ethical obligations;
- Adopt a conversational rather than an inquisitorial style to build rapport;
- Begin with the least demanding or controversial questions;
- Listen carefully and avoid interrupting participant/s;
- Be respectful and sensitive to the emotional climate of the interview; and
- Probe and summarise to confirm your understanding.

Based on these guidelines, I formulated schedules and ensured an appropriate interviewing environment with various participants.

#### **4.4.1.1 Semi-structured interview**

Semi-structured interviews involved in-depth, open-ended interviews with the principal, the deputy principal and the parent component of the SGB. Thomas (2011: 163) argues that an advantage of using semi-structured interviews is that it allows the researcher the freedom to follow up on questions or points deemed necessary. The interviewer requires the discipline of an interview schedule. Thomas (2011) indicates that the interview schedule reminds you about the potential questions, possible follow-up questions, probes and encourages the interviewee to say more on these follow-ups.

Rule and John (2011: 65) argue that semi-structured interviews allow for more flexibility during the data collection process. This flexibility allows the study to capture the uniqueness and complexity of a case study. According to Johnson and Christensen (2000: 186), the interview allows questioning to be redirected, ensuring that all questions are answered in full. Interviews allowed

me to obtain rich data and place the school in context. The question focussed on respondents' perspectives and what is done according to ensure quality teaching and learning. Interviews took place at the school or a venue and time convenient to respondents. The schedule used open-ended questions to probe for significant data when a respondent did not answer a question fully. Data from interviews were audio-recorded.

A semi-structured interview was conducted on a one-on-one basis with the following respondents:

- The principal,
- Deputy-principal and
- Five parents of the SGB.

Respondents to be interviewed received the interview schedule which included questions to be asked and the order in which they would be asked. I followed the guidelines indicated above by Rule and John (2011) while conducting interviews. Interviews took place during the time-frame of May to September 2012. The interview with the principal took place first in his office at the school.

The format of the interviews was based on the above guidelines of Rule and John (2011). The interview started off with the nature and purpose of my study. The environment was informal and relaxed for the interview. The next step was to enquire whether there was any uncertainty about the interview or study. I indicated that no-one was obliged to participate if they did not wish to. I ascertained respondents' willingness to be audio-recorded. After these explanations, respondents were asked to sign the consent form (see Appendix VIII). Questions were scheduled in an order of easier or simpler questions to more complex type and ended with a candid, personal type of question. Respondents were not interrupted and I probed where necessary to gain deeper clarity upon certain issues.

The interview with the deputy principal followed the same format as the principal's and took place in his office at the school. The deputy principal's interview schedule differed from that of the principal as indicated in Appendix II. Parents' (SGB) interviews took place at their homes or at their place of



employment as dictated by them. The five parents' interviews were all conducted from the same interview schedule as in Appendix III.

#### **4.4.1.2 Focus group interview**

Focus group interviewing as a qualitative research method is a group interview with a stronger emphasis on the group's interactions with each other. The vital role of group interaction is that data collected is of such importance that it would never have been accessible without interaction within the group (Morgan: 1997: 2). Rule and John (2011: 66) state that focus groups are useful for gaining a sense of the range and diversity of views, of whose views are dominant and marginal in the group, of resistance and dissent and of how dialogue shifts the understanding of members in the group. The focus group interview technique provides new insights not easily achieved through the one-on-one interview method. This is largely due to the interaction of the group and group dynamics that bring about new insights. For this reason the SMT was not interviewed as a whole. To avoid power dynamics within the group, the principal and deputy principals were separated from the HoDs. The same reasoning also applies to why HoDs were not part of the post-level one teacher's focus groups. Appendix IV refers to the interview schedule for the HoDs and Appendix V refers to the interview schedule for the focus groups of the teachers.

Focus group interviews with teachers took place in the library at the school: it was a familiar and safe environment for respondents. Each focus group interview with teachers had approximately 3 to 5 participants. Rule and John (2011) indicate focus groups are most successful with between 6 to 12 participants. Thomas (2011: 164), however, implies that group interviews can be two-member groups and more and still achieve the desired outcome. Interviews with teachers took place in the afternoon after school. These interviews with HoDs and teachers took place in the last week of the June term. One group, however, was postponed to the third term in July 2012. Focus group interviews lasted approximately one hour and fifteen minutes each.

The initial plan was to conduct a focus group interview with past learners as well. Not being able to meet at a convenient time for all the respondents meant the instrument was changed to an open-ended questionnaire. The interview schedule was the main instrument used in the focus group interview. The structure of the interview schedule allowed leeway to probe where necessary; to entice respondents to reveal more in the discussion and thus gain greater depth in the data. Questions for the focus group were structured in such a manner as to determine what the critical factors are that promote an effective school. The questions were set according to three types of focus group questions as described below:

- Engagement questions: used to introduce the topic to participants and make them comfortable with the topic of discussion;
- Exploration questions: determining the essence of the discussion; and
- Exit questions: used to check whether anything was missed in the discussion.

(Adapted from: Elliot, 2005: 3)

With each question I identified a specific aspect of data (refer to Table 4.3- methodology overview table for example) to facilitate discussion and prevent issues being raised in an unstructured manner.

#### **4.4.2 Questionnaires**

Questionnaires provide information about thoughts, feelings, perceptions, beliefs and values (Johnson and Christensen, 2000: 164). One set of questionnaires was distributed to the entire current Grade 12 learners (2012). These questionnaires were closed-ended ordinal rating scale questionnaires. The purpose of the closed-ended questionnaire was to determine the level of agreement or satisfaction on school issues relating to the study from the perspective of an often marginalised group. They were anonymously self-administered and learners participated of their own free will. Learners were advised of their rights as respondents. They were informed verbally as to why they were requested to complete the questionnaire. A brief summary was included on the questionnaire (see Appendix VI).

Questionnaires were monitored by the Life Orientation teacher and completed as was done during a Life Orientation class. The questionnaire was administered during the month of May 2012. I attempted to have questionnaires completed as early as possible in the data collection process so that learners were not troubled after August while preparing for their final examination.

Questions were based on the level of agreement or satisfaction with regard to learner's experiences and perceptions of the school, the teachers and the principal. The questionnaire was administered to 147 learners of whom 87 were girls and 60 were boys. The completion of questionnaires yielded a response rate of 100%.

The open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix VII) was handed out to a purposively selected sample of past learners of 2010 and 2011 that attended the school. These are learners who were initially identified to participate in a focus group interview. The questionnaire was administered to 14 respondents who have regular contact with the school and completed the questionnaire at the school. Questions were constructed in such a manner as to collect information about respondent's perceptions with reference to social influence, leadership and difficult circumstances. The open-ended questionnaire was administered between September and October 2012. Past learners were informed by the principal as to the nature of the questionnaire. I explained the aim of the research project. Respondents were informed of their rights and that they were not obligated to participate.

#### **4.4.3 Logistical instruments used in the research process**

The following are logistical instruments used in order to make the research process more convenient:

- An audio recorder was used to record interviews and ensure that there would be accurate transcriptions;
- A computer was used as a research tool that served many functions such as:
  - Accessing the internet to search for relevant literature;

- A tool for managing retrieval and storage of data and the thesis production; and
- The e-mail function used for communication: receiving and sending documents.
- A telephone and mobile phone were used to communicate and confirm appointments for interviews and site visits.

#### 4.5 Data analysis

The data analysis process involves understanding data and what information it conveys relating school effectiveness. Because the study was set in an interpretive paradigm, interpretation was achieved through data analysis. Rule and John (2011: 75) argue that data analysis and interpretation constitute a critical stage in the research process which allows the researcher to construct thick descriptions, identify themes, generate explanations of thought and action evident in the case, and theorise the case. The research questions of the study determine the analysis process. The research questions are:

- What are the critical factors contributing to school effectiveness using matriculation results as the yardstick, in disadvantaged communities?
- To what extent do cross-field factors contribute to the effectiveness of a school in disadvantaged communities?

Before I could start data analysis, I had to prepare data by organising it for analysis. The organising process involved having the interviews transcribed and questionnaires coded. I spent much time reading transcripts and listening to audio recordings to familiarise myself with data and remind myself of the context of the interviews. This could be regarded as a preliminary phase before actual data analysis.

Analysis of data was non-computerised in order not to restrict the scope of the interpretation process. Grbich (2013: 285) posits that data analysis software has the capacity to distance and limit perspective of researchers thereby providing a too narrow interpretation. I used a selective coding and categorisation approach. Data was categorised into dominant themes fortified through theoretical constructs. Coding of data was regarded as my first level of analysis. It provided the opportunity to get close to the data. Codes emerging from the data during the coding process were known as the open coding technique (Henning *et al.*, 2005). Kerlin (2002) refers to it as factual coding:

the process of developing categories of concepts and themes emerged from data gathered.

The second level of analysis led to the search for relations and generation of themes linked to themes within the conceptual framework. The process involved using colour highlighters to highlight various themes. Data was categorised according to constructs within the conceptual framework. These constructs of the conceptual framework determined further analysis of data under the headings of these themes. A further part of the analysis was to correlate themes from the different respondents.

Questionnaires were coded from an interpretive epistemological position. The responses were analysed based on interpretive judgements whether they were significant or not. The use of diagrams and tables assisted in the effective interpretation and descriptive analysis of data. Data from questionnaires were also categorised according to themes as guided by the conceptual framework. The critical analysis process involved identifying dominant themes and then linking themes with the literature and constructs of the conceptual framework. Use of thematic analysis ensured that the conceptual framework guided the research project. As part of the write-up process of the themes, clear descriptions were provided of how themes are interrelated.

#### **4.6 Ethical considerations**

According to Thomas (2011: 68) ethics are principles of conduct about what is right and wrong: this, however, can be complex within social research. What is right for one person may not be right for the next person. This could mean that what is acceptable for the researcher might not be acceptable for a participant. Rule and John (2011: 111) argue that conducting research in an ethically sound manner enhances the quality of research and contributes to its trustworthiness.

I obtained approval from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) as well as from the Ethics Committee of the University to undertake the research

since the intended study took place in a public school (refer to Appendices IX and X).

Initial contact with the school principal was made telephonically followed by a site visit the following day. The meeting with the principal was attended by me and a colleague with the purpose of explaining the research. Respondents were informed by the principal about the research which was then followed by a letter (see Appendix XI) requesting their participation before I accessed the site. I provided a verbal explanation when accessing the site. In order to maintain the integrity of the study, I disclosed all methods, the ends for which the research was executed and applied the principle of honesty in informing all respondents about the research. Respondents were under no obligation to participate and confidentiality was maintained. Consent forms (see Appendix VIII) were signed by all respondents: they agreed to participate on the above terms.

For research ethics to be valid there are three standard principles to consider as indicated by Rule and John (2011: 112):

- **Autonomy** – I need to ensure that respondents' privacy, confidentiality and anonymity are adhered to. I needed to gain permission from the authorities (WCED) and obtain informed consent from respondents. There should be no deception in securing participation of the respondents.
- **Non-maleficence (do no harm)** – I needed to ensure that, throughout the research process, neither respondents nor the institution were harmed in any way.
- **Beneficence** – This principle relates to the duty of the researcher to serve the public good. Such duties include meeting obligations: providing feedback, follow-up or intervention if this was part of the negotiation agreement.

I have strictly adhered to these principles in order to render the study to be valid.

## **4.7 Validity**

Neuman (2003: 185) defines validity in a simple term, 'truthful' and argues that qualitative researchers are often more focussed on authenticity than validity. He describes authenticity as producing a fair, honest and balanced view of the respondents.

The fact that I was not involved with the school helped preclude any possible bias and ensured objectivity in data collection from interviews. In the pursuit of trustworthiness, I made use of content validity as a subjective form of measurement. This was achieved through academics focussing on school effectiveness and functionality to validate the instruments. Content validity can be equated with face validity (Leedy, 1993: 41).

According to Leedy (1993), with reference to face validity, the researcher should be able to answer certain questions: (1) do the instruments measure what they are supposed to measure and (2) is the sample adequately representative of the behaviour measured. In answering the above questions, the instruments clearly investigated critical factors that contribute to the effectiveness of a school in a disadvantaged community. The sample was relevant and specific to the unique situation of the school. The sample further represented stakeholders who contribute to the effectiveness of the school.

Validity of data collected was established by taking transcripts of the interviews back to the respondents. They were requested to check the transcripts and ascertain whether it was how they intended to answer the various questions. All respondents indicated that they were satisfied with what was said during the interviews. This is referred to as respondent validation or internal validity (Creswell, 2009).

## **4.8 Challenges of the data collection process**

The data collection process demanded that certain aspects be addressed in the course of the research project. Aspects which required attention included, first, obtaining written approval from the WCED to conduct research in a public school, second, having to revisit the research site due to appointments not

being kept and, third, the reluctance of some respondents to participate in the research.

#### **4.8.1 Obtaining written approval from the WCED**

Obtaining permission from the WCED did not seem to be an obstacle at the start of the study. One of the greatest challenges was obtaining the application form. It resulted in numerous telephone calls to the WCED to ascertain the contact person at the WCED. The phone would often ring before the call was diverted to another department. The solution came when the faculty of education had a presentation with the research department of the WCED at the Mowbray campus. The contact person introduced herself and provided direct contact details at this meeting. The process then became easier. I then had to complete the application form and attach the research proposal with instruments to be used. Approval was received within two weeks after submitting my application.

#### **4.8.2 Appointments not kept**

A relatively time-consuming process was the issue of respondents not keeping to their scheduled appointment dates and time. This challenge had another implication. Besides time consumption, it related directly to a financial or cost factor. It often meant travelling to the research site which proved to be of no value for data collection: I often arrived at the research site only to be informed that teachers or members of the SMT were too busy and I had to consider re-scheduling their appointments.

The same applied with past learners. This continued for five occasions. It was then discovered that the respondents' availability were not aligned and this process would keep repeating itself. I then decided to make use of a different technique for collecting data. Open-ended questionnaires were used so that past learners could complete them at the school whenever they visited it.



### **4.8.3 Reluctance to participate in the research**

There was reluctance from three respondents to participate in the research. Only one of the three respondents did not participate. They were informed that they were not obliged to participate. The major concern that they had was that they did not see the value of participating in the research project. I, however, noted that they were not clear as to what the research project was about. After clarification, two respondents agreed to participate.

Of the many voices raised before the commencement of the interviews one was that teachers felt they were tired and hoped that the interview would not be too long. I assured them that the interview would last approximately one hour. However, it continued for one hour and 15 minutes. I provided light refreshments after the interview as a token of appreciation for their participation. The refreshments were served after the interview so that it had no impact or influence on the information provided in the interview.

## **4.9 Summary**

This chapter outlined the rationale for the research design for this research project. The study is set within an interpretive paradigm which has influenced the methodology used as well as the data collection instruments in order to answer the research questions posed which were: 'What are the critical factors contributing to school effectiveness using matriculation results as the yardstick, in disadvantaged communities?' and 'To what extent do cross-field factors contribute to the effectiveness of a school in disadvantaged communities?'. The chapter provided an in-depth discussion of the sample, the instruments used and the data analysis process. Issues of ethics, reliability and validity were addressed.

In Chapter Five the findings from the SMT and teachers is presented, followed by findings from learners and parents in Chapter Six.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FINDINGS FROM THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM AND TEACHERS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This study focuses on factors which characterise a highly effective school within a disadvantaged community, specifically in the Western Cape. In Chapter 4, I outlined the rationale for the research design employed in this research project. The previous chapter provided an in-depth discussion of the research methodology, the sample, the instruments used and the data analysis process. Respondents were categorised into groups within the school hierarchy/structure. Findings in this chapter are presented under the categories of school management team (SMT) and teachers.

The chapter presents findings as follows:

- Section 5.2 – the school management team;
- Section 5.3 – the teachers; and
- Section 5.4 – summary of the chapter.

#### **5.2 The school management team**

In the data collection process it was necessary to segment the School Management Team (SMT) for the purpose of eliminating the power dynamics which could exist. As an element of an open social system (the school), the SMT forms part of the human resources of the input (Lunenburg, 2010) which plays an integral role in administering the school. Data was collected from the principal, the deputy principal and heads of department separately. The SMT serves a management function and therefore the study uses a systemic approach to understand the consequences of decisions made with regard to the school. The structure of the SMT is displayed in Figure 5.1 below:

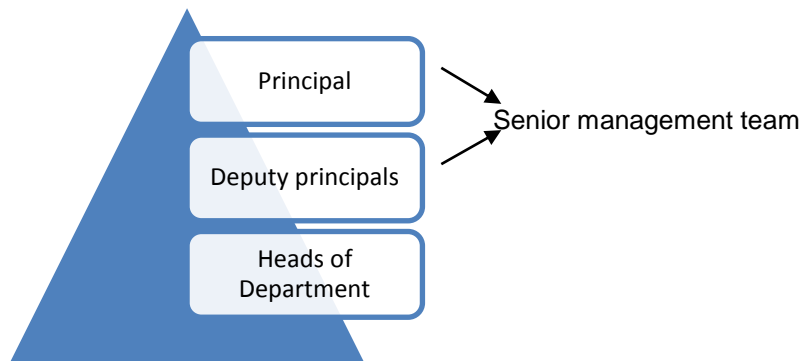


Figure 5.1 – Structure of the school management team

The findings are presented according to five categories with sub-headings under each category. Through the analysis of the interviews, the main categories identified from the SMT were:

- Professional development;
- Leadership and school functionality;
- Monitoring improvement;
- Social influence and circumstances; and
- Parental support.

The above categories are interconnected and often influence one another.

## 5.2.1 Professional development

Ono and Ferreira (2010: 60) associate professional development of teachers with in-service education and staff development. They imply that professional development is conducted for different purposes and often in different forms. Within this study, I associate professional development with staff and school development. School development is regarded as a systematic approach to change at the school level. The purpose of school development is to guide and focus a school toward the achievement of its primary objective: enhancing the learning process of learners. It can be interpreted that professional development aims to improve the effectiveness of a school.

### 5.2.1.1 Staff development

The three groups of the school management team revealed that staff development takes place at the school. Sillins, Zarins and Mulford (2002: 616) indicate that learning organisations such as schools should have systems and

structures in place that enable teachers at all levels to collaborate, continuously learn and put new learning to use.

The principal and deputy principal indicated that staff development is often focussed on motivation. Heads of department (HoDs) agreed with the principal and deputy principal: they felt that team-building sessions aimed at staff development were successful. The HoDs interpreted the team-building sessions as motivational sessions because staff members often were more motivated after attending a session. This confirms the habitus of the school. Habitus is interpreted as the product of practices which result in lasting qualities. These qualities are the product of accumulation of capitals that teachers or schools acquire over a period and which is beneficial to them. Hardy (2009: 517) describes habituses as comprising of competing and complementary discourses and social practices as 'conservative', 'results oriented', 'critical', 'student-focused' and 'inquiry oriented'. It is evident that the school's habitus is results oriented through the staff development programmes.

The principal and HoDs reported that professional development focussed on content in curriculum aspects. The deputy principal, however, specified that the focus in professional development should be on assessment as to determine whether the learning objectives are being achieved. The deputy principal maintained that assessment does not only have to do with curriculum, but referred to it within a context of monitoring progress. A concern with the results oriented approach is that teachers are focussed merely on learner achievement in examinations and not developing learners holistically. Volante (2004: 1) raises a similar concern with this type of approach to teacher development where activities are narrowly focussed on 'teaching to the test'.

Motivation can be regarded as the social condition being reconstructed to reflect a different aspiration for achieving effectiveness. From the findings, it is evident that all respondents indicated that professional development had to do with motivation. Throughout the interviews, it was highlighted. Interviews revealed that, through professional development, team-building took place

which promoted the notion of a shared vision for improvement in the school. The deputy principal commented:

...staff development should be on a continuous basis to keep staff motivated and that they do not become discouraged and frustrated.

The above statement of the deputy principal supports the view of the principal and HoDs that they needed to be updated continuously.

Gaining new knowledge from the staff development programmes is associated with acquiring additional social capital which derives an advantage for the school in having a teacher better equipped to present the content. In turn, it provides greater possibilities for teachers in gaining effectiveness. The acquisition of this capital by teachers poses the risk that teachers are now able to use it to their advantage in seeking promotion posts and leaving the school. However, teachers are remaining at the school which is indicative that they appreciate the development received and ensures that the school moves forward. There are numerous programmes attended by staff for professional development. The majority of HoDs indicated that, although teachers attend the programmes, there is some resistance to having to attend so many:

...I'm not always in favour of going to the many workshops. We wonder what new can we learn from these different workshops but in the end I don't regret going.

This was highlighted by a statement from one HoD: teachers attend with a premature attitude as to what they are going to learn at these sessions; however they leave there with valuable information and a different attitude. This could be attributed to teachers feeling that the workshops are often time-consuming and it is a sacrifice on their part as it takes place after school hours or over weekends. The change in attitude of the teachers after attending the workshops can be related to their lack of information on the workshops. This is indicative that they are not appropriately informed by SMT members about the workshops.

Findings further reveal that teachers, and staff in general, are well represented in staff development programmes. It can be deduced that teachers acknowledge the value of professional development in their personal development as teachers. The principal and HoDs alluded to the fact that staff develop academically as well. A unique opportunity existed at the school as

teachers were encouraged to register for short courses: the school was prepared to contribute financially to their development. Such opportunities are not presented at other schools in the community. This reflects commitment of management of the school to the development of teachers. This aspect was extended when HoDs suggested that teachers motivate each other to improve their qualifications as well. The school promoted the opportunity to develop academically: so that teachers become experts in their subject field.

#### **5.2.1.2 Service providers**

Professional development programmes were provided by various institutions or organisations. It became evident from data collected that HoDs, the deputy principal and the principal highlighted different organisations involved with the school. In analysing the findings, it was revealed that there had to be a starting-point for identifying why or when professional development should take place. It was during the process of the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) that teachers identified where improvement was required and how it could be achieved.

It became clear that there were different Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) involved with the school; but two organisations were regularly highlighted in interviews. These organisations were: Association for Educational Transformation (ASSET) and Sciences and Mathematics Initiatives for Learners and Educators project (Smiles). ASSET is a NGO that provides educational support for disadvantaged communities. The Smiles project is an intervention initiative of Stellenbosch University that supports schools in the Kraaifontein, Paarl and Stellenbosch area. The intervention of ASSET and Smiles was initiated by the principal that invited them to recognise the potential of the school. These organisations have identified the potential in the school and invested in the success of the school. The function of NGO's was to provide and assist with professional development for the teachers. HoDs indicated that NGO's provided invaluable support for teachers as well as learners.

Findings revealed that NGO's provided much-needed financial support to the school and assisted with transport costs to attend professional development programmes. In fostering relations with NGO's, the school expands the social capital by creating networks with organisations outside the school. Through the increase of network connections, the school's volume of social capital creates yet greater effectiveness. When mentioning the Western Cape Education Department (WCED), the principal said:

I think I must also not forget, we do get, we could do with more but we do get support from the district office especially from the curriculum advisors.

Although it was not highlighted often in the interviews, it was clear that the WCED's district office provided professional development initiatives for teachers in workshops which were well attended by staff members. The principal and HoDs indicated that curriculum advisors played a leading role in promoting and implementing the curriculum at the school through a supportive role. Curriculum advisors ensured that staff knew what was expected of them in the implementation process of the curriculum policy.

## **5.2.2 Leadership and school functionality**

### **5.2.2.1 Leadership**

The level of leadership in any school and its community is a strong indicator of the level of organisational learning generated in a school (Sillins, *et al.*, 2002: 635). This statement relates directly to the effectiveness of a school and the influence that leadership has on the school. The influence of leadership relates to collaboration between the principal and the different stakeholders in the school. This would often require the principal to be the initiator of development or organisational structure. One particular HoD stated in the focus group interview:

I would like to give credit to the principal for involving the other stakeholders as much as possible. So that is not a closed thing you see. It helps the staff also to be open to input from outsiders as well.

From the analysis it was revealed that all the interviews related to responsibility, yet one group referred to sharing of responsibilities. The

principal indicated the distribution of responsibilities. The principal referred to an organogram which indicated the structure of responsibility and how responsibilities were distributed. HoDs implied that sharing responsibilities promoted capacity-building among teachers. This developed leadership skills amongst teachers which helped them to apply for promotion posts. The deputy principal indicated that leadership was promoted among teachers by allowing them to lead briefing sessions at the school. Leadership of the school was interpreted as the principal and the deputy principal managing administrative aspects and resources. HoDs were regarded as leaders of the curriculum. Teachers assumed a leadership role at a lower level with less responsibility such as managing the playground and gate-duty rosters. This served to create leadership opportunities for teachers. Harris (2003: 17) postulates that within shared leadership, the leader uses his/her power with or through people rather than exercising control over the people.

Power held by leadership has the ability to shape the school in becoming effective or ineffective based on Foucault (1989) implying that power shapes the subject. Foucault makes a clear statement through the following passage:

...it's my hypothesis that the individual is not a pre-given entity which is seized on by the exercise of power. The individual, with his identity and characteristics, is the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces (1980: 74).

Leadership carries the weight of symbolic power and the notion of power. This power relation is evident in the hierarchical structures within schools.



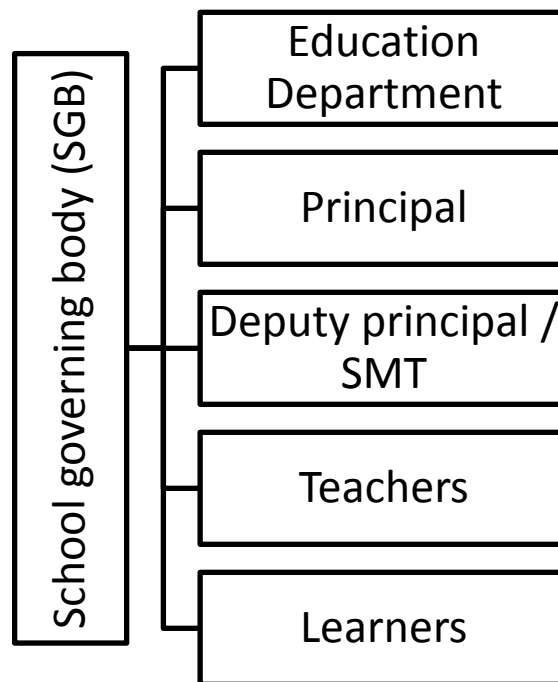


Figure 5.2 – Hierarchical power structures in schools

Figure 5.2 represents the hierarchical power structure within schools. For example, the effective application of policies or circulars issued by the education department to schools is determined by the implementation through power structures. School Governing Bodies (SGBs) serve a governing function as the legal entity of schools. In most cases, teachers and learners had no contributory input, however, are required to implement it.

### 5.2.2.2 Shared vision

The approach of the SMT using a shared vision clearly indicates that the school achieves success. The deputy principal and HoDs refer to a shared vision in their leadership approach. They further indicated that, through this approach, they achieved and maintained the support of the teachers. The principal won the support of teachers through his approach of letting teachers take ownership of the school and their actions. This meant that teachers could regard themselves as part of the school and believe their actions contributed directly to the development of the school and learners. The deputy principal and HoDs regarded their leadership as successful due to their mutually respectful relations with teachers.

I treat my colleagues at all times with respect and in return I receive the same respect, this result in us achieving our goals set. Even when we have differences we resolve it in a civil manner.

One of the HoDs indicated that teachers are approached on a one-to-one basis. Teachers are more accommodative, he felt, when approached personally when required to do a task. The deputy principal was of the opinion that there is no room for political canvassing in the school. He felt that people with hidden agendas to promote a particular political view hamper the promotion of equal education for all. Ideally that would be good, but in the South African education system, education is dictated by politics because politics influences the curriculum itself. It is the role of leadership to dispel the idea that the poverty cycle will continue to constrict the school forever. Through achieving success, learners can break the poverty cycle within the community.

New modes of behaviour are formed in the school based on different fields encountered by learners. Each particular field is influenced by different agents entering the field. The school creates a different habitus compared to the home.

### **5.2.2.3 School functionality**

School functionality can be defined as the ability of a school to translate its human and material resources into meaningful learning and educational outcomes (JET, 2011). This relates to whether policies are in place and financial obligations are met. The principal indicated in his interview that what made his school work well was that there was basic functionality at the school. Basic functionality is associated with the transformative process within a systemic approach in order to achieve the required output in a system (Lunenburg, 2010). The principal further explained that he should always be prepared for anything that could possibly happen.

Once you've got basic functionality because in a classroom for quality teaching and learning to take place there must be order, there must be discipline, there must be predictability in a school.

The deputy principal indicated that transparency was a crucial aspect of leadership: it promoted a shared vision. All the respondents of the SMT

agreed that the principal secured much-needed funding for the school. Securing funding is ideally suited to the principal: he does not have the teaching load of other staff members. It was indicated in the interview that the principal and the deputy principal are best positioned to deal with external agents. Funding acquired by NGO's served the function of supporting the school financially.

Analysis of the findings of the HoD focus group interview revealed that not all respondents agree with the aspect of transparency as indicated by the deputy principal. All respondents acknowledge that funding is secured, but two HoDs indicated that they do not always know what finances have been used for. The majority of HoDs indicated that funding should be more focussed on improving the learning environment. Analysis of the concern revealed that there is lack of communication or a break in the communication channel among staff members. This was deduced based on findings provided by the principal and the deputy principal compared to the HoDs.

Funding ensures that the school has sufficient economic capital in order to achieve basic functionality. Economic capital is important in ensuring the school is managed and administered effectively.

#### **5.2.2.4 Time management**

Time management is critical to learner achievement and attitudes toward learning (McLeod, 2003). Effective time-management contributes to efficient school and classroom processes. From the findings it was evident that time was critical. The three groups all indicated aspects of time management in their responses. The deputy principal emphasised that there is an effective implementation of time at the school for teachers and learners. This factor is supported by the response of a HoD who indicated that learners attempt to be punctual at school although not always the case.

The principal implied that he is strict with regard to deadlines and time-management; however he claims to be sensitive to the heavy workload of teachers and the attempt to meet deadlines. HoDs responded that they were

not content with the process in terms of the distribution of progress report cards which were handed out at the start of the following term. For the senior management team time on task is more important than reporting at the end of the term: costing valuable contact time with the learners. The principal and deputy principal alluded to the school year planner. They indicated that the year planner guides functionality and processes at the school. The year planner served a monitoring function when used as a checklist or tool to determine the progress of certain processes at the school. The deputy principal indicated that he motivated staff with the saying: "Work hard, play hard."

Strict adherence to deadlines and management of time contribute to the cultural capital in the embodied state of the staff and enable the transformative process of achieving effectiveness within the system.

### **5.2.3 Monitoring improvement**

#### **5.2.3.1 Reporting on progress**

Sammons (1999:209) notes that performance and progress of learners, classes and schools can be monitored by well-established mechanisms which form an important feature of effective schools. Monitoring improvement can determine the extent of progress made or if any regression has taken place. Monitoring tools provide valuable feedback. The entire SMT indicated in their responses that reporting is an important tool used for the purpose of monitoring. From the findings of the interviews, it is obvious that one form of monitoring takes place through the reflection sessions held with the objective of reporting on progress, status of projects or general information. Progress and improvement are monitored through reports that are provided to the SMT according to a response from the principal.

It's from the reports that I get from teachers and also from the reports that I get from those...we call them mentors...from the NGO facilitators. I give feedback as well; there is an opportunity for me to give feedback.

Reporting as a monitoring tool occurred through various channels at the school such as briefing sessions in the morning. Briefing sessions are used to

make announcements and provide feedback on activities that have taken place. HoDs, the deputy principal and the principal referred to briefing sessions as an opportunity to monitor implementation of new ideas or programmes attended by staff. Another platform provided for reporting was the monthly staff meeting where in-depth reporting was required. HoDs indicated that reporting took place at departmental meetings. Monitoring happens through the evaluation of the quality of feedback provided or reports given at meetings.

As part of the practice to achieve effectiveness, the open systems approach requires feedback in ensuring that the desired output is achieved. The greatest influence over this process is the principal, who is perceived as having the power; he shapes the process by providing feedback.

#### **5.2.3.2 Curriculum supervision**

Another form of monitoring is supervision of the curriculum. Supervision of curriculum occurs through moderation whether internally or externally. Internal moderation is carried out by the SMT. Curriculum advisors undertake external moderation. The level of implementation of the guidelines provided is monitored through written reports submitted. Reports are made to parents of learners through progress reports. Reports provide valuable information on performance of learners at school. Harris (2001b: 484) asserts that monitoring learners' progress offers an important means of self-review for improvement and creates opportunities for setting objectives related to learning. Monitoring by parents can be associated with this aspect: they can consult with learners or teachers on the progress of their children. It creates opportunities for sharing information and ensuring that the objectives of learning are met.

#### **5.2.3.3 Analysis of progress**

Use of analysis is an effective tool for monitoring improvement. This statement is supported by Southworth (2004: 60) who suggests that monitoring progress includes analysing and acting on learner progress and outcome data such as assessment and test results; learner attendance; school performance information; and evaluation information. This comment links to leadership: it

informs leadership as to which plan of action to follow after the results of analysis have been interpreted. Within this study, the entire SMT reported on the aspect of analysis of progress. There was an indication that progress results are analysed to determine where improvement needs to take place or where acknowledgement is due for good work rendered. It was indicated in the principal's interview that quarterly results of the learners are reviewed and analysed:

We meet at the start of the term to look at the progress of learners and try and find out why some learners are not passing. We also look at what is being done right so that it can be shared with our colleagues.

The principal indicated that, through the analysis of results, they can identify intervention strategies for improvement. HoDs reported that result analysis informed them as to where support is required. One HoD indicated that she acknowledged teachers that were doing well and through this process identified effective practices that were taking place in the school. The deputy principal indicated that there was analysis of results: he insisted, however, that analysis should take place at lower grades so that they can identify possible problems earlier.

Analysis of progress is interpreted in the context of cultural capital in the objectified state: segments of power (the SMT) interpret what progress or regress has been made. Analysis is an important aspect within the practice of effectiveness in identifying what needs improvement.

#### **5.2.3.4 Accountability**

According to Figlio and Loeb (2011: 384) school accountability is the process of evaluating school performance on the basis of student performance measures. Mayston (2007: 10) postulates that accountability is promoted when information is provided to measure and adduce performance. In the analysis of the findings of the SMT, it was highlighted that accountability played an important role at the school. The principal and HoDs indicated that IQMS was used in the school as an accountability tool. It was regarded as a tool used by the school to identify areas for improvement. Results of the IQMS

process fed into the school improvement plan which assisted in identifying areas for improvement for the following year. This confirmed the first theme of professional development: it assisted in identifying professional development programmes.

The principal mentioned the lack of monitoring by HoDs due to their workload and the lack of training to be a HoD.

The HoDs and this is where I very strongly believe that the HoDs are not given sufficient training to manage their departments and they also need to be given, uh...you know to be given more admin time because they are the leaders of the curriculum and our core function here at the school is curriculum delivery and I find that there isn't sufficient monitoring.

This indicates that there are problems with monitoring. It does not state that monitoring does not take place. The principal stated in his interview that HoDs compile reports that are forwarded to him. The deputy principal indicates that monitoring sessions take place.

Accountability is an important aspect in developing the habitus of an effective school and staff. Behaviour changes to create success or failure.

#### **5.2.4 Social influence and circumstances**

An issue of concern is that the greatest 'effect' on learner performance remains outside schools. In learners' home backgrounds and their social conditions lie key influences (Christie, *et al.*, 2007). This concern is dealt with in the case study school through the influence of teachers to ensure that learners achieve success. The greatest influence that teachers have upon learners is in relation to how they manage their classrooms. This is supported by studies by MacBeath and Mortimore (2001) and Townsend (2001). What happens in the classroom contributes to the effectiveness of the school as a whole: the field within Bourdieu's theory or the environment within systems theory plays an integral role in achieving effectiveness. According to Ahrweiler (2011), the environment dictates the system both inside and outside the organisation as it assists in understanding and anticipating consequences of decisions concerning the system.

#### 5.2.4.1 Discipline

Discipline is a contributory factor to a positive learning environment (Bear, 2010). From the findings, it is evident that discipline is maintained in the classroom by teachers. This is supported by parents. This contributes to a positive learning environment for learners. Discipline extends beyond the classroom at the school as indicated in the findings: teachers ensure that there is discipline on the playground as well as ensuring that learners are punctual for school. This is indicated by the principal stating that, in order for quality learning and teaching to take place, there needs to be order and discipline.

Discipline was identified by nearly half of teacher respondents as a major issue. One respondent reported that she regarded discipline as a problem: learners are not cooperative. This disturbs teaching and retards effective learning. I associated the one response of classroom management with discipline: the teacher indicated that she struggled with classroom management due to the variety of different personalities of learners. Respondents reiterated that there was a lack of discipline which obstructed their teaching abilities. One of the respondents explained that dealing with learners who display different temperaments gives rise to behavioural problems in the classroom. A respondent associated lack of discipline with some of the learners' background with specific reference to poverty as the reason for misbehaviour. The discipline issue stretches beyond the classroom and falls within the category of social ills in the community, which is discussed in Section 5.3.5.2

Analysis of the findings shows that parents provide support to the school in the form of ensuring that discipline is maintained. The SMT indicated that they can rely on the support of parents when it comes to the discipline of learners. Parents come to the school when required to impose discipline and when requested for general matters. This shows learners that their parents are interested in what they are doing. Parents were informed by the principal as to what one of their major roles is:

... It is your responsibility to make sure that your child is at school and on time, in full uniform and we expect you to instil in your child the



values of respect for the school and for the rules of the school and so on.

Findings reflected positive aspects on discipline, however, correcting of misbehaviour was revealed as a challenge in the analysis. It was a challenge as teachers often had to resort to seeking advice from the SMT or contacting parents for support in dealing with discipline issues. When asked what type of support is provided by a school management team, teachers had a variety of responses. Respondents indicated that the SMT provided support in terms of implementing discipline at the school. Support was in the form of advice in dealing with behavioural problems of learners. Another respondent stated that they could refer disciplinary matters to the SMT to deal with. One respondent reported that the SMT had procedures and measures in place to assist with discipline. When asked to give examples, he indicated duties such as ground duties and relief rosters. The co-ordinated approach of the SMT assists in creating a habitus conducive to effective learning and teaching as well as creating a safe environment. An issue of concern is whether the school's code of conduct is effectively implemented in addressing discipline. The effective implementation of the code of conduct would promote self-discipline among learners.

The issue of discipline is again associated with habitus of learners. However, it now influences the habitus of the teachers. They become aware of how to deal with it or adapt accordingly. The background of teachers influences the behaviour of learners. Teachers instil values of respect in learners. The influence results in the creation of a new habitus for learners. Their behaviours now adapt to the school's requirements. The support of parents in terms of discipline relates to the habitus which is reinforced when called upon by the school.

#### **5.2.4.2 Learner motivation**

Motivation is something that energizes, directs and maintains a particular type of behaviour. In the school environment, with specific reference to learners, it directs learners and keeps them focussed on the objective of achieving success. Learners' motivation is reflected in their *personal investment* and in

cognitive, emotional, and behavioural participation in school activities (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris, 2004; Reeve, 2006).

From the findings it was deduced that motivation of learners influences their quest for achieving success. Due to the high levels of poverty in the community, teachers assume a role of guardian over many learners. Learners identify which teachers they find approachable and whom the learners think they can relate to. It was revealed in interviews that there are cases where learners are living with teachers due to the learners' circumstances at home.

The deputy principal indicated that, while teaching in a disadvantaged community, it would generally be expected to assume a supportive role as a teacher. It was indicated in interviews with HoDs that all teachers at the school can relate to the learners: nobody comes from an affluent background. Therefore teachers encourage learners to achieve success. This has a direct effect on learners' self-esteem. Longitudinally, it would uplift the community and possibly break the cycle of poverty within the community. This could be interpreted as a cross-field factor contributing to school effectiveness.

#### **5.2.4.3 Support by teachers**

Findings of interviews with segments of the SMT corroborate each other: the social backgrounds of teachers influence the learners. This has to do with support provided by teachers. Teachers are prepared to sacrifice their time after school to assist and monitor learners while they work at school. In the findings it was revealed that the school building is made available for learners to work and study after school hours. This can be associated with which resources or infrastructures are available at home. The disadvantaged community in which the school is situated consists mostly of one-bedroom homes where learners lack appropriate space for homework or study. The principal indicated in his interview that one has to be passionate about helping others at this school.

The principal reported that the school's social responsibility goes beyond providing an education:

...because we just love the community, we want to upgrade the community and serve as good role models for our learners...

The school does extra in terms of ensuring that learners are fed through the feeding scheme: it provides meals for learners in the morning as well as the afternoon. The feeding scheme is funded through the WCED. The school secures further funds through NGO's in order to provide additional meals. This could be regarded as a factor contributing to the academic success of the school. Due to the poverty levels in the community, learners come to school hungry. The feeding scheme could be regarded as an attractive reason to attend school. The feeding scheme kitchen is run by parents from the community who assist in preparing meals at the school. Within this theme, cross-field factors contribute to school effectiveness in that teachers influence learners: thereby increasing learner's cultural capital through education.

#### **5.2.4.4 Diverse cultures**

Another aspect which is considered within social influence is sensitivity to diverse cultures dispersed across the community and in the school. From the findings, it was indicated that there needs to be an awareness of different cultural backgrounds. Different cultures in the school include Xhosa, Sotho, Coloureds, Indian and foreign nationals. This is, however, not limited to learners only: teachers at the school represent different cultures, black, coloured, Indian, white and foreign. Teachers provide positive moral value support in ensuring that learners do not become marginalised based on their cultural backgrounds. Teachers encourage learners to retain their cultural identity. There is a strong need to ensure that mother-tongue instruction is provided for most subjects.

Data collected from teachers identified diverse cultures in the school and the community as a challenge. Teachers highlighted aspects of language barriers and cultural differences. Different home languages spoken in the school include Afrikaans, English, French, isiXhosa and Sotho. Respondents reported that it was a challenge to learn the different cultures of the learners as well as the diversity of their colleagues. Language barriers are closely associated with different cultures.

Social policies of the school contribute to the personal development of learners and teachers. The policies create an environment in which people know that they are cared for and that there is support for them. From the analysis, it can be deduced that, although the school and learners are in a disadvantaged community, it does not mean that the world ends there. Learners are taken on excursions to expose them to different cultures and circumstances.

The cultural capital gained from diverse cultures is considerable. The social capital is increased with the association of other cultures within the field of the school. The field exposes learners to a multicultural environment which develops them in becoming more tolerant of difference.

#### **5.2.5 Parental support**

Reynolds and Teddlie (2005: 51) argue that parental involvement can be in different forms: synchronising school and home demands on learners; using parents as unpaid teacher assistants; raising resources for the school; assisting with homework and checking homework to see that learners do it and teachers mark it and liaising with the teachers.

It is important to note that this school serves a disadvantaged community. Different forms of parental involvement may not be applicable or might be to a lesser extent. All the respondents indicated that there is a serious lack of parental support. Nevertheless, it should be noted that parental support can be at different levels. There were two key factors identified in the findings regarding what parents lack in providing support. The first factor is the lack of academic support. This can be attributed to the education level of the parents. Respondents indicated that literacy levels of parents are low. Therefore parents leave the role of teaching and learning to the school to deal with. Many parents work long hours and cannot provide the support necessary for their children with their school work. One of the respondents indicated that the level of support or even the level of involvement by the parents has increased as it is noticed through the improvement of attendance of parent meetings. It was further indicated that the involvement levels increased to the point that

parents are checking their children's books. Literacy levels may be low, but parents are checking whether the books are marked and signed by the teacher. The parental involvement and support factor contributes to the success of the school.

The second factor is the lack of financial support. The economic conditions of the community are represented through a high unemployment rate which can be associated with high levels of poverty (City of Cape Town: 2011 Census Suburb). A statement by the principal describes the contribution of parents in terms of support,

...we do not expect too much of them... they do what they can, they do their best.

It can thus not be expected that parents would be able to contribute the same as parents in more affluent areas. Lack of educational capital from parents is attributed to the lack of formal schooling. This does not, however, imply lack of indigenous knowledge. Lack of educational capital results in a lack of support for learners in their school work. The issue of economic capital is reflected in the field: parents are unable to support the school financially.

#### **5.2.6 Critical factors from the SMT**

The critical factor from the SMT is that leadership has the greatest impact on the school becoming effective. The symbolic power that leadership has to shape the school contributes to its effectiveness. The leadership promotes a shared vision and responsibility which in return results in basic school functionality. The notion of shared vision and responsibility is encapsulated in cross-collaboration and communication among stakeholders.

**Table 5.1 – Summary of the responses of the SMT**

Category	Responses from the SMT
Professional development	Staff development focussed on motivation, content knowledge and academic development. Professional development was provided by various service providers.
Leadership and school functionality	Leadership focussed on sharing responsibility as well as promoting a shared vision. School functionality was ensured through acquiring funds. Time management was highlighted in order for the school to function optimally.
Monitoring improvement	Reporting on progress through regular feedback. Analysis of progress to ensure improvement. Monitoring focussed on accountability.
Social influence and circumstances	Aspects addressed included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discipline;</li> <li>• Learner motivation;</li> <li>• Support by teachers; and</li> <li>• Diverse cultures.</li> </ul>
Parental support	The SMT reported on low levels of support from parents. It was further maintained that there was evidence of increased level of support by the parents especially in discipline.

### **5.3 The teachers' role in the schools effectiveness**

All stakeholders should be considered in the school: this collaboration plays a pivotal role in order for a school to be effective. From a school perspective, teachers have a greater understanding of learners and their conditions: they facilitate the learning process. Teachers spend the most time with learners at the school. The findings of the interviews are arranged below under the categories according to the question that was asked. The categories are:

- Teacher motivation;
- Effective teaching and learning environment;
- Provision of teaching and learning support material;
- Support from the school management team;
- Support from the parents;

- Teacher challenges; and
- Influence of social problems.

### **5.3.1 Teacher motivation**

Bennell and Akyeampong (2007: 1) state that without teachers, there can be no education and without education sustained economic, political and social development is not possible. It is further argued that there are growing concerns that teachers are becoming increasingly de-motivated, which contributes to deteriorating teacher performance and learning outcomes. Swanepoel (2009: 464) suggests that a lack of job satisfaction resulted in frequent teacher absenteeism from school, aggressive behaviour towards colleagues and learners, and early exits from the teaching profession. In this study, however, it is found that teachers are motivated by other factors in ensuring that the school is effective. Factors that contribute to teacher motivation include: being motivated by learners, collegiality, resources, and their contribution to reducing poverty and guaranteeing achievement.

#### **5.3.1.1 Motivated by learners**

The majority of teachers who were interviewed reported that they were motivated by their learners to ensure that meaningful learning took place. With regard to motivation of the teachers, one teacher said:

I am motivated by my learners. Some of them are really trying their utmost best to achieve their best in all learning areas. I love it when my learners pass! I feel like a failure if they fail!

According to teachers, learners and their interest in achieving success plays a central role in ensuring that teachers do what is required of them. Most teachers indicated that when learners perform well they are happy: this keeps them motivated. One respondent said she loves working with children and thus enjoys her profession. One respondent worked hard to win the groups' approval. Her motivation was gained from seeing the change happening:

...the eagerness to see your learners from the disadvantaged community developing in all spheres of life and the interest shown by the learners.

Teachers are motivated by the eagerness of learners to learn. Teachers create opportunities for meaningful instruction. The majority of respondents indicated that the willingness of learners to engage in the lesson contributed to their motivation. A further contributory factor to the teachers' motivation is the discipline and respect shown by the learners. A few of the respondents stated that they were motivated by the idea that they were contributing to the learners' knowledge and knowing that the learners could achieve success.

Motivation by learners as a theme relates to constructs of habitus and social capital. Habitus, in turn, can be associated with behaviour of learners and their willingness to learn. It is associated with social capital through the institutionalised relation between learners and teachers.

### **5.3.1.2 Collegiality**

In determining what kept teachers motivated to promote purposeful learning, approximately a quarter of respondents mentioned that their colleagues played a role. Collegiality was determined as an aspect due to the reference to team work and understanding among teachers. One of the respondents indicated that it was as a result of co-operation and support received from colleagues. The collegiality aspect included support received from the school management team which motivated teachers. Respondents cited that they worked well together and were able to consult their colleagues: they had 'good interrelationships' with their colleagues and SMT. The SMT was acknowledged as a motivational factor due to their inspiration and hard work which was an example for teachers. Respondents replied that motivation was received from the SMT as a form of support. Motivation was given in the form of words of encouragement to always do their best: especially when teachers felt their workload was too great. One respondent indicated that he felt motivated by the SMT when he was asked to assist with SMT duties and thereby develop himself for promotion. Other respondents maintained that motivation was given to attend staff development sessions to develop as a professional. Co-operation and support from colleagues was extended to motivation of attending staff development programmes. One of the



respondents indicated that it was not only support provided to teachers that kept him motivated, but support provided to learners as well. One respondent's initial comment captured the spirit of collegiality with regards to motivation:

I'm motivated when there is that understanding of each other and team work. I see it when we have that willingness to learn as teachers as well as the learners. I can say it is the cooperation and support from the colleagues.

Collegiality can be interpreted as the network of relations among teachers at the school as well as other teachers. The system of the school forms an internal network that promotes positive relations consonant with the acquiring of social capital.

### **5.3.1.3 Resources**

Two respondents stated that a crucial factor in their motivation was availability of resources. They indicated that there were resources available but not always in the lower grades such as Grades eight and nine. This implies that teachers become creative in providing resources in the lower grades to ensure that educational foundation for the higher grades are not compromised. The creativity of the teachers is supplemented by acquisition of resources through NGOs. This is an indication that there is a focus on the output of the school system in ensuring that the learners in Grade 12 are well equipped. It is evident from this finding that the transformative process within a systemic approach (Lunenburg, 2010) is lacking in ensuring that effectiveness is reflected throughout the school. Teachers were motivated by having the resources necessary to teach. Resources referred to include availability of teaching media such as whiteboards and smart-boards with access to computers. There was an indication of a functional science laboratory at the school as well access to the library after school hours. A respondent indicated that resources contributed to a positive classroom environment. A positive classroom environment motivated teachers to do their best and be prepared for the learners.

#### 5.3.1.4 Addressing poverty and achievement

The majority of respondents were motivated by the idea that they were relieving poverty or contributing to the learners' ultimate achievement of success. Teachers indicated that, when learners were successful at school, it gave them hope that learners will be able to achieve success beyond the school as well. One of the respondents indicated that learners achieving their goals through education motivated him as a teacher. When determining what keeps teachers motivated, respondents mentioned reducing poverty or assisting the disadvantaged community.

I'm motivated by the interest shown by learners and I'm eager to see my learners from this disadvantaged community develop in all aspects of life.

Two respondents reported that they were contributing to building a better South Africa by producing successful learners who were hard-working and talented. Another respondent added that not much had changed in the township home-life of learners. What motivates him is that he is capable of contributing to the change in the community. This confirmed another respondent's opinion: she was trying to develop learners from being disadvantaged to being successful. The majority of respondents indicated that their motivation was their passion and joy in changing and shaping the lives of learners in a disadvantaged community.

The concept of field is a contributing factor to school effectiveness. Teachers and learners are more motivated to achieve success because of their difficult circumstances. Data revealed that, due to their disadvantaged circumstances, teachers are more motivated to ensure that the school is effective.

Another two respondents commented that their motivation derived from commitment. A respondent associated commitment with learners while another respondent associated it with teachers. The respondent indicated that the learners were committed: they knew why they were at school and what they wanted to achieve: *...the learners were willing and ready to learn.* Another respondent referred to teachers and their commitment to their


profession as an aspect that motivated her. She maintained that commitment was evident in the hard work shown by teachers and management.

Commitment may be interpreted as behaviour formed by teachers and learners. It can be deduced that the habitus varies according to the level of motivation and commitment.

### 5.3.2 Effective teaching and learning environment

In addressing what teachers regarded as features of an effective teaching and learning environment, all respondents expressed their views on a teaching and learning environment. This provided features which overlapped among the respondents. Teachers' perceptions of features are shown in the table (Table 5.2) below as their perceptions of the level of importance.

**Table 5.2 Level of importance of features of an effective teaching and learning environment**

Level of importance	Teacher perceptions of features of an effective teaching and learning environment
Important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom management</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching and learning aids</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contextual factors influencing learners</li> </ul>
Less important	

#### 5.3.2.1 Classroom management

The majority of respondents indicated that classroom management played a vital role in ensuring an effective teaching and learning environment. Teachers indicated the following aspects as fundamental to classroom management, namely:

- A clean/neat environment;
- A disciplined and mutually respectful classroom;
- A friendly environment which is safe, secure, warm, loving, caring and positive;
- Proper seating arrangement; and
- A spacious classroom.

Within the construct of field, reference may be made to the classroom as it is in this arena that effectiveness starts to take place and results in the school becoming effective.

### **5.3.2.2 Planning**

In order for meaningful learning and teaching to take place, it is a prerequisite that teachers are prepared for their lessons. Teachers reported that they perceived proper and thorough planning as features of an effective teaching and learning environment. Two of the respondents agreed that one needs to have good knowledge of content in order to undertake proper planning.

In order for effectiveness to be achieved, the construct of practice is considered within the process of planning. Planning results in a routine of activities which create an effective teaching and learning environment.

### **5.3.2.3 Teaching and learning aids**

Of the respondents that identified resources as an issue, all indicated that there should be enough resources for teaching and learning. One respondent stated that there has to be a variety of teaching aids such as overhead projectors, data projectors and textbooks. This is associated with another respondent who reported that there should be sufficient support material for the learning process not only for the teaching process. Certain resources are acquired at the school's expense as one respondent commented:

Although we get support and things from the department, some of our schools especially in the disadvantaged schools are struggling a lot. We climb hills and mountains to get the material, resources ourselves. We try to be innovative.

A teacher raised a valid point by saying that it is pointless having the resources at the school, if teachers do not have access to them or lack the confidence or skills to use these resources effectively.

### **5.3.2.3. a) Teaching and learning support books and software**

Respondents replied freely when stating which teaching and learning support material is provided and if it makes teachers' tasks easier. Respondents indicated various items available and provided for support purposes. Support material included textbooks, atlases, modules, study guides, pace setters and work schedules. One respondent stated that they receive textbooks for Grade 12 learners from the WCED. But they do not receive the same support for lower grades. Another respondent reported that textbooks do not always arrive on time: they should be delivered to the school at the beginning of the academic year. A respondent indicated that the pace-setters and work-schedules provided by the WCED made her task easier: it guided her in what she needed to achieve by the end of the year. Non-governmental organisations such as ASSETS were acknowledged as assisting in providing support material such as modules, worksheets and study guides for learners. Respondents noted that having access to the internet and different computer software programmes at the school makes their task easier. It made it easier for finding additional information and resources for effective teaching. One of the teachers stated that it made her work neater and more presentable.

### **b) Hardware support**

Teachers responded that hardware support assisted in making their task easier. Hardware support included computers or laptops, data projectors, televisions and videos or DVDs' and overhead projectors. They indicated that they did not have to re-write work continuously on the board: it saved them a lot of time. One of the teachers reported that use of such support material made lessons more interesting and simpler to present to learners: it was visually stimulating. One respondent indicated that all this support material is provided but there is a lack of training given to teachers who need guidance about using the resources. A few of the respondents indicated that learners have writing books: this makes their task easier because learners are able to work in these books at home when they have homework to complete.

### **c) Subject resources**

Respondents stated that there are subject specific types of support material provided which make their lessons more effective. Respondents referred to subjects such as Mathematics, Science and English. In Mathematics, resources such as calculators and geometry sets helped learners. Science teachers stated that they were provided with apparatus and chemicals used in functional science laboratories at the school. The English department teachers referred to the provision of reading material that improved the learners' language abilities.

Some respondents commented on fixed items in the classroom which assisted in making their tasks easier as teachers. They specifically referred to chalkboards and whiteboards as well as charts or posters on the walls. Teachers said that the use of whiteboards made it easier for learners to complete work on the board and easier for themselves to assess learners' understanding of the work. Another respondent indicated that charts and posters made the classroom more appealing to learners and promoted a print-rich classroom which assisted in consolidating knowledge with the learners.

A comment by one respondent stood out among all the responses received. She stated that they do not receive all their support from the education department and NGO's. She continued by reporting that schools in disadvantaged communities have to support themselves. They become innovative and achieve a lot of success through their hard work. These teaching and learning aids indicated under Section 5.3.2.3 can be associated with economic capital which the school has acquired. These forms of economic capital contribute significantly to making the school effective as well as the processes within the classroom.

#### **5.3.2.4 Contextual factors influencing learners**

Contextual factors affect the teaching and learning process in a classroom. Findings revealed three contextual factors that teachers consider to contribute to effective teaching and learning environment. The contextual factors are: learner participation, learner background and class size, contact time and

communication: ...In addition to being punctual (teachers), we need to understand our learners, know their names, where they come from. What are their abilities and challenges so that good planning takes place...

#### **5.3.2.4. a) Learner participation**

In analysis of teachers' comments regarding features of effective teaching and learning environment, the following combinations of statements were associated with learner participation, namely:

- Learners are actively involved;
- Positive attitude for both learners and teachers;
- Willingness to learn; and
- Learners engaging the learning material and the teacher.

From the statements, it can be interpreted that participation of learners in the classroom contributes to effective learning. Teachers stimulate learners to want to be involved in the lessons. Active participation of learners creates a positive approach to teaching and learning. Active participation shows that teaching is not based on a teacher-centred approach; different teaching strategies are employed.

#### **b) Learner background**

Another feature alluded to by respondents was that of learners' background. One respondent reported that teachers should know about socio-political, economic and cultural backgrounds of learners that they teach. This statement could be associated with another respondent who indicated that teachers need to understand their learners' abilities, capabilities and challenges. Teachers are expected to complete a context analysis of their learning environment in order to achieve the best results from learners.

Teaching in a disadvantaged community is a challenging process: teachers have to deal with the social challenges and the diverse backgrounds of the learners. It raises concerns about whether teachers are adequately trained in their initial teacher training to deal with learner backgrounds, especially in disadvantaged communities.

### **c) Class size, contact time and communication**

Few respondents indicated class size as a major impediment to learning. Class size could be linked with a number of teachers who indicated that the classroom needs to be spacious. One respondent stated that there should be a smaller number of learners in a class. She did not indicate what would be an ideal number of learners. Another respondent stated there should be normal class sizes which are rare in their case: a ratio of 1:30 would be ideal at the school. Class sizes at the school range from 38 to 55 learners in a class. The lower grades have the greater number of learners in a class. More affluent schools have fewer learners in class. These schools can appoint extra teachers to school governing body positions. Concern over class sizes was identified as a difficulty by teachers as well. A respondent reported that the high number of learners admitted into the school results in an overloaded classroom which was not conducive to effective teaching and learning. The challenge of class size was well summarised by a teacher who said:

...it is not easy to teach a class full of learners with +/- 50 learners.  
Some of these learners make teaching impossible.

With regard to contact time, respondents maintained that punctuality was a necessity. One of the respondents went further and said that punctuality referred to both learners and teachers. Contact time was associated with the time on task aspect. A respondent said that it was important for teachers to stick to their contact time in order for them to be able to complete their syllabus for the year. Respondents emphasised that punctuality was regarded as a difficulty by teachers at the school:

...the late coming of the pupils is a big problem, they either don't come to class at all or they just go back home again...

Another respondent reiterated that late coming is a major problem that cannot be solved by the school alone: they felt there should be an outside intervention by the education department and social services to assist with the problem. Few respondents regarded communication as a particularly significant feature of an effective teaching and learning environment. Communication was associated with mutual respect between teacher and learner.



The contextual factors influencing learners are understood to be part of the field in which learners find themselves. In the field, different forms of capital are acquired and it is where the habitus is formed. The learner background relates to the learners' habitus. Cultural capital is gained through learner participation

### **5.3.3 Support from the school management team**

Some teachers indicated that there was either very little or no support provided by the SMT. One of these respondents reported that the principal was trying his best to support teachers, but she did not receive any support from the HoDs. Three of the respondents mentioned that their files are demanded by the HoDs: often with a stern approach. They do not receive feedback or advice on areas to improve. One respondent stated that the SMT is visible only during IQMS visits and then they demand files. One respondent indicated that she is new at the school and not sure about the support provided by the SMT. In contrast:

We encouraged making use of further training opportunities and we exposed to different experiences different from those we already experienced. They provide continuous encouragement when teachers get tired especially during times when there is a lot of work.

Norlin (2009) describes that a social systems approach means when two or more persons work together in a co-ordinated manner to achieve a common goal. This relates to how the SMT supports teachers who have the same goal to achieve effectiveness.

A number of respondents regarded monitoring as support provided by the SMT. Teachers said that the SMT monitors the teachers' files and learners' workbooks. This ensures that teachers are doing what they are supposed to be doing. The support aspect that teachers were referring to was that the SMT should provide feedback to assist them in doing what was required. There were, however, two respondents who indicated that monitoring did take place, but they did not receive any feedback. A few of the respondents claimed that the support they received was with curriculum delivery. The SMT supported

teachers with support material and solving subject issues such as textbook shortages and moderation. One of the respondents reported that their HoD assisted their department with guiding and arranging content with additional learning and teaching material. It was stated that the SMT provides teachers with information for their subject and to better understand the subject. The core function of the school is curriculum delivery, which is monitored from a management perspective and can therefore be associated with accountability.

#### **5.3.4 Support from the parents**

There were generally two categories of responses: no support or support provided irrespective of how it was regarded.

The minority (13 of 33) of teachers are of the opinion that parents do not provide any support to the school or teachers. Teachers supported their responses by comments such as:

- This makes it difficult for us teachers especially in terms of discipline and homework.
- They don't come to school meetings.
- Parents are only seen when they collect reports.
- There is no evidence that they help the learners with homework.

The majority (20 of 33) of respondents reported that they received support from parents, whether little or substantial. Respondents indicated there was a lack of support: they referred to parents providing support by coming to school when requested to discuss issues with teachers.

Parents are very little involved in their learners at home, most of our parents are staying in the Eastern Cape and the learners are in the care of older siblings. Sometimes with little or no responsibility.

One respondent maintained that parents supported the school, but to a restricted degree because they had full-time jobs. Teachers work with these parents by communicating with them telephonically or making appointments to see them after school hours. Schools interact with their environments according to open-systems views. In order for effectiveness to be achieved,

the school relies on having to deal with agents around them in the system (Scott, 2008). A teacher reported that they received little support from parents of learners in the lower grades but parents of the Grade 12 learners ensure that their children attend school regularly and solve problems relating to their children's education. Support provided by parents of the Grade 12 learners shows that parents want their children to achieve success. Lack of support in lower grades can be interpreted as parents not realising the serious nature of their children's schooling career in the earlier grades.

One of the respondents indicated that support was related to parents' financial obligations. The teacher explained that the social circumstances of parents were important: they could not pay learners' school fees. Of the nine respondents who reported and receive support from parents, eight of them aligned support with discipline. One teacher indicated that parents are involved in the learners' education in terms of ensuring punctuality, assisting with homework and attending meetings. Other respondents maintained that parents are supportive in terms of addressing discipline and ensuring that problems with their children are resolved. An additional comment made by one of the respondents was that support provided by parents includes providing background information about learners' problems, difficulties and behaviour. Based on this, the school depends on parental involvement and support. Parents contribute to the effectiveness of the school irrespective of the amount of support.

### **5.3.5 Teacher opportunities and challenges**

Teachers were asked what opportunities and challenges they could identify for themselves or the school.

I see opportunities to be part of a project that provides our kids with skills to develop them in all aspects. A major challenge is my inability to deal with the issues of gangsterism and some of the social problems.

This was simplified by asking 'what could they see as possibilities to improve themselves or the school?' or 'what are the barriers preventing them or the school from becoming effective?'

### **5.3.5.1 Opportunities**

With regard to opportunities and challenges they faced as teachers and the school, few respondents mentioned opportunities that they could identify. The opportunities identified were:

- Promotion to senior positions at other schools due to teachers' commitment and dedication;
- New teacher training programmes that equip teachers to deal with disadvantaged communities;
- Projects that provide learners with skills and develop them in all aspects of citizenship; and
- Staff development in which teachers are enhanced to deal with the challenges of a disadvantaged community.

Opportunities mentioned relates directly to teachers acquiring social and symbolic capital. These opportunities are beneficial for the teachers and therefore the social capital gained has the potential to provide mobility to move across fields. Social capital means expanding networks to be involved outside the school with the purpose of improving the school. Equipping teachers with social capital includes new knowledge gained which can be applied in the context of the school. However, teachers do not always apply their newly acquired knowledge to their current situation and in some cases move to new schools showcasing their acquired capital. Acquisition of symbolic capital indicates teachers gaining promotion associating it with prestige and honour for themselves.

### **5.3.5.2 Challenges**

Teachers identified various challenges according to six main groups. The groups were:

- Social ills in the community;
- Discipline;
- Academic challenges;
- Class sizes;
- Punctuality; and
- Diverse cultures.

The number of times a challenge was mentioned was quantified from the interviews in order to represent graphically the perceptions of the teachers.

Discipline was discussed previously in Section 5.2.4.1. The graph below (Figure 5.3) shows perceptions of teachers and their level of concern for a particular challenge.

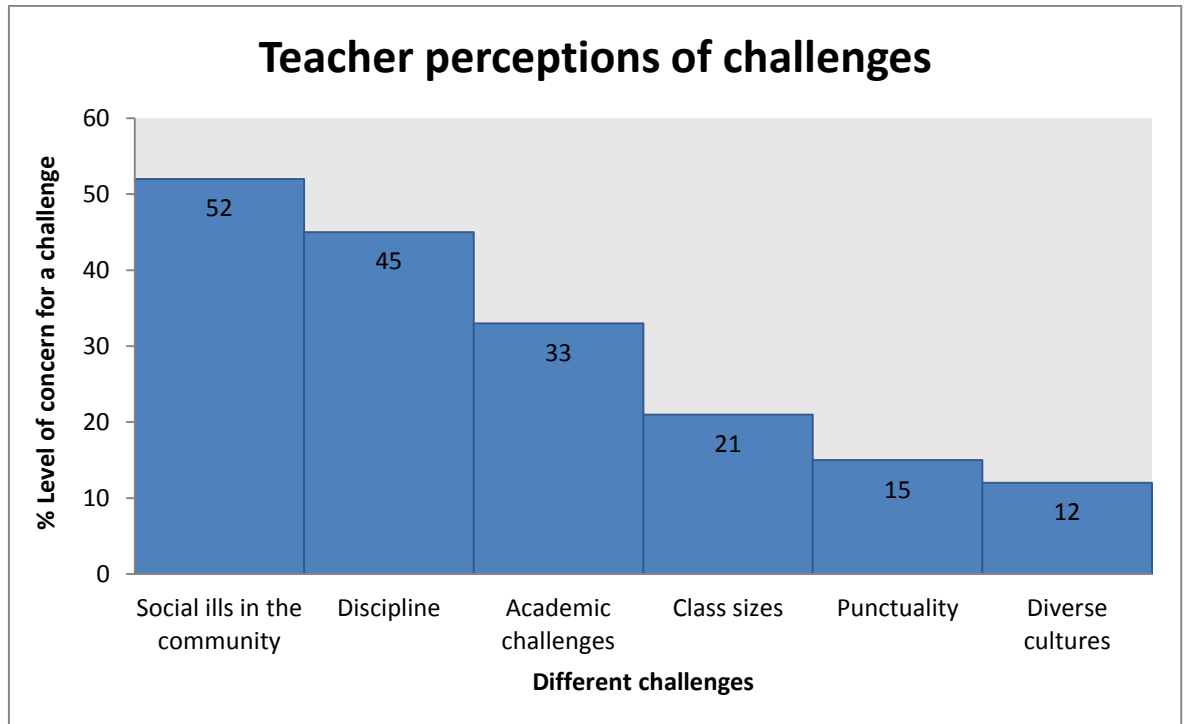


Figure 5.3 Teacher perceptions of challenges

### 5.3.5.2. a) Social ills in the community and its influence

As can be seen in Figure 5.3, respondents continued to highlight that social ills in the community are a challenge for them as teachers. These social ills exacerbate ill-discipline in the school. The sub-theme of social ills in the community evoked the influence of social problems upon learning and teaching in the school. While listening to the audio recordings and reading the transcripts, it became evident that responses were closely related: data revealed no new significant information. Various social ills as determined by the teachers are:

- Gangsterism;
- Teenage pregnancy;
- Poverty; and
- Various forms of abuse:
  - Drugs;
  - Child;
  - Emotional;

- Sexual; and
- Physical.

Most respondents reported that the issue of gangs presented considerable difficulties at the school. Learners become involved with gangs which lead to learners leaving school. Teachers fear learners who are gangsters in their class. They cannot implement effective discipline measures. Four of the respondents stated that teenage pregnancy was a problem: young girls often dropped out of school and did not return to complete their schooling. This could be attributed to the girls feeling ashamed or the responsibility of having to support the child. Researchers attribute this to the girl's age and the void left by any consistent means of support to care for the baby and the girl-child when they should be in school (Gyan, 2013, Chigona and Chetty, 2008).

A respondent reported that poverty in the community prevented effective teaching and learning. The issue of poverty has a direct impact on the ability of learners to concentrate on their school work in class while they are starving. A positive aspect at the school is the feeding scheme which provides the learners with meals. It affects teaching and learning as the learners have to leave the class to collect their meals. This reflects negatively on how the school manages the feeding scheme. Meals should be distributed in an allocated time outside of contact and learning time. However, this is not always possible having to feed over 700 children a day.

Teachers indicated various forms of abuse that learners encounter in the community. The most pertinent form of abuse was drug abuse. Five respondents maintained that they regarded drug abuse and its use as a social evil. Three respondents alluded to other forms of abuse such as child abuse which can be grouped together with sexual and physical abuse as well as emotional abuse. When teachers have to deal with these different levels of abuse, the concern raised is whether teachers are trained and equipped to deal with these issues. When teachers have to deal with psychological matters such as abuse, it distracts them from their core business of teaching. This influences the effectiveness of the school and them as teachers in the classroom. On the other hand it reflects a caring and concerned teacher that learners feel comfortable with.

It's difficult, ummh..., learners have challenging circumstances, having to deal with pregnancy, drugs, the abuse, that's emotionally, sexually and physical...

These social ills influence effective teaching and learning. This relates again to whether teachers are achieving their primary objectives of educating the learners. Most of the findings related to families of learners. One of the respondents reported that the learners are from dysfunctional families. Most have one adult heading the household. Another respondent stated that certain learners are orphans and live with older siblings. In certain instances they live with teachers. It was reported that some parents are illiterate or have a low level of education and are unable to assist learners with their school work at home. These aspects are associated with teachers assuming a parental role at school: known as the dominant legal principle governing the role of teachers in *loco parentis*. Although teachers still assume this parental role, research has begun to view teachers more as agents of the state due to the social ills (MacKay and Sutherland, 2006). It implies that teachers need to be more focussed on their role as teacher and have learners achieve academic results.

Teachers agreed that either poverty or unemployment influenced teaching and learning at the school. In terms of poverty, it was reported that it influences the learning, retards the scholastic development of learners.

The children come to school hungry and who can learn or do anything on an empty stomach? Some of them come to school just so that they can get something to eat at school.

Most respondents stated there is a high rate of unemployment in the community. Unemployment influenced learning at the school in that the basic needs of learners cannot be met by parents. This compromised learners' ability to achieve success at school.

The context of the environment (field) is a substantial factor that does not contribute to effectiveness but is regarded as a barrier that needs to be considered in comprehending the process of effectiveness. This gives teachers cultural capital in the form of experiences which teachers in more affluent areas do not necessarily have to deal with.

## **b) Academic challenges**

Respondents who identified academic challenges associated challenges with learners' ability to complete work, especially their homework and projects. One of the respondents reported that it was a challenge being unable to assist a learner who is struggling academically. Two respondents maintained that there was a lack of interest towards education on the part of learners and the community. This was supported by another respondent who indicated that learners were not putting any effort in their school work and end up copying assignments from other learners. A final academic challenge was that teachers had to wait for textbooks due to a shortage of textbooks and this weakened their teaching.

Academic obstacles are part of the process in teaching. It is expected of teachers to deal with such problems. Irrespective of their gravity, teachers at the school overcome them as is evident in the learners being successful.

## **c) Class sizes**

Another category identified as a hurdle was the problem of class size. The challenge of class size was well summarised by a teacher who said,

...it is not easy to teach a class full of learners with +/- 50 learners.  
Some of these learners make teaching impossible.

One respondent reported that the high number of learners being admitted to the school results in an overloaded classroom which was not conducive to effective teaching and learning.

## **d) Punctuality**

...there is a serious lack of discipline especially with the late coming...

Respondents emphasised that punctuality of learners was weak at the school. One of the respondents stated that learners who came late to school often led to them either remaining absent from class or playing truant from certain classes. Another respondent reiterated that late-coming was a major problem that could not be solved by the school alone: there needed to be outside



intervention by the Education Department or Social Services in assisting with the problem.

#### **e) Diverse cultures**

The final category identified by the teachers as a challenge was that of the diverse cultures in the school and the community. Four respondents mentioned two aspects that fell into the category of diverse cultures. The two aspects were language barriers and cultural differences. Different home languages spoken in the school include Afrikaans, English, French, isiXhosa and Sotho. Respondents reported that it was a challenge to learn the different cultures of the learners as well as the diversity of their colleagues.

Our biggest challenge is the language barrier our learners have to face. Most of our learners come from Xhosa primary schools and in grade 8 they are expected to learn all their subjects in English.

The aspect of language barriers is closely associated with different cultures. Teachers and learners come from different cultural backgrounds such as Xhosa, Coloured, White, Indian and foreign nationals.

Challenges of class size, punctuality and diverse cultures are associated with the construct of field. The challenging environment is interpreted as a motivation for teachers to become more effective. They deal with difficult circumstances and still contribute to the school becoming effective.

#### **5.3.6 Critical factors from the teachers**

Teachers' findings have highlighted the factor of the field or the environment. The critical factors related directly with creating a supportive learning field for learners and promoting high expectations. The greatest influence in the field is the ability of teachers to influence learners and the humanity aspect of teachers. This results in the cross-field effect that teachers create by introducing a different habitus into the school. The findings within the field are related to challenges which teachers overcome as well as their role in school effectiveness. A critical factor further identified from teachers was effective

teaching and development. It was associated with the effective classroom processes and support received from the SMT in order to develop personally.

Table 5.3 provides a summary of the responses of teachers according to categories of each question asked in the focus-group interview.

**Table 5.3: Summary of the teacher responses**

Category	Key responses according to category
Teacher motivation	<p>The following were key influences of motivation for the teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners</li> <li>• Collegiality</li> <li>• Resources</li> <li>• Addressing poverty and achieving success</li> </ul>
Effective teaching and learning environment	<p>The following are teacher perceptions of features of an effective teaching and learning environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom management</li> <li>• Resources</li> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Contextual factors influencing learners</li> </ul>
Support from the school management team	<p>Responses from the teachers indicated that support was received from the SMT in terms of discipline, motivation and monitoring. A few respondents indicated that they did not receive any support from the SMT.</p>
Support from the parents	<p>The majority of the responses informed that there was support even if it was a little. Certain respondents were of the opinion that parents did not provide any support.</p>
Teacher opportunities and challenges	<p>A few respondents mentioned any opportunities.</p> <p>The challenges of the teachers were categorised under six main groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic challenges</li> <li>• Diverse cultures</li> <li>• Punctuality</li> <li>• Discipline</li> <li>• Social ills in the community</li> <li>• Class sizes</li> </ul>

## 5.4 Summary

Chapter five offers the findings from school management and teachers. Categories under which findings are presented have been identified as key factors contributing to school effectiveness. Factors from SMT responses were leadership, professional development, monitoring improvement, social influence on circumstances and parental support linked to responses from teachers. Teachers' responses indicate critical factors to be teacher motivation, an effective teaching and learning environment and support from parents and the SMT. They identified teacher opportunities and challenges as contributing to their role in school effectiveness. Factors presented were a construct of the conceptual framework to show alignment of data with the conceptual framework. From the findings, it is evident that the critical factors contributing to school effectiveness are leadership, effective teaching and development, supportive learning field and cross-field factors. The systemic approach to leadership is of the utmost importance in ensuring the desired outcomes are achieved. The cross-field factor of the influence of the teachers and the principal on learners encourages them to want to achieve success. The cross-field factor is linked with the symbolic capital that learners want to acquire.

In Chapter Six findings from learners, alumni and parents are presented. Chapter Seven concludes this study through synthesizing the findings and providing recommendations.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **FINDINGS FROM THE LEARNERS, PAST LEARNERS AND PARENTS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, findings from questionnaires distributed to current Grade 12 learners are presented. Information gained from the open-ended questionnaires handed out to past learners who attended the school is discussed. Findings from interviews held with the parents of learners who served on the school governing body (SGB) are described. It is important to voice the views and perceptions of a group that is often marginalised when examining school effectiveness. This is supported by Rudduck (2001: 7) who contends that learners' voices should be heard and taken seriously in debates about learning. In Chapter 5 the findings of the school management team and the teachers at the school are drawn up. The findings were presented under categories identified during analysis of data collected.

Findings in this chapter are organised under the main categories of the questions listed on the questionnaires and interview schedule. The chapter organises the findings as follows:

- Section 6.2 – closed-ended questionnaires of the Grade 12 learners;
- Section 6.3 – open-ended questionnaires distributed to alumni;
- Section 6.4 – interview with parents; and
- Section 6.5 – summary of the findings in the chapter.

#### **6.2 Closed-ended questionnaire of the Grade 12 learners**

In this study school effectiveness is measured by matriculation results. As a yardstick matriculation provides an indicator of the functioning of the school system, the school itself and individual learners (Christie, Butler and Potterton, 2007: 8). It is appropriate that the group determining effectiveness not be marginalised, but be allowed to voice their experiences and perceptions.

Findings illustrating the perceptions of learners are presented together with graphs and tables. The closed-ended questionnaire is divided into two sections: Section A covers the general information of the learners and Section B deals with the learners' views and perceptions of schooling. The findings of the questionnaires are arranged below in categories under each section. The categories are:

- Section A:
  - General information of respondents;
- Section B:
  - Experiences and opportunities for learning;
  - Learner – teacher relations;
  - Learner influence and motivation;
  - Learning environment;
  - Support for learners; and
  - Learner communication.

### 6.2.1 General information of the respondents

The purpose of Section A in the questionnaire was to provide a general background of respondents. Respondents indicated their gender, home language and number of years they were at the school. Respondents were not asked to indicate their race: it had no relevance to determining their perceptions of their school although the school has predominantly black learners. The pie chart (Figure 6.1) below reflects the ratio of boys to girls who completed the questionnaire.

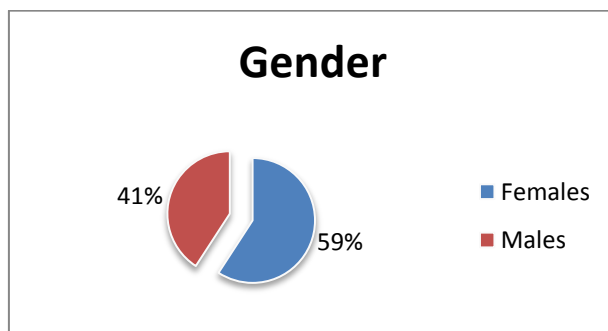


Figure 6.1 Gender of learners

There were one hundred and forty-seven (147) respondents who completed the questionnaire. The majority of the respondents were girls which made up 59% and boys 41%. The aspect of gender was important to reflect the development of girls in education. It further shows that girls are the greater

number of learners contributing to the schools effectiveness. This is supported by the research of van Rooyen and Jordaan (2009) and a survey conducted by the Department of Education (2003) in the Grade 12 Senior Certificate Examination and assessment that girls are doing better at key competency tests. Table 6.1 below reflects an adapted snapshot from the school's CEMIS database on the total enrolment of 2012 and 2013 (Cemis: 2013). Grade 12 learners' composition in the ratio of boys to girls is similar to the ratio of the total number of learners at the school.

**Table 6.1 – Adapted snapshot from Cemis record on total enrolment for 2012 and 2013**

<b>Enrolment of boys</b>	<b>Enrolment of girls</b>	<b>Total enrolment</b>
<b>Enrolment for 2012</b>		
638 (45%)	788 (55%)	1 426
<b>Enrolment for 2013</b>		
686 (44%)	871 (56%)	1 557

The language of learning and teaching at the school is English. Table 6.2 below shows the home language of the learners.

**Table 6.2 – Home language of learners**

<b>Home language</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Xhosa</b>	127	86%
<b>Sotho</b>	12	8%
<b>Afrikaans</b>	4	3%
<b>English</b>	3	2%
<b>Other</b>	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	147	100%

From the table it can be noted that only 3 of the 147 (2%) learners are taught in their home language yet the majority of 86% are Xhosa-speaking who are taught in an additional language. The one learner who indicated 'other' was a foreign national whose home language is French. General information with reference to home language of learners confirms the findings of the teachers and SMT as indicated Sections 5.2.4.4 and 5.3.5.2 (e). Findings have

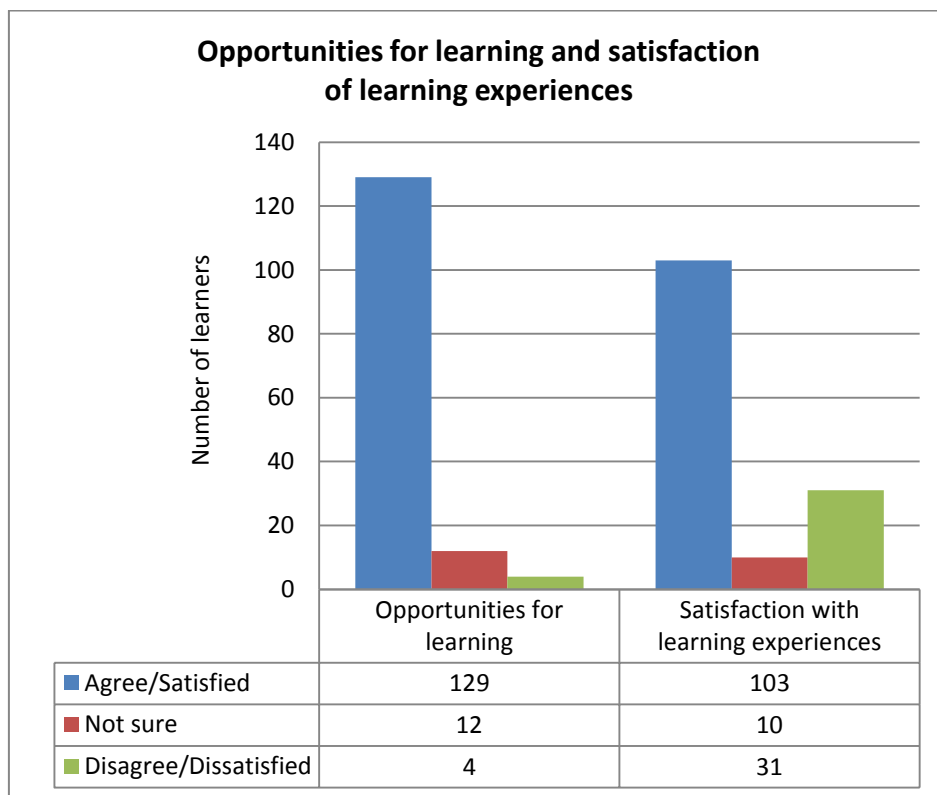
revealed that the field in which the school is situated has diverse cultures. Diverse cultures indicate different habitus and cultural capitals brought in the field. These differences are harnessed in the school with common interests to achieve effectiveness through creating an environment that is conducive for learners to apply themselves in realising the objective of schooling. The cultural differences contribute to building relations and understanding among members of the school community from different backgrounds.

In determining the number of years learners were at the school, only one respondent failed to indicate the number of years at the school. Of the learners who responded, 23% (34 of the 147) reported to be 4 or less years at the school compared to the 68% (100 of the 147) who indicated that they were at the school for 5 years. Twelve (8%) learners indicated that they were at the school for six or more years. This is an indication that these learners have repeated a grade or grades. The retention of learners in a grade may be a reflection of ineffectiveness of the school at a different level; however, the contention may be that the school intends to ensure the throughput of learners in the system rather than creating opportunities for drop-out of learners. Jimerson (2001) argues that the majority of studies on the effectiveness of grade retention fail to support its efficacy in correcting poor school performance. On the other hand learners moving through the system are not equipped competently at the next level of schooling which could result in ineffectiveness at that level. The majority of learners were well experienced to comment on perceptions and experiences of the school. 76% (112 of the 147) were at the school for five or more years.

### **6.2.2 Experiences and opportunities for learning**

Banicky (2000) explains that learner experiences and opportunities for learning were defined as the overlap between information taught and information being tested on. The definition has evolved to include the quality of resources, school conditions, curriculum and teaching that learners experience (Banicky, 2000). Learners were asked to indicate whether there were sufficient opportunities for learning and if they were satisfied with their

learning experiences at the school. The graph (Figure 6.2) below shows learner’s agreement and satisfaction with their learning experiences at the school.



**Figure 6.2 – Agreement and satisfaction of learning experiences**

In addressing whether there were sufficient learning opportunities at the school, 2 of the 147 respondents did not answer the question. Three of the 147 respondents failed to report on the satisfaction of their learning experiences. Responses to these questions were high: response rates of 99% and 98% on opportunities and satisfaction of learning experiences, respectively. There is a clear indication in the graph above (Figure 6.2) that the majority of respondents (88%) agreed that there were sufficient opportunities for learning. This is supported by the high number of respondents (70%) reporting that they were satisfied with their learning experiences.

Few respondents (4 of the 145) who answered the question disagreed that there were sufficient opportunities for learning. 8% reported that they were not sure if there were opportunities. In comparison to those that indicated that they are satisfied, 21% (31 of the 144) of respondents indicated that they were not satisfied with their learning experiences. 7% (10 of the 144) reported that they



were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. The dissatisfaction with learning experiences could be associated with the field and the economic capital in the disadvantaged community. Dissatisfaction is associated with the learning environment and availability of resources which is discussed in Section 6.2.5: the majority of learners were dissatisfied with the learning environment. The majority agreed there were learning opportunities at the school which is supported by 70% who said that they were satisfied with their experiences. Opportunities for learning are directly associated with acquiring embodied cultural capital as well as in the institutionalised state. In the embodied state learners are changed through the knowledge that they acquire at the school. Their embodied cultural capital is changed in that learners now learn how to act and react through new lived experiences at the school. Cultural capital by learners through learning opportunities creates a new *habitus* for learners in the way they think and how they become more attentive to other influences. The learners newly acquired cultural capital is influenced through the interaction with teachers and the schooling system. Learners contribute to the effectiveness of the school by applying their cultural capital through their new habitus. This is supported by Dumais (2002: 45) who concurs that there is a consideration of both the resources (capital) and the orientation one has to using these resources (habitus) to implement an effective practice in the educational field. This is evident from learners' satisfaction with their learning experiences.

### **6.2.3 Learner-teacher relations**

Learner–teacher relations include aspects such as trust, caring, approachability, respect, sensitivity and fairness (Doll, *et al.*, 2010: 204). Learners had to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with certain characteristics of their teachers. Kesner (2000) postulate that learner-teacher relations are similar to bonds between children and parents. There were two specific relationship characteristics which the learners had to respond to, namely approachability and sensitivity. Learners' responses are illustrated below in Figure 6.3.

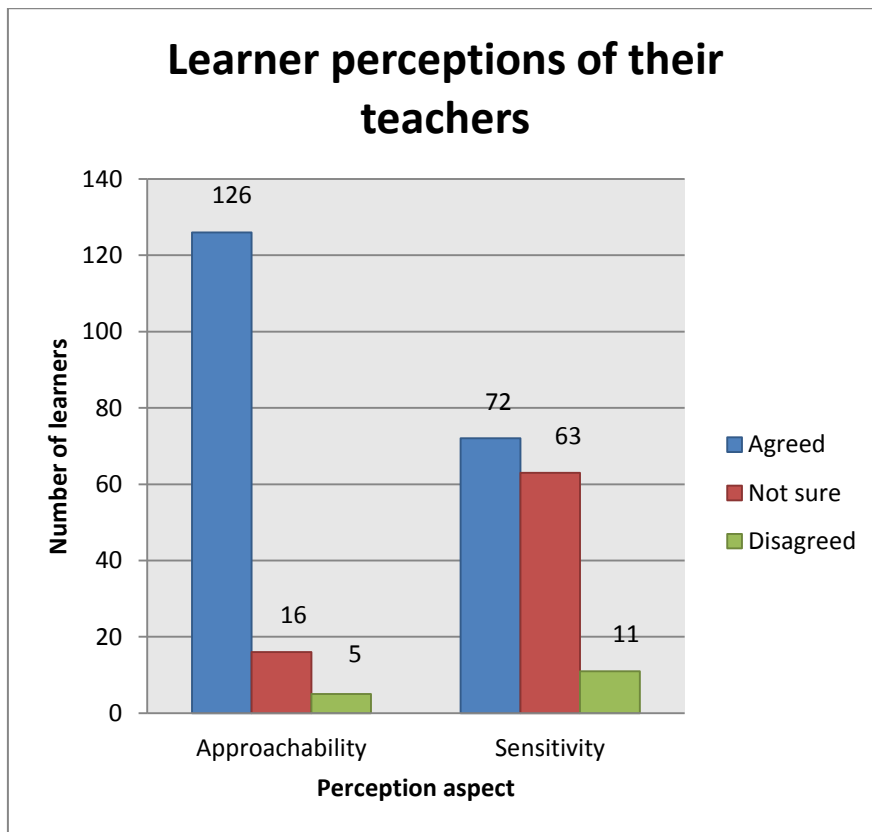


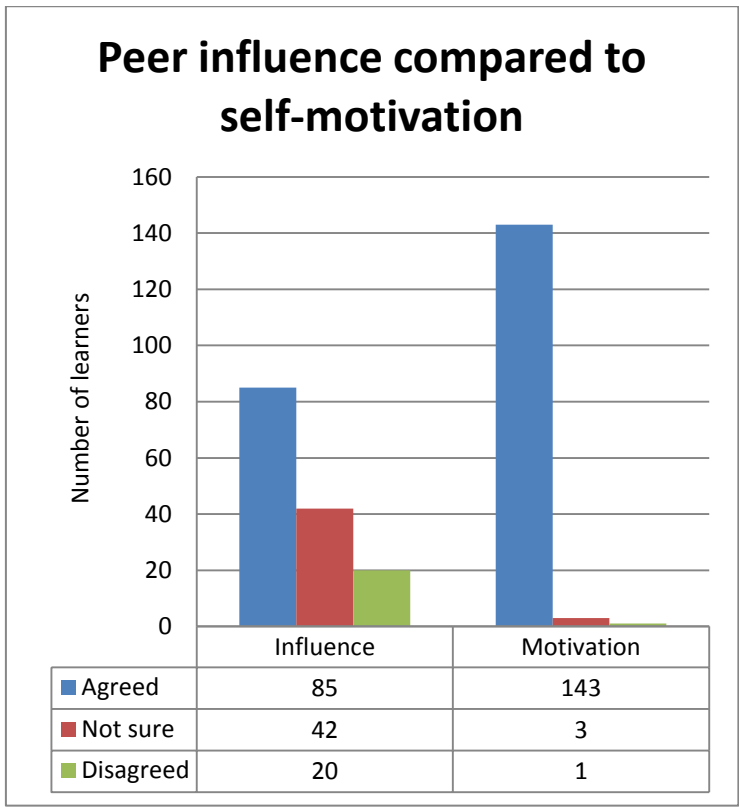
Figure 6.3 – Learner perceptions of their teachers

In addressing approachability, learners were asked whether they perceived their teachers to be open and amenable to learner opinions. From the responses it is evident that the majority (86%) of learners reported that their teachers were approachable. Few respondents (5 of the 147) indicated that they did not regard their teachers as approachable whereas 16 of the 147 stated that they were not sure whether their teachers were accommodating and open. This could be attributed to learners being disciplined by their teachers: they did not feel that they could approach teachers after being disciplined. It could be the result of learners being able to trust their teachers: respondents might have not had the confidence to speak to teachers due to their own shyness. Approachability may be compared with teachers' sensitivity towards cultural differences. Cultural differences refer to the various languages, races and religions involved in the school among teachers and learners. Based on these findings, teachers have enhanced the relations with learners at school. This makes them able to cope better with the challenging circumstances of learners' lives.

Learners had to report whether their teachers were aware of, and sensitive to, their cultural differences. It was significant that the majority (72 of the 146) of learners agree that their teachers are sensitive to cultural differences. In comparison, 63 of the 146 (43%) learners were not sure whether their teachers were aware of, and sensitive to, the different cultures at the school. When teachers deal with different cultures, there is a risk that certain learners could feel that their culture is neglected. 43% of learners who were not sure may be regarded as learners who do not always perceive their teachers as fair, even-tempered behaviour or good humoured (Wentzel, 2002). The learner-teacher relationship influences the habitus of learners through daily interactions and has the ability to improve the academic achievement of learners (Murray and Malmgren, 2005).

#### **6.2.4 Learner influence and motivation**

Learner influence and motivation refers to the relations learners have with classmates or friends at school. Friends are identifiable when two, or more, learners prefer to spend time with each other; friendships provide learners with companionship, assistance, comfort and make school more enjoyable (Johnson, Johnson, Buckman and Richards, 1998). Wentzel and Watkins (2002) argue that learners who have friends at school are more interested in school activities and more active participants in the classroom. Friendship at school can be linked directly with the social capital of learners: it is a social network that the learners form amongst themselves. The stacked area chart (Figure 6.4) below reflects a comparison between the influences learners have on each other compared to their own motivation to succeed.



**Figure 6.4 – Comparison between learner influence and motivation**

The majority (85 of the 147) of respondents were of the opinion that their peers influence them to achieve success. By comparison, nearly all (143 of the 147) learners reported that they were motivated and capable of achieving success. There was only one learner who indicated that he/she was not motivated to succeed. 3 learners reported that they were unsure whether they were motivated or not. This uncertainty could be associated with the challenging circumstances of the disadvantaged community which made learners feel that they were not motivated. When compared with the influence that learners have on each other, 42 of the 147 (29%) stated that they were unsure whether other learners inspired them to achieve success. The stacked area chart illustrates that fewer than 20% of respondents disagreed that fellow learners inspired them to achieve success at school. As within any friendship, it is not uncommon for learners to experience conflict with their classmates or friends which are manifested in arguments. Ladd, Birch and Buhs (1999) report that unresolved conflict amongst peers can cause stress and lead to decreased learner involvement in the classroom. It could be due to conflict that learners feel they are not influenced by their peers or there is a lack of healthy competition amongst the learners to outperform one another. This lack

of competition or influence could negatively impact the ability of learners to achieve success. Therefore, it is imperative that schools ensure that learning environments are minimally impacted by negative issues among learners and teachers.

### 6.2.5 The learning environment

The learning environment refers to the field in which teaching and learning takes place. The learning environment creates an arena for the exchange of cultural and social capital. In the findings of the learning environment three aspects were identified. The aspects were disciplined environment, safe and secure environment and availability of resources in the learning environment. A further aspect addressed was that of learners' satisfaction in terms of the learning environment. The results of the findings are reflected in Table 6.3.

**Table 6.3 – Aspects of the learning environment**

Learning environment aspect	Agree / Satisfied		Not sure / Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Disagree / Dissatisfied	
	Frequency	percentage	Frequency	percentage	Frequency	percentage
Disciplined environment	111	76%	22	15%	11	7%
Safe and secure environment	75	51%	38	26%	29	20%
Availability of resources	37	25%	38	26%	69	47%
The mean percentage	51%		22%		25%	
Satisfaction of learning environment	54	37%	27	18%	63	43%

The table indicates that 76% (111 of the 144) of learners who responded agreed that there was a disciplined learning environment at the school. 22

learners were not certain whether there was a disciplined learning environment. 11 learners indicated that there was not a disciplined learning environment at the school. The term 'disciplined learning environment' referred to effective teaching and learning taking place with minimal disruption. Although the majority indicated that there was a disciplined learning environment, it cannot be ignored that there are learners who feel there is a disruptive force in their learning environment. This disruption may be traced to gangsterism as mentioned by past learners and parents. Aspects of ill-discipline and gangsterism affect whether the school can be credited with providing a safe and secure learning environment. 51% of respondents agreed that there was a safe and secure environment at the school. 38 respondents reported that they were not sure whether the learning environment was safe and secure compared to 29 learners who reported that they did not agree that there was a safe and secure environment at the school.

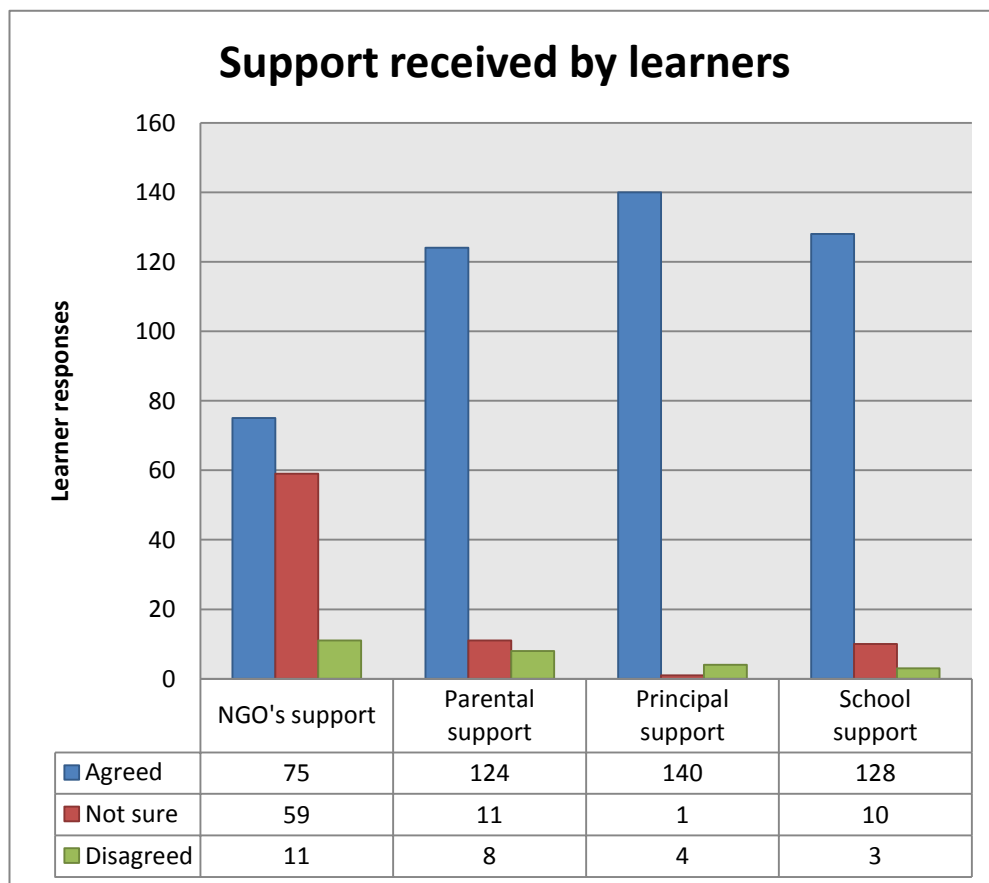
Respondents were asked if they agreed that learning resources were available at the school. The majority (47%) of learners that responded indicated that they disagree that resources are available for learning. With regard to respondents being unsure, 38 of the 144 learners that responded indicated that they were not sure whether resources were available for learning purposes. A quarter (37 of the 144) of the learners felt that learning resources were available for learners. Learners could have misinterpreted the term 'learning resources' as referring to technological resources at the school. Learning resources include material such as textbooks, apparatus used in the class and books. Technological resources were available only under the supervision of teachers. Learners may have been restricted in their use of computers due to ill-discipline or misuse of computers. Learning resources are closely monitored: they are expensive to replace if broken or stolen. The school is in a disadvantaged community which cannot afford to replace broken or stolen equipment.

In assessing the learners' views on aspects of the learning environment, 51% mean responses indicate that there is a positive learning environment in comparison to the mean in disagreement of 25% and a mean of 22% that is unsure. Learners were requested to indicate their level of satisfaction with the

appearance of the learning environment and 43% (63 of the 144) responses revealed that they were dissatisfied with the physical appearance of the school. By contrast, 54 of the 144 (37%) respondents reported that they were satisfied and 18% indicated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the learning environment. The learning environment is directly associated with the construct of field (Bourdieu, 1976) in which the engagement of learning takes place. From the findings, it is evident that the SMT and teachers are concerned with the learning environment and that attempts to improve the learning environment are made. The majority of learners are satisfied with the learning environment.

#### **6.2.6 Support for the learners**

Furrer and Skinner (2003) contend that children who receive support from teachers and family feel more comfortable in school and participate more actively in the classroom. Support has reference to emotional engagement and showing a sense of interest in learners. This can be associated directly with the motivation of learners. Learners were asked how they perceived support received from four groups of people involved with the school. The four groups were: non-governmental organisations (NGO's), parents, the principal and teachers. Learners indicated their agreement or disagreement in the categories of support, involvement or motivation of their learning. Figure 6.5 below illustrates the results of learners' responses to each group.



**Figure 6.5 – Support received by learners**

Learners were asked whether they benefit from the support provided by NGOs involved with the school. NGOs involved with the school provided curricular support for learners and teachers. They offered extra classes and teacher development. Support funding for the school was provided by NGOs. 75 of the 145 (51%) respondents agreed that they benefited from support provided. A relatively high number (59 of the 145) of respondents reported that they were not sure whether they benefited from support provided by the NGOs. A few (11 of the 145) respondents disagreed that they benefited from the support. NGOs are partners with the school and contribute by expanding the social network of the school and acquiring more social capital. In comparison to support received from the school, few (2%) respondents disagreed that they received support from the school whereas 7% were not certain if there were strong support systems for learners at the school. 87% (128 of the 141) of respondents who replied stated that they agree there was strong support from the school. This could be interpreted as the cross-field effect that teachers have on the various capital resources of learners. The influential capital



resource effected is the symbolic capital that learners associate with prestige and being able to achieve success.

The principal support overlaps with school support; data yielded significant findings on support received from the principal. Findings on the principal support are therefore separated from school support. The majority of learners agreed that there was involvement and support from the parents and the principal. The respondents indicated more encouragement and motivation was received from the principal than from the parents. The majority of respondents (95%) agreed that the principal motivated them to achieve success, whereas 84% agreed that their parents encouraged them to succeed. With regard to uncertainty of receiving support from parents and principal, it is notable that one respondent only was unsure of the principal's support. 11 learners were not sure whether their parents motivated them. In disagreement, 5% of learners indicated that they did not receive support from their parents whereas 3% reported that they did not receive any from the principal. It can be interpreted that learners spend more time of the day at school and are therefore more exposed to the principal than their parents. The principal's primary focus at school should be to ensure that learners are successful. He ought to be motivated to encourage learners to do their best. This is a reflection of the symbolic power that the principal has in influencing and shaping learners. It can be associated with the leadership aspect as discussed in Section 5.2.2.1 of Chapter 5.

### **6.2.7 Learner communication**

Learner communication refers to learner engagement where there is peer encouragement for learning and being informed of issues at the school. It is important to note that learner communication plays an important role in learners' development in the practice of effectiveness at schools. Milteer, Ginsburg and Mulligan (2012) postulate in low-income families, parents often do not have the time or resources to develop skills and educational interaction therefore it is important to develop positive peer relations among learners. This would improve peer relations and develop social skills of learners. Learner communication was examined to determine whether learners agreed that

there was effective communication on leadership issues among the Learner Representative Council (LRC) and learners. The purpose was to determine the effectiveness of the social network amongst learners at the school. Table 6.4 below reflects the frequency table for the responses.

**Table 6.4 Effective learner communication**

<b>Response item</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Agreed</b>	71	48%
<b>Not Sure</b>	55	37%
<b>Disagreed</b>	19	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>98%</b>

As shown in the table above, the majority (71 of the 145) of respondents agreed that there was effective communication on leadership issues between learners. 37% of respondents were not sure whether there was any communication between learners and the LRC. Based on the number of learners that are not sure, it is questionable how effective communication is. Communication amongst learners is important: learners become aware of any developments at the school and by motivating each other. It is clear that 19 of the respondents reported that they disagree that there was any communication among learners. The indication of a lack of communication implies that there are barriers to the exchange of information or knowledge among learners. Some learners prefer being in isolation to other learners but could create a situation where valuable information and social skills are lost. This lack of information sharing through communication impedes on the effectiveness of the school.

### **6.2.8 Critical factors from the Grade 12 learners**

The most prominent finding from the questionnaires of Grade 12 learners is the effect of teachers and school principal on the social development of the learners. It was revealed that learners were positively influenced and motivated based on what teachers and principal perceived as success. This relates to the critical factors of creating high expectations for learners and a

supportive learning field. Based on the impact of the cross-field effect on learners, it was determined that the social capital of the learners was expanded through the positive relations in the school network with teachers, the principal and amongst learners. This identified the critical factor of cross collaboration and communication. There was a strong indication of dissatisfaction at the shortage of resources according to the learners. Dissatisfaction with the shortage of resources informs the importance of the learning field being suitable for effective teaching and learning.

Table 6.5 provides a summary of the findings of the Grade 12 questionnaire within the categories identified.

**Table 6.5 – Summary of the Grade 12 questionnaire findings**

Category	Findings from the questionnaire
Learning experiences and opportunities	Majority agreed there were sufficient opportunities for learning. Majority of learners were satisfied with their learning experiences. Dissatisfaction of learning experiences is associated with the learning environment.
Learner – teacher relationships Two characteristics of teachers were addressed.	Approachability – Teachers are accommodative and open to learner opinions. Sensitivity – less than half of the responses perceived their teachers as being sensitive to cultural differences.
Learner influence and motivation	Learners felt that there was a positive influence from their peers. Nearly all the respondents indicated that they were motivated to achieve success.
The learning environment	Disciplined environment – majority agreed there was a disciplined learning environment. Majority of the respondents felt there was a safe and secure learning environment. Resources not always available. Learners' dissatisfaction of the learning environment can be associated with the disadvantaged community.
Perception of support received	Support was received from three pillars identified. Parents, principal, teachers and NGOs. Significantly identified that learners felt they received the most support from the principal.
Learner communication	The majority of the learners agreed there was effective communication amongst the learners. Communication contributed to learner motivation.

### 6.3 Open-ended questionnaire of alumni

In consideration of marginalised voices in school effectiveness, it was necessary to pay attention to alumni who contributed to what makes a school effective. Alumni have an understanding of the conditions at the school and what they perceive to contribute to the successful completion of their

schooling career. The findings of the open-ended questionnaires are arranged below in categories according to the constructs of the conceptual framework. The categories are:

- Perceptions of teachers;
- Motivation by teachers;
- Strategies to succeed;
- Support structures;
- Conditions at home; and
- Purposeful learning – the challenges and opportunities

### **6.3.1 Perceptions of teachers**

Ampadu (2012) reports that there is considerable attention on teachers' beliefs and perceptions of their teaching and it is broadly documented in literature. However, Ahmad and Aziz (2009) suggest collecting data from learners regarding their teachers' teaching provides meaningful information as to their perceptions and experiences as they observe learning, teaching and support more intimately than the teachers. In providing feedback on open-ended questionnaires, the majority (12 of the 14) of respondents referred to how their teachers played a supportive role. Teachers were perceived as dedicated and passionate in their work with the learners. The following phrases illustrate learners' perceptions of their teachers:

- They were passionate about their work and career.
- Fascinating, motivating and hard workers that were always punctual whether in academics or sport
- At school the teachers were very helpful and supportive. They work nicely together as one unit.

Perceptions indicated by the respondents can be linked with Section 6.2.3 as it highlights characteristics of teachers. It can be deduced from the comment, *they always would help you; you could talk to them if you had problems*, that teachers were approachable. Respondents stated that, although they were in a disadvantaged community, teachers made sure that effective teaching and learning took place. This was indicative of the extra classes presented by teachers and the availability of school resources after school hours. Certain

respondents indicated that teachers were role-models to them and served the function of parents. One of the statements highlighted their perception of teachers as inspirational and motivational. From these findings, it can be deduced that the general perception of teachers was that they were supportive and willing to help learners to achieve success. This clearly implies that teachers contributed to the success of learners by increasing the learners' cultural capital and enriching the learner's habitus.

### **6.3.2 Motivation by teachers**

Learners often arrive at school with a certain level of motivation, either to learn or not to learn and is often influenced by teachers' behaviours or teaching styles. Reeve and Jang (2006) suggest that academic achievement and motivation increase when teachers adopt a supportive teaching style. The supportive teaching style refers to behaviours such as listening, giving hints and encouragement, being responsive to learner questions and showing empathy for learners. According to past learners, their ability to successfully complete their matriculation was mainly due to being motivated by their teachers. The enhanced motivation of learners results in a learning environment more conducive to active learning. From responses received one respondent only indicated that he was not motivated by the teachers. In contrast, all the other respondents (13 of the 14) implied that their teachers motivated them.

Motivation by teachers was informed by different features according to the respondents. Responses varied from talks on life or real-life stories to learners' ability to rise above their current living conditions. A comment by a respondent stated: By telling us how children, ex-students with a poor background made it and went to University. Another respondent commented: teachers indicated that their attitude towards their school work was important in achieving success. The feature of respect was highlighted as well by teachers: learners should have respect for themselves and their peers. Learners were motivated by teachers informing them that they (teachers) believed in the learners and that the learners could have opportunities to study further. A comment that summarised it indicated that: They always wanted us to be something in life as

they always availed themselves for us even if you have a problem at home; they were always there to help.

Garcia *et al.* (1991) describe a crucial factor of student motivation to be self-efficacy for learning and performance which deals with two aspects: expectancy for success and self-efficacy. This relates to learners' own desire to want to succeed and motivate themselves. Self-efficacy is the ability of learners to accomplish their goals and in this instance achieve success.

Learners could be motivated to achieve success by the fact that certain teachers come from similar conditions such as a disadvantaged community and have achieved success through education. A respondent implied:

He (a teacher) motivated me by telling me about his life stories, what he went through to achieve what he has today

Teachers agree that they come from similar conditions and want their learners to become successful. In Sections 5.2.4.3 and 5.3.1.1, teachers reported how learners motivated teachers as well. Respondents indicated that hearing teachers' life-stories gave them motivation to rise above their current living conditions.

### **6.3.3 Strategies to succeed**

In pursuit of success at school, learners have to master a wide variety of skills and acquire the knowledge necessary to be successful in a standardised test at the end of their schooling career. The category of strategies to succeed is easily influenced by the category of motivation. One respondent mentioned his strategy of success: '*Remember where you come from always*'. When learners are motivated, they develop a strategy to accomplish what they want to achieve. The dominant response from past learners related to their strategy being dedicated and working hard. 86% (12 of the 14) of respondents alluded to aspects of dedication and hard work. A respondent described their strategy as having to attend all lessons and be focussed in class. The respondent stated that they had to study hard and ensure there was time for their studies. Another respondent commented:

To attend the extra classes and be open-minded in class. Always ask questions in class and focus more on my studies.

The comment by the respondent indicated that the past learner had a positive attitude towards extra classes. Extra classes can assist in improving learning, understanding and overall academic achievement. This can encourage learners to become motivated and learn by themselves. Selamat, Esa, Salleh and Baba (2012: 114) explain that extra classes are sessions that involve teaching and learning conducted after school hours. Teaching of extra classes requires preparation by teachers in order to produce effective teaching and learning (Selamat, *et al.*, 2012: 114). It is evident that learners knew what they wanted to achieve and what was expected of them to achieve success.

Another aspect within the strategies referred to the ability to organise and prioritise work. One respondent commented: *I constructed my own timetable to study and reviewed each lesson I learned at school when I arrived at home.* This indicated that the student needed to be strict and break his work into timeframes to be able to assimilate it. A comment by a past learner stated: *I planned in every subject always took breaks in between for me to strive to excellence.* This reflected the ability of learners to organise and manage their study time after school. Learners taking responsibility for their own learning means they direct their own effective learning processes (Jones *et al.*, 1995).

#### **6.3.4 Support structures**

Support for learners is a vital important aspect in ensuring learning experiences in any learning environment but especially in the context of a disadvantaged community. Learner support can be related closely to motivation and effective learning. Earwaker (1992: 11) contends that the purpose of support for learner's learning is to ensure that they derive maximum benefit from their course. Student support is needed to help students achieve learning goals and objectives successfully (Curley and Strage, 1996). The effectiveness of a school and the successful learning of learners are determined by the quality of support received by learners. The alumni's perceptions of support are categorized by the school, the principal and their parents.

### 6.3.4.1 School support

The school is situated in a disadvantaged community, but findings from teachers and the SMT as indicated in Chapter 5 reveal that conditions at school are conducive to effective learning. There are resources available to help learners achieve success. 12 of the 14 past learners stated that they received support from the school. The majority of past learners indicated that there were resources available at the school.

The school supported me by giving me the needed stationery and providing us with textbooks.

They [the school] gave us access to advance equipment such as computers and it was available after hours.

That the school is situated in a disadvantaged community implies that learners do not have access to resources at home. It is evident that the availability of resources at school contributed to the success of learners. Resources which students referred to were: computers, smart-board and data projectors, science and computer laboratories and a library. One learner indicated availability of internet services. It can be concluded that use of these resources enhanced the learners' pedagogical experience and contributed to learner success.

Respondents identified that extra classes provided by the school constituted support that they received. 57 % (8 of the 14) of respondents replied that extra classes assisted them in the learning process. One respondent indicated that the school arranged for 'private tutors' to help them with their studies. *The extra classes and after the consultation with teachers, the weekend classes helped us very much.* Learners indicated that school doors were always open to them for extra classes. This policy can be regarded as motivation for learners to do well: they know there are people willing to help them achieve success.

An interesting aspect raised by 3 of the 14 respondents was extramural exposure that the school provided them. Exposure denotes excursions that the learners were taken on. Excursions referred to included career day expos



and outings to the theatre to see plays. This is an interesting aspect as it contributes to developing learners' cultural capital and formulation of their habitus.

The school supported me by allowing extra classes and taking us to expos.

The school is situated in a disadvantaged community. There would be poverty present at the school. A salient feature of the school within the context of support would be to alleviate poverty within the community. The Education Department attempts to confront the issue of poverty by providing feeding schemes at schools. The case study school has a feeding scheme that helps learners. Respondents indicated that the school supported them through the feeding scheme. A respondent indicated that she recalled her mother helping at the school by making food for the feeding scheme.

Two respondents indicated that they did not receive support from the school. One respondent bluntly replied they didn't support him. The other respondent indicated: *there was not much support from the school only certain teachers and family close to me supported me*. These learners felt they achieved their success on their own. Another one indicated that there was support from teachers which could be associated with the school.

#### **6.3.4.2 Principal support**

Effective learning and teaching can take place when principals support strong learning communities. Hord and Hirsh (2009) report the role of principals is to lay the groundwork for professional learning communities. This can be achieved through reflecting a belief in the abilities of learners and teachers. Findings from past learners indicate that the principal plays a significant role in their success. The majority (12 of 14) of responses were positive with reference to the principal. The other two respondents did not answer the question. These two past learners might not have answered the question. They were not sure of the support provided by the principal or they might have been reprimanded by the principal at some time and did not wish to indicate whether they received support from him. Most of the responses concerning support from the principal could be related to motivation provided by the

principal. Lee *et al.* (2011: 4) asserts that student support is closely associated with student motivation and learning. Most of the responses provided related to the principal having motivated the learners through a general motivational comment. Among responses about the principal were:

The speeches that he always gave on Mondays...

Wise words and through tough love

Gave us a lecture about how important it is for us to be educated

Learners regard the motivational talks of the principal as support for them to achieve success. A prominent response was:

I remember a term when I failed; he called me in his office and told me it is not over until it is over. It was the June exams that I had failed.

Two respondents indicated that the principal supported them by providing transport to attend extra classes away from the school. Transport support provided by the principal can be regarded as care for students. Care he provided constitutes support for learners.

When I had a problem with my ID he took his time and tried to solve it by taking me with his car to Bellville

A past learner reported that the principal supported them by providing them with calculators, pens and bags which was in fact support provided by the school and not the principal. This could be seen as learners regarding the principal as the school: they saw the principal as the one making sure the school was effective.

The principal was always there for us making sure that we pass and that we all get good results.

#### **6.3.4.3 Parental support**

Ratelle *et al.*, (2005: 286) describe parental support as providing resources to their child in the form of spending time with the child and being interested in, and attentive to, the child, as well as providing emotional resources. Researchers agree that parent involvement benefits student learning and achievement (Soucy and Larose, 2000; Strage and Swanson-Brandt, 1999). Grolnick (2003) affirms that parent's support of their child's autonomy predicts self-regulation, competence and achievement at school.

Only one respondent failed to indicate whether or not she receive support from her parents. There could be various reasons for why she did not answer the question. The most common support received from parents was in the form of motivation to succeed.

My parents supported me fantastically and morally and they have always been the driving force and motivating me.

By motivating me to do better and always asking if I have homework and how I wrote when writing exams.

They were great! The money for school requirements they gave to me and there was a reduction in house chores during exam times. I was shouted at when my marks were low.

This is an indication that parents were interested in their children's academic performance in school. Acknowledgement of parental support by past learners is in accord with the findings of the closed-ended questionnaire of the grade 12 learners that there was parental support; however, it was in contradiction to the findings of the teachers and SMT as indicated in Chapter 5. Findings in Chapter 5 indicate that the only support that parents provided was in the form of discipline.

The support of motivation indicated by past learners can be grouped with emotional support according to the findings. 58% (8 of the 14) of respondents indicated emotional support from their parents. Responses included:

They supported me physically, financially and emotionally.

Motivated me by telling me how they were living in the past and they only wanted the best for me to achieve success.

The learners highlighted financial support received by their parents. 50% of past learner respondents were of the opinion that their parents always supported them financially. Financial support was in the form of school uniform purchases and payment of school fees. One respondent indicated that the financial support received included purchase of study guide material to help prepare for the examination. This was a clear indication that this learner's parents were concerned with the academic success of their child.

### 6.3.5 Conditions at home

Egunsola (2014: 52) concludes that the influence of the home environment has a significant impact on academic performance. The home environment made reference to parent's educational qualification, economic status/occupation and the location of the home. This study considered the lack of these aspects in achieving effectiveness of the school with good academic performance. In examining how far conditions at home affect learners' ability to achieve success, most respondents implied that it motivated them to achieve success. This motivation stemmed from learners not being marginalised by their lack of resources or being constrained by their conditions at home. Two respondents did not answer the question. Only one respondent indicated that conditions at home had no effect on her ability to achieve success. It could be implied that the respondent felt that, irrespective of the conditions, she would still have achieved success.

Three respondents highlighted conditions at home which are representative of a disadvantaged community.

Firstly, our home is not in a good condition. Some other nights I used to go sleep without food. I told myself I will finish school and get a job to tackle this issue.

We live in a poor community and have no electricity. We had to use candles at night.

I lost my mother at a younger age and I had to take care of my younger siblings as well.

Although these are difficult home conditions for learners, they have in many cases managed to rise above deprivation to achieve success at school. These poor conditions for learning can be generalised to other learners at the school. These are the conditions frequently associated with a disadvantaged community.

A respondent indicated that adverse conditions at home prompted them to strive for success. The ability to achieve success has a positive effect on the learner and the home because conditions could change if new opportunities arise.

The conditions propelled me to succeed and made me hungry for success.

I struggled a lot but in the end I managed because I'm not the kind of person who gives up because of the situation.

From the findings, it can be deduced that conditions at home influenced the learner's motivation to achieve success. These findings can be linked with symbolic capital which learners wanted to acquire such as the prestige of being successful and gaining what was not achieved by other family members.

My conditions motivated me to study hard and make my parents proud as there was no one that studied further.

It made me to dream and to achieve more than what my parents achieved.

The desire to achieve success can be interpreted as the learners' motivation to gain economic capital so that they may eventually break the poverty cycle that trapped them within a disadvantaged community.

### **6.3.6 Purposeful learning-the challenges and opportunities**

In understanding purposeful learning, Biggs and Moore (1993) explain that learners should be involved actively in the meta-cognitive processes of planning, monitoring and reflecting on their study material. Within these processes, learners experience both challenges and opportunities for purposeful learning to take place.

#### **6.3.6.1 The challenges**

All respondents indicated that they experienced challenges in pursuit of purposeful learning. Challenges referred to by respondents were specifically categorised between challenges at home or at school. 10 of the 14 respondents related challenges to the school.

The challenge of having to deal with gangsterism and crime at school.

Peer pressure – some of my friends that did not want to learn.

The strike of the teachers was a challenge.

These were some responses of past learners with regard to challenges at school. The issue of gangsterism was continuously highlighted by all respondents within this study: it clearly indicates that it is of concern to the community. A comment made by a parent in her interview was:

We have learners that are involved in gangsterism and I would regard that as a challenge for the school to address.

One respondent indicated that he does not give up due to the difficult circumstances. It is reflected in other learners as well as it contributes to the effectiveness of the school. It can be concluded that learners overcome their challenges in order to be successful. Challenges at home were associated with living conditions at home. Respondents indicated that there was not always electricity at home. This drove learners to study at school in the evening. A respondent indicated that the noise levels at home were an obstacle completing their schoolwork at home.

Sometimes my parents did not allow me to attend extra classes in afternoon with my classmates.

Parents can be accredited as protecting their children by not allowing them to return to school in the afternoon because of crime in the area. The distinction is that it was not that parents were not being supportive, but rather protective of their children.

#### **6.3.6.2 The opportunities**

Few respondents indicated that there were opportunities for purposeful learning. Only 3 respondents indicated opportunities existed. The first opportunity related to the number of subjects that learners were studying: it opened doors for further studies. This was associated with learners acquiring knowledge.

...the opportunity of having friends and being able to engage with other people (classmates).

The second opportunity is related to social relations amongst learners: how they build up networks. This in turn is associated with the acquisition of social capital. Networks were expanded in meaning when a respondent relayed that they were exposed to groups of people that visited them at school. This was expanded further by opportunities to study further from bursaries. This is in line with findings of the SMT: NGO's visit the school and assist in developing the learners.

### 6.3.7 Critical factors from alumni

Findings from alumni highlighted factors associated with them achieving success. It could be concluded that there is a relative balance in the influence from the school and the home. The significance of the school is the cross-field effect of the teachers and the principal. The critical factors of cross collaboration and communication, high expectations and supportive learning field are supported by the findings of the alumni. Findings indicate that alumni have increased their cultural capital at the school and were further exposed to a greater social network. The social network is seen as the learners' social capital expanded by NGOs and excursions which they participated in.

Table 6.6 provides a summary of the findings of alumni responses according to categories.

**Table 6.6 Summary of the open-ended questionnaire findings**

Category	Findings from the questionnaire
Perceptions of teachers	Teachers were regarded as approachable. Teachers were supportive and willing to help learners achieve success.
Motivation by teachers	Teachers motivated the learners. Motivation resulted in active learning. A strong sense of self-efficacy was created.
Strategies to succeed	Associated with motivation. The ability to organise and manage their study time. Learners taking responsibility for their own learning.
Support structures	<u>School support</u> : provision and availability of resources. School supported them through the feeding scheme. The learners were taken on excursions. <u>Principal support</u> : Motivated the learners through talks. Learners perceived the principal as the person who ensured that they received resources or transport to attend extra-classes. <u>Parental support</u> : The findings reflected that parents were interested in their children's development. The learners were motivated by their parents. Parents provided financial support where they could to the learners.
Conditions at home	The conditions influenced the learner's personal motivation to achieve success.
Purposeful learning	Two challenges to purposeful learning identified, namely: conditions at home and gangsterism. Opportunities were seen as the ability to study further and expand on social networks.

## **6.4 The role of parents in school effectiveness**

Mestry (2004) interprets parent involvement as the commitment of parents to the education of their children and the role they play in the management of schools. Data was collected from parents who served on the School Governing Body (SGB). Parents are active stakeholders in a school and play a vital role in a school becoming effective. In a systemic view, parents are part of the system through their agency and being part of the environment of the system. The purpose of interviewing parents is to determine whether they participate meaningfully in their child's education. The findings of the interviews with parents are arranged below in categories according to the constructs of the conceptual framework. The categories are:

- Home-school partnership;
- Impact of social concerns;
- Parental involvement;
- The challenges and opportunities according to the parents;
- School improvement; and
- Perceptions of good practice.

### **6.4.1 Home-school partnership**

Good home-school partnerships are vital in ensuring a school becoming effective. Mestry and Grobler (2007: 177) contend that partnerships in the educational situation are important in the interrelationship between schools, the community and the family. The South African Council for Educators' (Republic of South Africa, 2000) Code of Conduct states that teachers should recognise the parents as partners in education and that there should be harmonious relations with them. This implies that parents should be kept informed of the well-being and progress of learners. According to the National Education Policy Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996), community participation should be recognised as one of the guiding principles in education: all stakeholders should be involved in the education system. This involves active participation and effective partnership of all role players in the educational process: teachers, principals, parents, and learners (Donald *et al.*, 2002).



Findings drawn from interviews make it clear that parents are of the opinion that a home-school partnership exists. The majority of respondents stated that there is a 'good' home-school partnership; however there was an indication that it was 'not always' a good partnership.

The partnership is not always good between the school and the parents. Sometimes we don't get any letters or know what is happening at the school but we as parents don't always go to school when asked, because some are working or have other responsibilities.

Statements made by respondents are contradictory to other responses: they present certain parents' situations. 60% of respondents indicated that they go to the school if they need to find out something from the school or if called upon to visit the school. Responses were in support of the findings from teachers and the SMT that parents assist in enforcing the discipline at the school.

...I go to school when my child's teacher asks me to come and my child is being naughty. We [parent and teacher] work together in making sure my child stays in line.

Yes, there is a good partnership! The school reports to parents each term on the progress of the child and we have parent meetings every now and then.

It is clear, from the findings, that parents agree that the school reports on the progress of learners to parents. In the interviews, there was an indication that communication does take place through the form of letters from the school. It could be concluded that letters, if not received by parents, are not handed to parents. Parents make constructive suggestions to improve the school at parent-teacher meetings: such involvement indicates that they are involved in the school.

#### **6.4.2 Impact of social concerns**

Eitzen, Baca-Zinn and Eitzen-Smith (2009: 8) argue that conditions in society such as poverty, racism and sexism cause material or psychological suffering for parts of the population and such social conditions are detrimental in any situation. These social conditions prevent members of a society from

developing and using their full potential. Therefore in this study, social concerns are explained as being conditions that some people in the community view as undesirable and contributes negatively to the school becoming effective. In interviews with parents various social concerns were raised. Concerns raised included poverty, discipline, teenage pregnancy, unemployment, living conditions and crime/gangsterism. The majority of respondents indicated that poverty was a social concern which affected the school's effectiveness. One respondent made reference to the school being in a disadvantaged community that would naturally have many social issues influencing the education of learners.

We are living in a poor community where learners come to school on an empty stomach.

The issue of poverty is confronted by the school and Education Department through the provision of a feeding scheme. It was indicated by teachers in their interview that certain learners come to school especially for food provided by the feeding scheme. Parental support is visible in the feeding scheme: certain parents help at the school with preparation of meals for the feeding scheme.

I am one of the parents that come and help in the kitchen. We make food for the learners at the school and we make a proper meal for them. I don't always have money to pay all the school fees so I try and help the school where I can.

It is evident from the comment above that parents are interested in the well-being of learners and contributes to the school achieving its objectives of effective teaching and learning. Parents are aware that learners cannot be in class hungry and still be expected to be efficient in their school work.

Discipline was of concern to parents: to them it is essential to the learning that should be taking place.

The manners and behaviours of the children have an influence on how well the school appears to the outside world. Sometimes they are not very naughty but there are times that you see a lot of misbehaviour and conflict amongst the learners.

Discipline has been raised as a concern by most respondents throughout this study. Sound discipline of learners is a social concern which promotes

effective teaching and learning. Not all discipline refers to negative behaviour of learners; however negative discipline has a ripple effect within the community and the school. Lack of personal discipline could be a contributory factor to teenage pregnancy or anxiety for peer approval. Teenage pregnancy constricts the school's effectiveness: learners drop out of school, because they have to find work to support the child.

The issue of discipline is influenced through social factors such as unemployment and living conditions of the community. The issue goes deeper since unemployment relates to crime which can be linked with gangsterism. Table 6.7 below provides a selected and simplified overview of crime statistics reported for the Kraaifontein precinct in the Western Cape from 2009 to 2013 ([www.crimestatssa.com](http://www.crimestatssa.com), 2013).

**Table 6.7 Kraaifontein precinct crime statistics (2009 – 2013)**

<b>Crime</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
<b>Contact crimes</b>					
Murders	100	77	78	94	121
Total sexual crimes	203	251	275	231	201
Attempted murder	71	65	107	110	136
Common assault	455	591	684	673	801
Common robbery	190	192	258	311	281
<b>Contact related crimes</b>					
Malicious damage to property	414	490	374	441	410
<b>Crimes heavily dependent on police action</b>					
Illegal possession of firearms	95	71	52	93	112
Drug related crimes	1017	1222	1632	2020	2341
<b>Other serious crimes</b>					
Shoplifting	138	367	493	359	204
Public violence	17	5	44	6	9
Neglect and ill-treatment of children	12	28	21	16	15
Kidnapping	2	2	9	18	17

Gangsterism has become synonymous with low socio-economic societies. This factor influences discipline: learners begin to bring the behaviour of gangs into the classroom. In turn, these modes of behaviour influence effective teaching or learning. The unemployment factor raised by parents was substantiated by the fact that parents cannot always fulfil their financial

obligations to the school. Living conditions are associated with the size of the dwelling at home and the capacity it has to serve the function of learners being able to do school work at home.

The houses are small in which we live and it only has one bedroom. We living with six other family members in the house. There is no place in the house for [name of child] to do his homework.

The above comment can be linked with the findings of the principal and the SMT (Section 5.2.4.3) that the school creates opportunities for learners to complete their homework and studies at school after school hours. Hall (2013) describes overcrowding as living in dwellings when there is a ratio of more than two people per room excluding bathrooms but including kitchens and living rooms. The majority of dwellings in the disadvantaged community (case study school's community) have one bedroom, a kitchen, bathroom and a living room. There are often two or three families living together in these dwellings with an average of 4 family members. This indicates that learners live in overcrowded circumstances at home.

### **6.4.3 Parental involvement**

The parents' involvement in the education of learners can be regarded as a contributory factor to the effectiveness of a school and the overall academic achievement of learners. Lall, Campbell and Gillborn (2004) explain that parental involvement can be defined in different ways which could include parents coming to schools informally or formally such as meetings with the teacher. When parents were asked how they were involved in motivating and supporting learners and teachers, they all responded to motivation of the learners and certain support functions to the school.

I encourage my child and her friends to make sure that they finish school and become successful so that they may do better than where we as parents are. Some of us parents try and support functions or let's say activities at the school.

There is a clear indication that parents are contributing where they can to the schools' success. One respondent indicated that they do a lot to assist learners with their problems. This could be understood as parents being open and approachable to learners to raise concerns among learners. One

respondent reported that they, as parents, are called upon by the school to maintain discipline among their children at school. This is in support of the findings of the teachers and the SMT in Section 5.2.4.1.

The findings of parents with regard to involvement in academic development of learners proved interesting:

Me and my wife, take turns in making sure that homework is done ...and make sure that our children are at school and on time when school starts.

As parents we support the learners wherever possible, I can't help with the schoolwork because I don't know the work that they are doing and I never finished school.

These two responses reflect the support that parents provide. One indicated that parents were capable of supporting the child academically: the other parent was bluntly honest indicating that they did not understand the school work that learners had to complete. It can be deduced that, irrespective of the fact that parents cannot help academically, they still provide support in other areas such as discipline or encouraging them to succeed.

#### **6.4.4 The challenges and opportunities according to the parents**

In answering the question, what they regard as challenges and opportunities for the school, responses relating to challenges outweighed responses indicating opportunities. This is attributed to the field in which parents find themselves, a disadvantaged community. It is logical to identify problems before seeing any solutions.

##### **6.4.4.1 The challenges**

Serious obstacles to effective teaching, such as gangsterism and poverty, were examined under the challenges of the past learners in Section 6.3.6.1. New challenges identified by parents include unemployment which can be associated with parents' lack of money and the truancy issue among learners. The majority of respondents regarded unemployment as a fundamental weakness in the school and the community. It is seen as a danger for the

school because, as long as parents are unemployed, they are unable to meet their financial obligations to the school that is, paying the school fees.

It is challenging for us because we have high levels of poverty in the community and there isn't work so that maybe those levels of poverty can come down. ... it also impacts on the school because children go to school hungry but luckily there is a food at the school through the feeding scheme and parents can't even pay school fees because they not working.

From the responses, it is evident that parents are aware that there is a need for school fees to be paid. It is an indication that they are concerned about the school and want what is best for the school.

One respondent was concerned about the issue of truancy among learners.

...uhmm...the bunking of some of these children make me so cross because I see them walking around in the community...I then come to the school to inform [principal] and he goes to fetch them. In this way we try and address this challenge.

It can be observed that there is an attempt to overcome the problem. This attempt relates to the aspect of parental involvement. This reflects support provided by parents to deal with the issue of discipline.

#### **6.4.4.2 The opportunities**

Parents provided a different perspective on what they regarded as opportunities for the school. Responses with regard to opportunities provided by parents was categorised into three groups of opportunities. Opportunities identified were extra classes, partnerships and community upliftment. Three of the respondents referred to extra classes for learners as an opportunity for the school to achieve new heights. Extra classes could be seen as an opportunity for learners to better understand their work or consolidate knowledge gained in the classroom. Extra classes fell into the category of partnerships. A respondent indicated:

There are opportunities such as that which the school has with ASSET, a partnership; they helped the school with Saturday and holiday classes for the children.

A respondent, referring to the partnership with the NGO, confirmed findings indicated by the SMT: that NGO's assist with the development of learners and contribute to the school's overall effectiveness. Effectiveness of the school, as gauged by good results, attracts partnerships with NGOs or companies willing to invest in the school.

When the children are performing well in school, the school has an opportunity of winning prizes and competitions which can help with the upliftment of the community.

Parents understand that, the more the school becomes effective and is exposed to different environments, the greater impact beyond the school: the community gains benefits from it. When learners become successful, they can reproduce their capital in the community and change the socio-economic conditions of the community.

#### **6.4.5 School improvement**

Makoelle (2011) suggests that schools improve as they embrace the spirit of change: and change from the current to the future state depends on how well change is implemented at the school. As discussed in Section 6.4.3, it is imperative that there is parental involvement in developing a school. The perspective of parents in identifying areas for improvement enhances the process of school effectiveness. However, parents do not indicate what they are willing to do to help in improving the school. Respondents mentioned a few suggestions for improvement they would like to see implemented at the school. The majority of respondents made reference to the need to improve discipline at the school.

I want to see the code of conduct of the school being improved so that the discipline at the school can be improved.

It is recognised that the school has a Code of Conduct but it is not necessarily implemented effectively. It could be suggested that learners be aware of the

contents of the Code of Conduct in order for discipline to be improved at the school. A respondent reported that discipline can be improved when the school acquires more teachers. This relates to the aspect of class sizes: a high number of learners in a class often reflect issues of discipline. The respondent could have been implying that smaller classes would result in more efficient discipline management at the school. It can be deduced that parents are not aware of the teacher-to-learner ratio which is currently at 1:38.

Another aspect that a respondent indicated that needed improvement was wearing school uniform. Ideally, the school would prefer all learners to wear the uniform yet teachers and the SMT are aware that they serve a disadvantaged community. Parents are not always able to afford to buy a school uniform. It was indicated in the responses from the SMT that certain teachers contribute to purchasing school uniforms for learners (Section 5.2.4.2). Discipline is improved through learners wearing a standard uniform. Learners' wearing different clothes undermines discipline.

A respondent reported that there was a need for an improvement of security at the school.

The school needs more security to protect the learners and keep the gangsters out of the school.

Braun (2008:1) reported that school violence is a problem in South Africa. The phenomenon exists world-wide, but gang violence, weapons in school, sexual violence, assault, theft, robbery and vandalism are part of the daily reality for learners and teachers in South Africa (Braun, 2008). Improved security at the school results in a safe and secure environment for learners and teachers. This relates to a comment from one teacher who indicated they do not feel safe with gangsters in the classroom. Improved security protects investments made to the school for equipment: companies would feel that their investments are looked after and would be more likely to enter into partnerships. In an attempt to improve safety at schools, the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) has established a Safe Schools call centre to process reports on violence, abuse, alcohol and drug abuse, vandalism and/or complaints regarding corruption in schools (Western Cape Government, 2013).



#### 6.4.6 Perceptions of good practice in schools

Arendale (2013) interprets and defines good education practice as the wide range of individual activities, policies and approaches to achieve positive changes in student attitudes and academic behaviours. In the interviews, parents were asked what they perceived as good practice in a school. The question was clarified by asking what they regard as functional aspects of the school.

A good practice would be learners and teachers that are present at school and in class on time and where there is learning and teaching taking place. I see that happening here most of the time and it impresses me.

The comment raised by the respondent is a clear indication that punctuality was an important practice in order for a school to be effective. This was supported by three other respondents who indicated attendance and punctuality were important aspects. The aspects of attendance and punctuality have no value if no actual teaching and learning is taking place. Ineffective schools have teacher and learners at school but no learning or teaching takes place which makes the school ineffective. Respondents' perceptions are based on what they see that works in the former model-C schools that serve middle-class children in advantaged communities.

...in those white schools the learners are at school and the teachers are doing good teaching, this makes the school get good results.

It can be observed that perceptions of former model-C schools are what parents in a disadvantaged community hold as the bench-mark for effective schools.

From the findings, it was deduced that respondents identified communication as a defining practice in creating an effective school. Communication would have reference to communication relations between school and parents, teachers and parents as well as teachers and learners. Through effective communication, various stakeholders are informed in the process of creating effectiveness and what is required from each stakeholder. Two respondents stated that they perceived respect as a good practice in a school. A respondent further indicated that respect should be shown from the side of the

learners and from the teachers. This can be directly linked with the response which stated that discipline is a good practice. When there is respect between teachers and learners, the discipline would follow due to the respect held for each other.

#### 6.4.7 Critical factors from the parents

The critical factor from parents is the visible and existent partnership between parents and school. The partnership between school and parents contributes significantly to learners achieving success. The partnership translates to the cross collaboration and communication among stakeholders. Findings indicate that parents involved with their children's schoolwork encourage them to work harder. Findings can be associated with two theoretical constructs. First, parents influence the environment and inputs within the context of the systems approach. Second, parents contribute to the school's habitus of being effective and expanding the cultural capital of the learners. Table 6.8 provides a summary of the findings of parents according to categories.

**Table 6.8 – Summary of the findings of the parents' interviews**

Category	Responses from the parents
Home – school partnership	There is a good home-school partnership. Communication between the parents and the school contribute to the partnership. Feedback is received from the school in terms of the progress of the learners.
Impact of social concerns	Poverty is the greatest concern. Poverty is addressed by the school and Education department. The issue of discipline is addressed by the school with the help of the parents. Discipline is further influenced through unemployment and living conditions.
Parental involvement	Parents address the discipline of their children at school. Parents motivate learners. Support the school in ensuring attendance of learners.
Challenges and opportunities according to the parents	Challenges included: gangsterism, poverty, unemployment and discipline. Opportunities identified: community upliftment, extra classes for the learners and partnerships.
School improvement	The need for more teachers. Discipline which included the school uniform. Improved environment which is safer.
Perceptions of good practice	Punctuality of learners and teachers. Communication and respect was identified as good practice at a school.

## **6.5 Summary**

Chapter six presents the findings from the Grade 12 learners' questionnaires, past learners' open-ended questionnaire and interviews with the parents. Findings in this chapter are organised according to categories of questions listed on questionnaires and the interview schedule. The findings of the Grade 12 learners' questionnaire indicate that teachers and the principal have the greatest influence on learners' social development. It was suggested that cross-field effect enabled learners to want to achieve success. Findings from past learners corroborate findings of Grade 12 learners with regard to the cross-field effect in achieving success. It was determined that there was balance in the support received from school and home. The most prominent finding from parents' interviews was that there was a good home-school partnership. Parents supported the school where they could and especially in dealing with discipline. Findings presented were further linked to constructs of the conceptual framework to show alignment of data with the conceptual framework.

Chapter Seven concludes this study through synthesizing findings, providing recommendations and making suggestions for further research to reverse ineffectiveness of schools in disadvantaged communities.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7.1 Overview of the study

This study aims to understand what makes a school effective within a disadvantaged community. The study further aimed to develop a substantive theory from within a disadvantaged community to identify and formally characterise school effectiveness. School effectiveness is the level at which schools achieve their objectives in comparison to other schools that are equal in terms of the school's social context. This study focuses on determining the effect of social conditions on the effectiveness of the school. This chapter concludes the study through an overview of the study, synthesizing findings, providing recommendations and suggestions for future research.

With the focus on enabling schools to improve their level of academic achievement and quality of matriculation passes, it was necessary to take a systemic approach to investigating an effective school confronting adverse conditions. This was the primary stimulus for undertaking this study. The interest in understanding what makes a school effective in a disadvantaged community required investigating the critical elements of effectiveness. In order to understand the factors and determine an appropriate approach to investigate them, two theoretical approaches were used to construct a conceptual framework as the basis of the study. The two approaches applied in this study are:

- General systems theory (von Bertalanffy, 1950); and
- Theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1977).

These two approaches offered the opportunity to study and understand the critical factors that contribute to school effectiveness in a disadvantaged community. The approach of general systems theory (von Bertalanffy, 1950) formed the basis to apply a social systems theory (Bausch, 2001) approach to this study. Systemic thinking approach allowed a holistic perception of the effectiveness of the school. Schools are seen as a system consisting of

various parts: the different parts are what make a school function, either effectively or ineffectively. The different parts of the system were selected as the sample in the data collection process in order not to have a marginalised group from the system.

System thinking is a framework for examining the interrelationships of elements: it was important to highlight the interrelationships that existed between social beings. With the examination of social beings, it was necessary to draw on Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice: it provided the analytical concepts to connect empirical research with theoretical considerations of social relations. Constructs used from Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice include: practice, habitus, various capitals and field. The conceptual model reflected in Chapter 2 (see Figure 2.2) represented interrelationships of the different theoretical constructs in the practice of school effectiveness. The conceptual model informed the data collection process. The constructs assisted in analysing data. Systems theory and theory of practice each offer different conceptual lenses to view school effectiveness. Significantly, this study combines these lenses to view school effectiveness in the context of a disadvantaged community.

The research design of this study used a qualitative approach. Qualitative methods were used to collect data from the school management team, teachers and parents. The data collection process made use of interview schedules for the one-on-one semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. The survey method was used to collect data from learners and alumni. The learners completed a closed-ended ordinal-rated questionnaire and alumni completed an open-ended questionnaire.

The study made use of a deductive approach for data analysis. The literature review assisted in creating categories within which to arrange data. The six key categories were: a clear and shared focus; high standards and expectations for all; effective leadership and monitoring; collaboration, partnerships and communication; effective teaching and development; and supportive learning environment. As part of the deductive approach, constructs of the conceptual framework were used as analytical tools to better understand school effectiveness in a disadvantaged community. Data

collection and analysis assisted in addressing the research questions. The research questions guiding this study were:

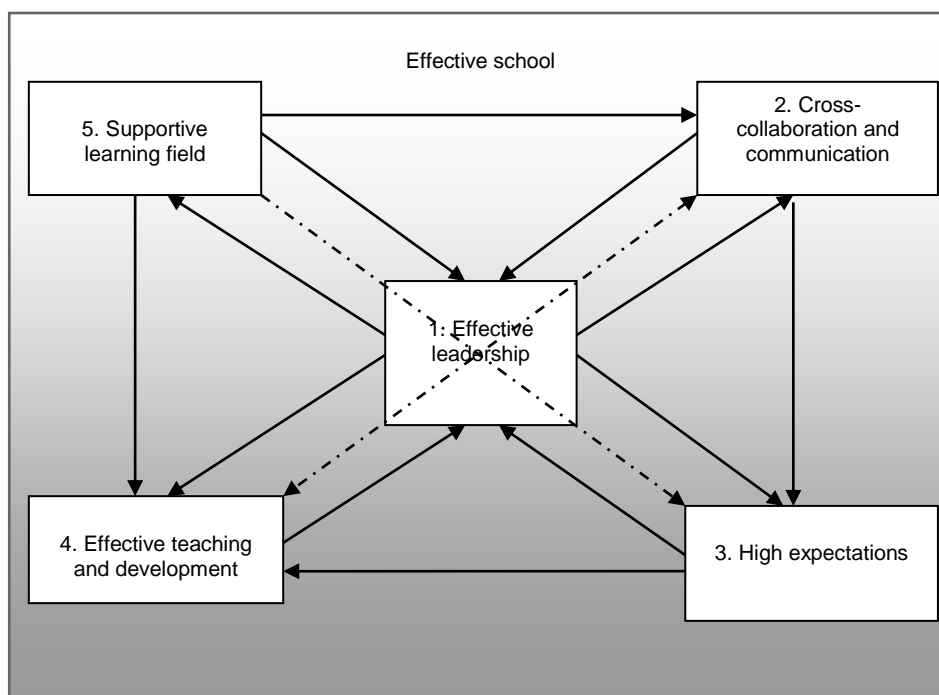
- What are the critical factors contributing to school effectiveness using matriculation results as a yardstick, in a disadvantaged community?
- To what extent do cross-field factors contribute to the effectiveness of a school in disadvantaged communities?

## **7.2 Conclusions**

The study has established conclusions concerning school effectiveness in a disadvantaged community. Conclusions were drawn from the critical factors derived from the findings in Chapters 5 and 6. Recommendations for correcting ineffectiveness in disadvantaged communities are based on conclusions drawn.

### **7.2.1 Critical factors contributing to school effectiveness**

Critical factors that contributed to the effectiveness of the school in a disadvantaged community were identified through answering the first research question. The question posed was: 'What are the critical factors contributing to school effectiveness using matriculation results as a yardstick, in a disadvantaged community?' The factors have been deduced from the key findings presented in Chapters five and six. In Chapters five and six, various factors were identified that contributed to the school's effectiveness: constructs of the conceptual framework assisted in analysing the findings. The literature review in Chapter three discussed the characteristics of effective schools. The study identified five critical factors that contribute to the effectiveness of a school in a disadvantaged community. Figure 7.1 below represents the five factors for school effectiveness in a disadvantaged community.



**Figure 7.1 – A diagrammatic illustration of theoretical concepts for school effectiveness in a disadvantaged community**

The diagram illustrates the interrelatedness of the factors in contributing to school effectiveness. These five factors assist in developing a substantive theory on school effectiveness in a disadvantaged community. From the study it was concluded that effective leadership is the most critical factor contributing to effectiveness of the school in a disadvantaged community. It is further noted that all the factors are influenced by each other. Concluding remarks on each critical factor will now be presented.

### **7.2.1.1 Effective leadership**

Mahembe and Engelbrecht (2014) emphasised in their study that leadership behaviours promoted positive behaviours and outcomes for schools, indicating that schools became effective through positive leadership behaviours. Findings from teachers, learners, alumni and parents corroborate the findings of the SMT in terms of strong leadership at school. This study has established that effective leadership is the single most significant factor that contributes to school effectiveness in a disadvantaged community. There are various aspects of leadership that make it effective. Shared vision within leadership

affects the other factors contributing to effectiveness. When there is a belief in a set of ideas by different stakeholders, communication takes place which results in the other factors contributing to the effectiveness.

Hoadley, Christie and Ward (2009) assert that effective leadership has the capacity to inspire and lead improvement efforts at school. It can be concluded that effective leadership is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the school functions optimally: this includes various aspects. Examples of these aspects found in the study are reflected in Table 7.1 below.

**Table 7.1 – Aspects of leadership in effective schools**

Aspect	Leadership features
Finance management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The purchase of resources and textbooks.</li> <li>• Ensuring that funds are available to cover basic expenses.</li> <li>• The sourcing of funding from external donors.</li> <li>• Available funds for professional development.</li> <li>• Ensuring that the schools learning environment is conducive for effective teaching and learning.</li> </ul>
Time management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is optimal time on task.</li> <li>• Contact time is used for teaching.</li> <li>• Deadlines are met by all teachers and staff.</li> <li>• Ensuring the punctuality of learners and teachers.</li> </ul>
Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholders are held accountable in their roles at the school.</li> <li>• Feedback is provided on all monitoring.</li> </ul>
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership contributed to the motivation of learners and staff.</li> <li>• The principal was a key role player in motivating learners.</li> </ul>
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support was highlighted by all respondents.</li> <li>• Leadership was approachable to address issues or support teachers and learners.</li> </ul>

The study concludes that the scope of leadership is beyond the notion that it is only the SMT that contributes to its effectiveness. The study has found that teachers play a decisive role in contributing to effective leadership. This includes their role in the effective management of their classrooms. The further



contribution by teachers to effective leadership is their role in collaborating and communicating with different stakeholders of the school. Williams (2011: 197) supports the notion by suggesting that distributed leadership within schools can be realised if the combined knowledge, expertise and experience of the different stakeholders are harnessed in a collaborative approach.

### **7.2.1.2 Cross-collaboration and communication**

Wentz (1998: 113) concluded that an understanding of the importance of communication is significant to the effectiveness of educational institutions. This implies that the different stakeholders in the school need to be conscious of messages they convey non-verbally and in their tone or actions is as important as the words spoken (Wentz, 1998). It is closely associated with collaboration as Rutgers (2009) states: collaboration takes time to build trust, understand responsibilities and should be based on respect. Respect is demonstrated by ensuring that everyone has the same information and incorporates different viewpoints. In this study, it was determined that cross-collaboration and communication played an important role in contributing to the effectiveness of the school. Cross-collaboration is regarded as the working together of the different stakeholders across the school. The study found that collaboration included the involvement of service providers and NGOs in the staff development programmes of teachers. It was determined that the support and involvement of parents in ensuring discipline was regarded as collaboration between parents and the school.

Communication was found to be an important aspect within school effectiveness. The study discovered that communication amongst learners contributed to a certain extent to their motivation and success. Regular feedback to teachers after monitoring and issuing of progress reports were regarded as communication between different stakeholders as well. It was evident from findings that communication was related to the approachability of teachers and the SMT.

### **7.2.1.3 High expectations**

The process of learning involves the ability to relate previous knowledge to the new information being provided. High expectations are closely associated with effective teaching which is developed through collaborative, evidence-based, whole-school professional development (Bishop, Berryman, Powell and Teddy, 2007). The study has further determined that high expectations increase belief in success.

This study has found that all stakeholders promoted the idea of high expectations for the learners. The promotion of high expectations was reflected in the support provided by parents, teachers and the SMT. It was further reflected in a positive learning environment as indicated in the discussion in Section 7.2.1.5. It was found that learners and teachers agreed that, through the high expectations created, success would be achieved overcoming poverty; learners break the cycle of poverty. Motivation and peer influence among learners were directly associated with strategies to succeed and categorised as high expectations created for learners.

### **7.2.1.4 Effective teaching and development**

Ko, Sammons and Bakkum (2013) report that teachers are one of the key elements in any school and effective teaching is one of the key propellers for improvement of schools. Effective teaching is correlated with learner achievement which is supported by teacher behaviours and classroom processes. For effective teaching to be achieved, it is of utmost importance that there is good content or subject knowledge. It is concluded from the study that in the case study school, effective teaching takes place. The study has found that the leadership of the school ensures that teachers are equipped to be effective teachers. Collaboration with external agents such as NGOs assists in providing professional development for teachers. A key purpose of staff development is to improve teaching ability of teachers. The findings

indicate that the focus of development programmes should be the content knowledge of the subjects at the school.

Another aspect found within the theme of effective teaching is the importance of planning and preparation by the teachers. Teachers in the study have indicated that the available resources at the school played a role in contributing to the effectiveness of the school. The study found that collegiality and support amongst teachers and the SMT contributed to effective teaching as it contributed to maintaining discipline as well. Staff development kept teachers motivated and exposed them to new ideas from other teachers at other schools. Effective teaching was found to be influenced by a supportive learning field which included the learners, teachers and SMT in a supportive role within the school.

#### **7.2.1.5 Supportive learning field**

Akey (2006:5) explained that a supportive learning field is one that would promote a sense of belonging by individualising teaching and learning, and creating a caring social environment in which adults are interested in the lives of the learners. The study has found that the school is a supportive learning field in which all are considerate of the diverse cultures within the school as it was reported by the SMT and teachers. The aspect of safety and security is important in ensuring a supportive learning field. However, the study has found that there is a concern in terms of safety and security. Teachers, parents and learners reported that safety needs to be dealt with at the school. Burton and Leoschut's (2013: xii) study supports this argument and reports that violent acts have fuelled public opinion that school violence in South Africa is escalating at an alarming rate. Statistically, 22.2% of high school learners have been threatened with violence or been the victim of an assault, robbery and/ or sexual assault at school in 2012 (Burton and Leoschut, 2013). The findings of this study indicate that the high crime rate in the area undermines safety and security at the school.

The study has found that the supportive learning field of the school had other attributes that contributed to the effectiveness of the school. This included the

sound partnership between parents and school in maintaining a disciplined learning field which assisted in classroom management. Punctuality and contact time with learners in the classroom contributed to the learning field. The supportive learning field influenced teacher motivation and promoted teacher efficacy. It was further determined that it had greater impact on learners and their ability to achieve success.

### **7.2.2 Impact of cross-field factors**

In answering the second research question, the construct of field from the conceptual framework was considered. The question posed was: To what extent do cross-field factors contribute to the effectiveness of a school in a disadvantaged community? In the study, I primarily investigated the factors that contributed to school effectiveness in a disadvantaged community. The disadvantaged community and the school are associated with the construct of field. Navarro (2006) explained field as being a structured network. This study used the structured network to determine the influence of the relations between the different agents in the network.

The study has found that teachers and the principal have the greatest influence on the success of the learners. This was determined through the motivation of encouraging learners to overcome their circumstances and achieve greater heights. In the study, teachers made reference to coming from similar conditions and have managed to become successful. Teachers and the principal enter the field of the disadvantaged community from a different socio-economic context. The influence that they have on learners is referred to as cross-field factors. Findings were analysed with the analytical concepts of habitus and capital in Chapter six. The learners' habitus was positively influenced in changing their perspective on their ability to achieve success. The study concludes that cross-field factors have a major influence on schools becoming effective in disadvantaged communities.

### **7.3 Recommendations**

The findings have implications for those involved with schools and policy makers. In the study, I investigated the factors that contributed to school effectiveness and the effect of cross-field factors on effectiveness in a disadvantaged community. Recommendations are made to improve the practice of making schools effective in disadvantaged communities. The recommendations made are based on the findings of the study. The following sections outline the suggestions made.

#### **7.3.1 Pertaining to effective leadership**

In overcoming ineffectiveness in disadvantaged communities, strong leadership influences learner achievement. The effect of leadership is most notable in schools in a disadvantaged community. This study has found that effective leadership in the school contributed significantly to the school being effective; therefore, school managers should be focussed on becoming instructional leaders as well. School leaders should be part of professional development and familiarise themselves with the curriculum of each subject being taught. It is further suggested that effective leaders advance the skill of developing and nurturing teachers and staff at the school in pursuit of maintaining effective teaching. The study recommends that leadership should look at ways of retaining good teachers at the school for continuity and the protection of their economic and time investments in these teachers.

Weaker leadership at schools is caused by the lack of preparation to become a school principal. Teacher qualification and teaching experience are the only requirements for becoming a school principal in South Africa and in many countries (Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi, 2011: 31). The Western Cape Education Department should review their capacity-building programmes for principals. There is a need to develop high-quality principal preparation programmes that specifically focus on disadvantaged communities. This is supported by the notion that there is a growing realisation that headship of schools is a specialist occupation that requires specific preparation (Bush, 2010). The Department of Education piloted an Advanced Certificate in

Education: School Leadership (ACE) course in six provinces in 2007-2009. It was part of a strategy to introduce a new threshold qualification for aspiring principals with a wider aim to improve educational standards (Bush *et al.*, 2011). Bush *et al.*, (2011: 38) reviewed the impact of the ACE programme on leadership practice and concluded that it has not led to short-term gains in matriculation results at the case study schools. The idea of a generic one-size fits all development programme does not meet the needs of disadvantaged communities and schools.

### **7.3.2 Pertaining to collaboration and communication**

All the stakeholders (the SMT, teachers, learners and parents) contributed to the effectiveness of the school. In overcoming ineffectiveness, the SMT and teachers can be held accountable through the Integrated Quality Management System and learners through their academic achievement. The study suggests that parents in disadvantaged communities should be held accountable in their parenting role. An investigation into developing a matrix for the measurement of parental accountability should be considered.

Collaboration entails involvement and partnerships formed between different stakeholders in the school. The study recommends that the collaboration network be expanded in disadvantaged communities to include Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The findings of the study have reported that parents have low literacy levels in the community. To truly reflect an effective school in addressing social issues of the community: the school can initiate literacy development programmes for parents with the help of HEIs.

### **7.3.3 Pertaining to high expectations**

There are schools that are performing well against the odds and this suggests that schools in similar conditions could achieve the same. Chickering and Ehrmann (1996: 5) assert that when you expect more, you will get more; therefore, high expectations are important for everyone. This study recommends that learner beliefs in achieving success should be nurtured from

Grades eight and nine at the school. Findings from the study suggest setting high standards and expectations for learners in Grade 8 and 9. Setting high standards for each of the grade levels requires schools to ensure that there is consistency in the curriculum and alignment with the requirements from the education department. As mentioned in Section 7.3.1, leadership should advance the development of teachers, nurturing professional development and this will result in creating high expectations for teachers and learners.

#### **7.3.4 Pertaining to effective teaching**

Motivation to learn is changeable: it can be positively or negatively affected by the work, the environment, the teacher or the learner (Angelo, 1993). This statement is indicative of factors that can influence effective teaching. Findings in the study show that class sizes have an influence on effective teaching. Various research studies have indicated that smaller classes improve academic results (Zyngier, 2014). It is suggested that class sizes of schools in disadvantaged communities be re-evaluated. However, disadvantaged schools tend to have classes larger than the ratio set by the Education Department; for example, in the case study school class ratios vary between 1: 38 and 1: 55 as indicated in the findings.

Teachers are held accountable through the IQMS to ensure effective teaching. The study recommends that teachers should take responsibility for the learning and social well-being of learners at their school. This, however, can be achieved if the previous recommendation on setting high standards for all learners and teachers is seriously considered. It is the responsibility of the School Governing Body (SGB) and the SMT to ensure that teacher recruitment takes place on the basis of merit to ensure teachers are suitably qualified for a position in poor schools where the demands exceed those of the more affluent schools.

#### **7.3.5 Pertaining to supportive learning field**

This study has established that the learning field in a disadvantaged community is of concern to many stakeholders. It is the responsibility of the

leadership of the school and the Education Department to ensure that the learning field or school in general is safe, supportive and conducive to learning and teaching. The study recommends that this should be a priority for SMTs. Schools should develop plans to ensure community involvement in addressing safety issues. This would promote optimum conditions for effective teaching and learning. It is further recommended that schools develop a study skills programme for curriculum across all grades in a school to ensure that the throughput rates of grades are reflective of the school's effectiveness.

### **7.3.6 Pertaining to motivation of teachers**

In order for schools in disadvantaged communities to overcome ineffectiveness, there should be an emphasis on motivation of teachers. Teachers and SMTs are expected to create active learning environments in which learners are introduced to conditions outside the immediate community. It is recommended that this should be affected through appropriate and meaningful connections between the learners' knowledge and different fields outside the disadvantaged community. The study recommends that schools create opportunities for transition of learners from one field to the next by expanding social networks outside the school.

## **7.4 Future research**

The review of related literature in Chapter 3 indicated abundance of school effectiveness research; for example: Teddlie and Stringfield (2007), Reynolds *et al.* (2011), Townsend (2007) and Scheerens (2004). However, there is a need for various approaches to study school effectiveness in order to fully understand school effectiveness, particularly in disadvantaged communities. In Section 7.3 above, I made recommendations to address ineffectiveness of schools in disadvantaged communities as well as suggestions to improve effectiveness.

I had undertaken a singular case study investigation on the factors contributing to school effectiveness in a disadvantaged community. Based on



the findings and recommendations of this study, I propose four suggestions for future research to be investigated and discussed:

- I. To be able to generalise the findings on the factors that contribute to school effectiveness, I would suggest a comparative study of effective schools in similar disadvantaged communities. The investigation would be to determine whether the same factors contribute to school effectiveness considering the similar contexts of the schools.
- II. An aspect of concern is to determine the extent to which schools remain effective in disadvantaged communities over a period of time. I would therefore suggest a longitudinal study which would consider the retention rate of learners in the school over the period.
- III. The post-apartheid education system has presented more equal opportunities for education in South Africa (Harber and Mncube, 2011). Equal opportunities do not reflect equal challenges and therefore support provided to schools needs to be investigated. I suggest an exploration of the equality and quality of the support provided by the education department to schools in a disadvantaged community in order to promote school effectiveness.
- IV. School effectiveness focuses on achieving the objectives of the school. This study investigated the factors that contributed to its effectiveness. However, there is a need to determine whether school effectiveness adds value to the achievement of learners. I suggest that a tracer study be made to measure the extent of school effectiveness beyond school and how it confronts poverty in disadvantaged communities.

If these future research concerns are considered, I believe we would have a more holistic view of school effectiveness in disadvantaged communities.

## **7.5 Chapter summary**

The preceding interpretations of the general effectiveness of the case study school have provided a new lens for investigating school effectiveness in

disadvantaged communities. This study has highlighted the need for more attention on the ineffective schools in disadvantaged communities.

This chapter has provided an overview of the study, summarising the research approach. The overview highlighted the conceptual constructs used as analytical tools in the study. These constructs were derived from von Bertalanffy's (1950) general systems theory and Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice.

The chapter has drawn conclusions by synthesising the findings presented in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 to answer the research questions of the study. The study has identified five critical factors that contribute to school effectiveness in a disadvantaged community. These five factors have been represented in a conceptual model to reflect school effectiveness in a disadvantaged community (see Figure 7.1).

In consideration of the conclusions of the findings, the study has made recommendations to address ineffectiveness of schools in disadvantaged communities as well as to improve schools in these communities. Finally, the study made suggestions for future research which would provide holistic perspectives on school effectiveness research in disadvantaged communities.

Applying the findings and recommendations from this case study would indicate a new trend for schools in disadvantaged communities.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix I: Semi-structured interview schedule – Principal

1. Tell me about yourself. Experience, qualifications, etc.
2. What staff development programmes were organised over the past three to five years?
  - a. How do you gauge if the staff development programmes were successful?
3. It is required that the SMT play an instrumental role in shaping the organisational structure of the school. How do you develop policies and implement them.
4. What are the most effective practices for teaching in a school in a disadvantaged community?
5. What influence does your background have on the school/learners?
6. Can you tell me about the challenges and opportunities for the school?
7. What 'good practices' are you aware of in other school environments that you would like to be implemented in your school?
8. What is your opinion on parental support at the school?

## Appendix II: Semi-structured interview schedule – Deputy-principal

1. What staff development programmes were organised over the past three to five years?
  - a. How do you gauge if the staff development programmes were successful?
2. What strategies do you use to keep the teachers/HoDs motivated?
3. It is required that the SMT play an instrumental role in shaping the organisational structure of the school. How do you develop policies and implement them.
4. What influence does your personal or social background have on the school/learners?
5. What do you regard as the challenges and/or opportunities for the school? (Expand on how you deal with them).
6. What is your opinion on parental support at the school?
7. What social problems do you feel influence teaching and learning in this school?
8. What 'good practices' are you aware of in other school environments that you would like to be implemented in your school?

### Appendix III: Semi-structured interview schedule – SGB

1. As a parent, what are your ideas on what is good practice (things that work) in a school?
2. In your opinion, is there a good home-school partnership between the school and you?
3. What do you regard as the challenges and/or opportunities for the school?
4. What kind of improvements would you like to be seen implemented at the school?
5. In your opinion, what social issues impact on the effectiveness of the school?
6. How are parents involved in the support and motivation of the learners and teachers?

#### Appendix IV: Focus group interview schedule – HoDs

1. What staff development programmes were organised over the past three to five years that you are aware of since you have been a HoD at this school?
2. What strategies do you use to keep the teachers motivated?
3. It is required that the SMT play an instrumental role in shaping the organisational structure of the school. How do you, as HoD develop policies and implement them within your departments?
4. What influence does your personal or social background have on the school/learners?
5. What do you regard as the challenges and/or opportunities for the school? (Expand on how you deal with them).
6. What is your opinion on parental support for you as teachers at the school?
7. What 'good practices' are you aware of in other school environments that you would like to be implemented in your school?

## Appendix V: Focus group interview schedule – Teachers

1. What keeps you motivated as a teacher to promote purposeful teaching?
2. In your opinion, what are features of an effective teaching and learning environment?
3. What teaching and learning support material is provided and does it make your task easier?
4. What type of support is provided from the SMT?
5. What type of support is provided from the parents or the community?
6. What do you regard as the challenges and/or opportunities for you as a teacher and for the school? (Expand on how you deal with them).
7. What social problems do you feel influence teaching and learning in this school?
8. What influence does your personal or social background have on the school/learners?

## Appendix VI: Closed-ended questionnaire to the Grade 12 learners

### Questionnaire

Dear Learner

I am a Doctoral student at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. I am undertaking a research project for my studies. The research is about effective schools in disadvantaged communities in Cape Town. I will greatly appreciate your assistance by completing all the questions below. The results of the research project will possibly help improve other schools that are in similar circumstances as you.

Thank you.  
Conrad Potberg

Please mark X in the relevant box:

#### A. Demographical Data

1. Gender:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>	Male	<input type="checkbox"/>							
2. Language spoken at home	<input type="checkbox"/>	English	<input type="checkbox"/>	Afrikaans	<input type="checkbox"/>	Xhosa	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sotho	<input type="checkbox"/>	Zulu	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other
3. Number of years at Masibambane High school	<input type="checkbox"/>	Less than 3 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	4 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	5 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	6 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	7 or more years		

Indicate your level of agreement or satisfaction with the following statements:

4. There are sufficient opportunities for successful learning at Masibambane High	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree
5. Your teachers are open and accommodative to learner opinions	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree
6. The teachers are aware and sensitive to cultural differences	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree
7. Learners at my school influence each other to succeed in schooling	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree
8. You are motivated and capable of achieving success	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree
9. How would you rate your overall satisfaction with your learning experiences at Masibambane High	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very satisfied

10.	The school is conducive to a disciplined learning environment	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
11.	There is strong support provided by the school for learners	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
12.	The school provides a safe and secure environment for learners	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
13.	Parents are involved in your performance in school and encourages you to succeed	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
14.	Level of satisfaction of the physical appearance of school, classrooms, lab facilities, library, etc.	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
15.	Technological resources are always available for learners	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
16.	There is effective communication with and from the Learner Representative Council (LRC) in respect of school leadership issues	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
17.	The principal encourages and motivates learners to achieve success	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
18.	You benefit from the support provided by non-governmental organisations.	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree

## Appendix VII: Open-ended questionnaire to the past learners

Research topic: Factors contributing to school effectiveness in a disadvantaged community in the Western Cape: A case study

### **Open-ended questionnaire for past learners**

Kindly answer the following questions with as much detail as possible. Your contribution will be highly appreciated. Thank you, Conrad Potberg (CPUT).

1. How would you describe your teachers at the school you were?

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2. How did your teachers motivate you?

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3. What was your strategy to succeed?

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4. How did the school support you?

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5. How did the principal support you?

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6. How did your parents support you?

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7. What effect did your conditions at home have on your ability to succeed?

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8. What were the challenges and opportunities for purposeful learning while you were at school?

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9. What more could the school/teachers have done to assist those who were not as successful as you?

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10. Did the school have resources that assisted you in the learning process? Give examples.

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Thank you very much for your participation and completion of the questionnaire.

Kindly circle the appropriate:

Gender: Male / Female

Your race: Black / Coloured / White / Indian

### CONSENT FORM

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (Full Name and Surname) agree to participate voluntarily in the research project of Mr Conrad Potberg.

I am aware of the following that will take place:

- I will be interviewed at a venue of my choice (approximately one hour);
- Being audio-recorded for data collection purposes and
- I will receive the transcripts to peruse before it is analysed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix IX: WCED permission to conduct research in public school

Audrey.wyngaard2@pgwc.gov.za  
tel: +27 021 476 9272  
Fax: 0865902282  
Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000  
wced.wcape.gov.za

**REFERENCE:** 20110628-0112

**ENQUIRIES:** Dr A T Wyngaard

Mr Conrad Potberg  
PO Box 17143  
Ravensmead  
7504

**Dear Mr Conrad Potberg**

### **RESEARCH PROPOSAL: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS IN DIFFICULT SOCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: A CASE STUDY**

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Approval for projects should be confirmed by the District Director of the schools where the project will be conducted.
5. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
6. The Study is to be conducted from **01 March 2012 till 30 September 2012**
7. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
9. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
10. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
11. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
12. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

**The Director: Research Services**  
**Western Cape Education Department**  
**Private Bag X9114**  
**CAPE TOWN**  
**8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Audrey T Wyngaard

for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**

**DATE: 03 February 2012**

## Appendix X: CPUT ethical approval

### Department Name: Research Ethical Clearance Compliance Form

All postgraduate students and researchers are required to complete this form before commencing with research or submitting applications to the **University Research Fund (URF)**. All URF applicants are requested to please submit this form together with all the relevant URF application forms to their Faculty Research Committee (FRC) for approval.  
(Where applicable mark relevant boxes with an X)

Project Title: <b>Factors contributing to school effectiveness in disadvantaged communities in the Western Cape.</b>
---

<b>Applicant/</b>	Surname, first name, title			
<b>Researcher:</b>	Potberg, Conrad, Mr	Under-graduate	Post-graduate	Staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Office Telephone:	Cell:	EMail:		
021 680 1570	082 547 6743	potbergc@cput.ac.za		

<b>Supervisor (if applicable):</b>	Surname, first name, title:	
Office Telephone:	Cell:	EMail:

Research Checklist:		Yes	No
1.	Does the study involve participants who are unable to give informed consent? Examples include children, people with learning disabilities, or your own students. Animals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2.	Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited? Examples include students at school, members of self-help groups, residents of nursing homes — anyone who is under the legal care of another.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Will it be necessary for participants to participate in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time — for example, covert observation of people in non-public places?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4.	Will the study with the research subject involve discussion of sensitive topics? Examples would include questions on sexual activity or drug use.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.	Will the study involve invasive, intrusive, or potentially harmful procedures of any kind (e.g. drugs, placebos, or other substances to be administered to the study participants)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6.	Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing on sentient subjects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7.	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8.	Does your research involve environmental studies which could be contentious or use materials or processes that could damage the environment? Particularly the outcome of your research?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**If you have answered 'No' to all questions, submit the completed and signed form to your FRC together with the completed URF application forms**

*If you have answered 'Yes' ...*

If you have answered 'Yes' to one or more questions, kindly attach a report describing more fully how you plan to deal with the ethical issues raised by your research. It does not mean that you cannot do the research, only that your proposal will need to be approved by the Research Ethics Committee. You will need to submit your plans for addressing the ethical issues raised by your proposal to your faculty's Research Ethics Committee.

**Declaration**

As Researcher/Applicant I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to follow Ethical Standards and good research practice.


I declare that I am not aware of any potential conflicts of interest, other than those declared on THIS form, which may influence the ethical conduct of this study.

**Signatures:**

Researcher/Applicant: 
Date: 20/09/2011

Supervisor/Senior (if applicable):
Date:

**Faculty Research Ethics Committee comments:**

The ethics committee (Education) grants you unconditional clearance for your study titled, "Factors contributing to school effectiveness in disadvantaged communities in the Western Cape."			
Approved <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Referred back <input type="checkbox"/>	Chairperson 	Date: 29/9/11

Appendix XI: Letters requesting participation in the research study

[REDACTED]  
The Principal  
[REDACTED] High School  
[REDACTED]

**Research: Factors contributing to school effectiveness in a disadvantaged community in the Western Cape: A case study**

Dear Sir

I am currently engaged in a Doctorate of Education Degree, at the above-mentioned institution. My research focus is on school effectiveness and its contributing factors. I wish to explore the critical factors as it is exposed to the various stakeholders in the school.

I humbly request your assistance in this regard. I have received approval from the Western Cape Education Department under reference number 20110628-0112.

It would be greatly appreciated if you would allow me to solicit your assistance, that of the Grade 12 learners and teachers. The data collection will be done through a questionnaire and various interview processes. I have attached an outline of the data collection plan for your reference. The completion of the questionnaire and the interviews will take place outside normal school hours and would not interrupt the contact time of instruction.

I can assure you that none of the respondents will be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.

I envisage that the research will contribute significantly to school effectiveness and especially for schools in similar context. The supervisor of the research project is Professor R. Chetty and co-supervised by Dr A. Chigona.

I trust that you will consider my request favourably. Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours in education

Conrad Potberg

*I hereby give permission to participate in the research project. It is noted that teachers, learners and parents are under no obligation to participate.*

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Teacher

[REDACTED] High School

**Research: Factors contributing to school effectiveness in a disadvantaged community in the Western Cape: A case study**

Dear Sir/Madam

I am currently engaged in a Doctorate of Education Degree, at the above-mentioned institution. My research focus is on school effectiveness and its contributing factors. I wish to explore the critical factors as it is exposed to the various stakeholders in the school.

I humbly request your assistance as a participant in this regard. I have received approval from the Western Cape Education Department under reference number 20110628-0112.

If you agree to participate in this research you will:

- Attend and participate in a focus group discussion (approximately one hour);
- Sign a consent form to participate in the research;
- Be prepared to be audio-recorded for data collection purposes and
- You will receive the transcripts to peruse before it is analysed.

All information you provide will be strictly confidential. Please bear in mind that you may, at any time during this research, withdraw and stop participating in the study. All information provided will be used solely for research purposes and that anonymity of all is guaranteed.

If you would like to know more about this research project, please feel free to contact me or any of my research advisers, Professor R. Chetty on 021 680 1532 or Dr A. Chigona on 021 680 1509.

I envisage that the research will contribute significantly to school effectiveness and especially for schools in similar context.

I trust that you will consider my request favourably. Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours in education

Conrad Potberg

(Letter to parent)

Dear Mr/s \_\_\_\_\_

**Research: Factors contributing to school effectiveness in a disadvantaged community in the Western Cape: A case study**

Dear Sir/Madam

I am currently engaged in a Doctorate of Education Degree, at the above-mentioned institution. My research focus is on school effectiveness and its contributing factors. I wish to explore the critical factors as it is exposed to the various stakeholders in the school.

I humbly request your assistance as a participant in this regard.

If you agree to participate in this research you will:

- Be interviewed at a venue comfortable for you (approximately one hour);
- Sign a consent form to participate in the research;
- Be prepared to be audio-recorded for data collection purposes and
- You will receive the transcripts to peruse before it is analysed.

All information you provide will be strictly confidential. Please bear in mind that you may, at any time during this research, withdraw and stop participating in the study. All information provided will be used solely for research purposes and that anonymity of all is guaranteed.

If you would like to know more about this research project, please feel free to contact me or any of my research advisers, Professor R. Chetty on 021 680 1532 or Dr A. Chigona on 021 680 1509.

I envisage that the research will contribute significantly to school effectiveness and especially for schools in similar context.

I trust that you will consider my request favourably. Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours in education

Conrad Potberg